Angels of Desire
Subtle Subjects, Aesthetics and Ethics

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material either in full or part, for any degree at this or any other institution.

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This research project would never have found its way into this form, if it had not been for the professional and personal advice, guidance and support that I received from my academic advisors, friends and family. I wish to extend to them my sincere gratitude for their extraordinary care and generosity.

To my family and friends: Belinda Balaam, Ruth Barcan, Margaret Beale, Marion Benjamin, Erna Bollard, Kevin Bray, Justin Crotty, Jan Johnston, David Johnston, Kevin Johnston, Kate Johnston, Lili Kamala Johnston, Fiona Mackie, Mira Martic, David Waller (exceptional patience and care under duress), Regina Walter, Megan Watkins, and especially to Violet Johnston Waller (1998-2003).

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This thesis is dedicated to Graham David Hooper (1942–1971), whose legacy included bringing to my awareness the gentle paradox of presence–absence.
"Does the infinite space
we dissolve into, taste of us then? Do the angels really
reabsorb only the radiance that streamed out from themselves,
or
sometimes, as if by an oversight, is there a trace
of our essence in it as well?"

Rainer Maria Rilke

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Abstract

This thesis examines a model of subjectivity — the subtle body — and the aesthetic and ethical relations that emerge from its proposition. By drawing together a number of discourses from three religious and philosophical traditions — Eastern, Western and Esoteric — the thesis develops an innovative approach to the consideration of the dualisms at the heart of dominant western discourse: self–spirit; mind–body; reason–emotion, I–other. The research is broadly transdisciplinary and cross-cultural, tracing conceptual interrelations across the disciplines of religion, philosophy and art history/theory.

Emerging from this consideration of subtle bodies is an interrelated aesthetic–ethic that promotes an understanding of embodiment that is not exclusively tied to materiality (corporeality). Through the cultivation of sense perception the subject is simultaneously placed in intimate and detached relations with alterity. That is, a modification in aesthetic sensitivity necessitates a radical re-conceptualisation of ethical responsibility. This thesis contends that in order to establish relationships that are respectful of difference one must be able to sit — even uncomfortably — in relation, and that this process will engender the cultivation of perception requisite for apprehending one's own and another's affective influence. This perspective posits a subtle subject inherently intersubjective, creative and open.

The thesis structure reflects the radical extensivity of subtle bodies and is designed to accommodate the development of many interrelating arguments. This is achieved by building the argument in a syntagmatic fashion via subsequent chapters, as well as by utilising a paradigmatic development — the first, second and third chapters of each section correspond to one another. For example, as well as pertaining to their section and their place in the linear development, chapter one, four and seven develop considerations of ontology and relation to self; whilst chapters two, five, eight examine "subject–subject/object" relations and chapters three, six and nine trace a consideration of desire, ternary relations and mysticism.
Introduction
She found herself stalled at the heart of the invisible.¹

This thesis examines the subtle body (which will be defined in more detail below), a model of subjectivity drawn from the Eastern tradition, that renders the subject inherently plural — comprised of a number of bodies — infinitely open and, in its entirety, inherently unknowable. It attempts to capture — in an expository language inapt to its subject matter — a subjectivity that disrupts dialogues of mastery and representation. By its very definition, the subject this thesis seeks to elucidate exceeds the rational discourse employed for the task, especially considering that subtle bodies have traditionally been presented as apprehended by intuitive modes of knowledge. Therefore, the disjuncture between the subjectivity being considered and the rational discourse employed to do so, is acknowledged from the very outset. Significantly however, no matter how much this paradox consistently challenges the thesis' purpose, it also reflects one of its most crucial concerns: how to bring to one's conscious awareness — whilst maintaining and ensuring respect for alterity — the ephemeral and 'invisible' aspects of the subtle subject. The intent then, is to explore some of the modifications to aesthetic and ethical relations that subtle subjectivity proposes, rather than to stake a claim for mastery of a subjectivity, which, in its very nebulous constitution, eludes definitive boundaries.

As is appropriate for a fluid subject matter, this research is broadly interdisciplinary and cross-cultural. It traces the development of particular metaphysical and ontological concepts across disciplinary boundaries, drawing attention to sympathies and concurrences of thought in different fields. It is also a transdisciplinary project, in the manner that Antoine Faivre employs the term to designate a feature of the corpus of Esoteric philosophy: "the idea that several realities can exist" and "the

activation of forms of logic that are not classical (nonbinary). Further, it seeks not only to acknowledge nonbinary logic, but to present as valuable and as equally worthy of respect, forms of knowledge that are not at all logical in a narrowly 'rational' sense.

The methodology employed, which is grounded in textual analysis, draws together a number of discourses from the disciplines of philosophy, religion and art history, across three philosophical and religious traditions: Eastern, Esoteric and Western. These traditions are rarely considered together in the manner undertaken herein, and this unique approach has been developed to accommodate the conceptual interrelations and correlations that a consideration of subtle bodies invokes. Specifically, this approach makes possible the main thesis put forward, which is that the conceptualisation of a subtle subjectivity necessitates a radical re-negotiation of the dualisms at the heart of dominant Western discourse: self–divine (spirit); mind–body; reason–emotion, I–Other.

Implicit to this re-negotiation, is the interrelationship of aesthetics and ethics. The apprehension of subtle bodies calls for modalities of 'vision' that require conscious cultivation. The change in perceptual literacy that arises from such cultivation practices has direct ethical implications with regard to relationships with other objects and subjects. From this perspective, how one 'looks;' the development and use of particular modes of perception, is a conscious choice. That is, a modification of aesthetic sensitivity necessitates a radical re-evaluation of ethical responsibility.

Emerging from this research is the proposal that the type of matter–consciousness understood to comprise subtle bodies can be considered to be inclusive of a form of simultaneously ontological and ethical desire (onto-ethical desire). As outlined in

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the chapters that follow, this desire is understood to be multiplicitous and dynamic, providing the subject with a processual foundation of continuous exchange and relation. The subtle subject is inherently intersubjective. This research privileges the conceptualisation of subjectivity as relation: a dynamic relation that does not erase individuality. It is inclusive of relations with radical alterity, including that ascribed to spirit or the divine. The cultivation of subtle subjectivity — because of the pneumatological constituents attributable to the matter–consciousness of which it is comprised — generates a type of mystical relation, that does not implicitly threaten to dissolve the subject's individual identity.

Subtle bodies are understood to be comprised of a subtle form of matter–consciousness that exceeds the corporeal body, and therefore, their proposition promotes an understanding of embodiment that is not exclusively tied to materiality. The space between 'object' and 'subject,' or between subjects, becomes a space of mutual occupation, where a shared intersubjective relation is born. This relation — as conceived herein — is simultaneously both of, and not of, each of the subjects in relation. Its apprehension and cultivation necessitates an acknowledgement of one's energetic and affective capacities, as well as the acceptance that these aspects open self, and Other, in ways that evade one's grasp. The subtle subject, by its very ontological constitution, is simultaneously placed in intimate and detached relations with alterity. From this perspective, the subject is always innately intersubjective, creative and open.

In Eastern and Esoteric philosophy–religion the subtle body — from the Sanskrit sūksma śarīra ("subtle body"), also known as liṅga śarīra ("body of characteristics") — is comprised of numerous sheaths of matter–consciousness that exceed the corporeal body. This intersubjective relation is born within the space between 'object' and 'subject,' or between subjects, and is characterized by a shared intersubjective relation that is both of, and not of, each of the subjects in relation. Its apprehension and cultivation necessitates an acknowledgement of one's energetic and affective capacities, as well as the acceptance that these aspects open self, and Other, in ways that evade one's grasp. The subtle subject, by its very ontological constitution, is simultaneously placed in intimate and detached relations with alterity. From this perspective, the subject is always innately intersubjective, creative and open.

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interpenetrate, overlay, and exceed one another. This thesis' structure and line of argument reflects this form. It is designed to accommodate theories and arguments that interpenetrate one another, with many delicate correlations being drawn between disciplines and theories generally assumed to be unrelated. This is undertaken by building the argument in a syntagmatic fashion (via subsequent chapters) and in a paradigmatic form.

The thesis is divided into three broad sections: Subjectivity; Aesthetics and Ethics, and each of these sections contain three chapters that develop arguments pertaining to that theme. As well as this, the paradigmatic development relates each chapter across the section divisions; that is, as well as pertaining to their section and their place in the linear development, chapter one, four and seven (that is, the first chapter of each section) develop themes of relation to self and considerations of ontology; whilst chapters two, five, eight (the second chapter of each section) focus on the relations with difference, inclusive of subject–object and subject–subject relations, and chapters three, six and nine (the third chapters of each section) trace a consideration of desire as an ontological and ethical force, as well as relations with radical alterity, inclusive of divine or spiritual relations.

Like a spider suspended at the centre of a web, French philosopher Luce Irigaray's text *To Be Two* sits as a point of departure, for the arguments developed herein. In chapter one her proposition of dual subjectivity is examined and interpreted in light of the proposition of subtle subjectivity. The challenge to the conceptualisation of the singular subject of Western ontology that Irigaray's dual subjectivity initiates, opens the space for a consideration of subtle bodies to be undertaken with direct reference to the Western tradition. However, as argued herein, subtle bodies

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furnishes the subject with a much more radical form of intersubjectivity than is presented by Irigaray.

Although the work, *To Be Two* is a major focus of analysis throughout the thesis, Irigaray's later work *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community* is also examined, as its engagement with Eastern religious and philosophical traditions is particularly pertinent to a consideration of subtle subjectivity.\(^5\) This thesis is not intended as an account of Irigaray's entire oeuvre with regard to the proposition of subtle subjectivity, however, it does knit together selected strands of her thinking in an examination of the types of relations with difference that a radically open and creative form of subjectivity proposes.

The thinking and experience of simultaneity emerges as a consequence of considering subtle bodies and the Eastern models of ontology that provide their ontological foundation. This research applies the relations characteristic of co-dependent origination, a feature of Buddhist philosophy, to the conceptualisation of binaries implicit in the dominant Western discourse. This application enables the binaries to be considered in non-oppositional relations, relations that neither privilege one term over the other nor erase the difference of either.

Many other theorists are drawn upon to consider the implications of subtle subjectivity, its ontological constituents and ethical ramifications. From the Western philosophical tradition, the work of Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, and G.W.F. Hegel in particular, resonate continually throughout the thesis.

In general the close conceptual interrelations of many of the theories and theorists addressed here means that consideration of a singular concept cannot be undertaken

without evoking the many different interpretations that have been developed by many other theorists. In some instances, where the alternate interpretation has direct influence on the discussion, these variations of a theme are examined: in others, closer examination is postponed to a more relevant point in the thesis, and in some cases, it has been necessary to omit any detailed engagement. For example, as Irigaray's oeuvre explicitly takes up a dialogue with numerous central figures in the canon of Western philosophy, an account of each of her subjects of analysis, influence and revision cannot be accommodated in the discussion. Amongst the most significant omissions is the work of Emmanuel Levinas, whose body of work haunts Irigaray's own, and it has — apart from a few moments of identification — been left free to ghost without explication, without a direct and comprehensive analysis vis-à-vis the concept of subtle bodies. Such an engagement with Levinas would demand — because of the richness and complexity of the interrelations — to be the central focus of a research project, and this thesis has a broader objective: to present an horizon of possible intersections between the concept of subtle subjectivity that predominantly illustrates the interrelationships between Eastern, Western and Esoteric traditions. Such an endeavour could also be taken up with Levinas' oeuvre (particularly with regard to Derrida and the Jewish and Esoteric Kabbala) but this too is a project in its own right, and could not be appropriately accommodated within the context of this research. In addition, the correlations between the ontology of subtle bodies and contemporary quantum physics have also been excluded.

The first section of the thesis — Subjectivity — outlines Irigaray's proposal of dual subjectivity (and the ontology that could be understood to support it) in relation to a model of subtle bodies from the Hindu religious tradition. These issues are discussed in chapter one, as are the ontological constituents of this form of subjectivity through reference to Henri Bergson's concept of durée and Gilles Deleuze's exposition and analysis of Bergson's work (in dialogue with other
theorists). Chapter two — "Difference" — considers how an intersubjective subject can be understood to enter respectful relations with radical alterity. In particular, it examines the issues of sexual difference (central to Irigaray's concept of dual subjectivity) with regard to Jacques Derrida's *différence*. Chapter three focuses more directly on the proposed ontological constituents of subtle subjectivity — desire — with reference to Bergson, Deleuze and Hegel, as well as considering the role of the "body of desire" in a model of subtle bodies developed in the discourse of the modern Theosophical Society.

Section II considers intersubjectivity in aesthetic relations and, predominantly, the role and experience of the space 'between' that is traditionally posited as separating subject and object. Chapter four — "Seering Desire: The Between" — examines Irigaray's construction of the between space in light of her presentation of sensation and perception in *To Be Two*. This discussion builds on a concept of 'everyday' mysticism that is introduced in chapter three (emerging from a consideration of Bergson's *élan vital*). The radical form of relation with alterity is understood to have a 'searing' effect (rather than one of individual annihilation usually associated with an all consuming mystical experience) upon the subject's 'borders,' through the cultivation of perception that evokes in the subject perceptive qualities closer to those of a seer: that is, enabling capacities of sense perception that can apprehend the subtle, invisible interpenetration of subject–object.

A creative conception of vision, with ontological capacities, is the subject of chapter five, "Inhabiting Sight." This chapter considers an esoteric concept of creative imagination — *mundus imaginalis* — with reference to Henry Corbin's analysis of its role in Ibn 'Arabi's Sufism. Following this, the approach to aesthetic experience is further explored through a consideration of the Kantian concepts of disinterest, the sublime and the beautiful.
Chapter six — "Durée: the Aesthetics of Desire–Time" — reflects upon the temporal nature of the ontological–aesthetic relations being considered. Specifically, Gilles Deleuze's "time-image" is examined as a type of relationship (rather than a specific type of image) with reference to Wong Kar Wai's film *In the Mood for Love* (2000). This chapter also returns to the earlier discussion of mystical experience in an analysis of Deleuze's "crystal-image" and its operations.

The final section of the thesis — Section III: Ethics — focuses on the interrelation between cultivating perception and cultivating relations with alterity: it foregrounds the intertwining of aesthetics and ethics. This section opens with a return to a consideration of ontology (echoing the concerns of chapter one). Chapter seven, "An Ethics of Emptiness," discusses the model of subjectivity that is foundational to forms of Buddhism that the following chapters further elucidate. This chapter examines the concept of śūnyatā as presenting a re-negotiation of dialectical relations that emphasises simultaneity and co–dependent origination. It includes a consideration of Robert Newman Glass' comparative studies between Deleuzian desire and Buddhist religion and philosophy.

Relations between two is the focus of chapter eight, "Witnessing: Detached Immersion" (in correspondence with chapters two and five). Specifically, the couple relationship is examined with reference to the work of the contemporary Western philosopher Kelly Oliver, Tantric Buddhism (and its contemporary interpretation by several Western feminist Buddhist scholars) and Esoteric philosophy. Chapter nine focuses on relations between three, and considers the Hegelian family form as a reflection of the relations attributed to the Deleuzian crystal-image outlined in chapter six. Further, this chapter, "An Ethics of Grace: The Law of Desiring Angels," presents the extensive, affective agency of subtle subjectivity as enabling an elision of the boundaries between family and state, love and law as proposed by Hegel. This is explored with reference to Derrida and Irigaray's work. Centrally,
the concept of diachronic time and an ethical–ontological form of desire is presented as enabling these simultaneously aesthetic and ethical interrelationships.

Overall, to simplify, as well as taking the between itself as its object of study, this research takes place in the between: those 'spaces' where different disciplines of research meet. Discourses commonly considered with suspicion, as dubious objects of study, are found in these dynamic spaces. This includes areas that have often been marginalised within the Western academic domain (such as Esotericism and modern Theosophy). It should be noted however, that these areas of study are increasingly gaining a presence within the academies, the Sorbonne in Paris, for example, has a chair in the "History of Esoteric and Mystical Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe," and topics such as New Age Culture and the modern Theosophical Society are also examined within broader religious studies programs. References to New Age Culture (a phenomenon that is often summarily dismissed) are also made herein. This research seeks to demonstrate that ideas central to both the New Age and the Theosophical Society have a long heritage in the religious and philosophical traditions of both East and West. Even though diverse religious traditions are 'picked up' and adapted by practitioners of New Age culture and members of the Theosophical Society with little sustained research and applied praxis (and indeed, the depth of the practitioner's experience could be understood to reflect the level of engagement with which they approach the material) this in itself does not invalidate the legitimacy of their experience, or the material itself as worthy subjects of analysis. For example, the evolutionary theories of H.P. Blavatsky (which are discussed briefly in chapter three) if interpreted literally are offensive and unethical due to their racist content, and they are also, clearly untenable, from the perspective of archaeology and the biological sciences. However, equally racist and scientifically unsound is much of what was promoted as rational and reasoned science of the same period, such as, for example, Francis Galton's eugenics. Rather than disregarding both of these discourses because they so clearly contain racist
ideology and evolutionary ideas that cannot be supported by contemporary science, their study leads to an understanding of the conceptual heritage they contain and reveals the lasting influence or 'migration' of their ideas into more contemporary discourses.

It may also appear curious, that a project so centrally concerned with aesthetic relationships discusses only a few examples of artwork. This economy of examples has been specifically employed to reflect this thesis' call for entering into relations with duration. That is, in approaching both artwork and relations to others, it is suggested that the quick glance, the superficial look does not adequately enable the expression, experience and apprehension of alterity. This thesis contends that in order to establish relationships that are respectful of difference one must be able to sit — even uncomfortably — in relation, and that this process will engender the cultivation of perception necessary for apprehending one's own and another's affective influence. Engagement with visual artworks enables conscious awareness of adjusting, exploring and developing one's capacity to look in different and new ways, and in particular, with the whole body as a sensate matrix. Looking at art can therefore be considered a training ground for looking at one other. Each section of the thesis commences with the contemplation of an artwork and this contemplation is identified from the rest of the text by the use of a different font.

The changes that occur, in experience and thought, as a result of the amount of time spent engaging with an artwork is also reflected herein, through the repetition of analysis of contemporary artist Marina Abramovic's installation Wounded Geode. This is examined at the very outset of the thesis, and returned to at the beginning of the third section, when a more developed understanding of subtle subjectivity and its agency can be brought to bear on its consideration.
Such a practice of engagement requires entering a state of suspension that is not a state of inactivity; it is understood rather to be concurrently active–passive. This is a state in which the new can be grasped without erasure and mastery, where the self can be accepted as vulnerable without needing to close.

To be integral to its subject matter, this research itself should remain vulnerable, to not be conclusive, but rather it should be inconclusive, or more aptly indusive. Its aim is not to close a line of argument, an interpretation, but rather to induce, to open it out and, whilst providing academic analysis, to also allow for a suspension of control and mastery in the methodology. Again, weaving paradoxical aims together it sought to explicate, analyse and postulate but to do so in a way that does not 'lock down' the inherently expansive subject under consideration.

To be stalled is to find oneself suspended. It is the contention of this thesis, that such an attitude — so unwillingly accepted in an everyday Western culture that worships harried activity — is exactly the type of 'space' within which an opening to alterity, to creativity, to experiences that continually re-constitute an understanding of self and other is to be found. The state of suspension then, is not to be avoided, but is a state to be willingly cultivated. To be stalled, can be to flail, to be flummoxed, to be fearful. However, from this place one can look again, not with new eyes, but, in new ways, and in so doing perhaps find new visions — albeit inherently incomplete — of both self and other, and significantly, let the new enter into one's vision. To be stalled can itself be a form of movement: the meeting of the "I know" and "I don't know," from which the "I" may continually emerge.
Section I

Subjectivity
Figure 1: Marina Abramovic, *Wounded Geode* 1994.
Two viewers sit perched on unusually high chairs, feet dangling. Looking forward, facing each other, they cannot avoid the presence of their mutual gaze across the table. Between their bodies, a smooth grey crystal has been placed on the lengthy table. Open at one end, its interior is a fractal world of purple shards. *Wounded Geode*, is an installation by Belgrade-born contemporary artist Marina Abramovic. It's a deceptively uncomfortable work, the demands on the viewer/participant are substantial. Perceptual and physical stamina are required if they are going to participate for more than a few seconds. Blurring the division between subject and object in a most obvious way, Abramovic requires viewers to participate in the installation: to 'complete' it, to 'activate' it. Its full articulation is reliant on their presence. The installation is a hotbed of strange relations: making relations strange; relations brought to conscious awareness by the contrived setting and the alien environment of the hallowed gallery space.

This work foregrounds the relational foundation of aesthetic experience. Although, at first, the relations articulated may appear primarily dual, or ternary — between the two seated subjects (viewer/participants) and the geode — on further reflection one recognises it as a space bustling with multiple relations: between the viewer and the crystal, the viewer and the chair, the table, the other viewer, and the other viewers watching the viewer-participants. Abramovic's small tableau aims to evoke the perceptive modalities and physical disciplines necessary to actively engage the subtle relations of the 'subjects' and 'objects.' It is a device intent on activating modalities of corporeal perception. One is invited to sit in the chair for a while, to contemplate, to experience the sensation of sitting in that particular chair at that particular time, in relation to those particular items. The high chairs disorient the viewer, elevating them to an unfamiliar physical position. This simple move disengages the viewer from habitual expectations — not only does the work demand
their active participation, it does not allow them to remain in a comfortable position vis-à-vis 'normal' eye level. Such a shift is performed to privilege sensorial perceptions other than the purely visual. The geode placed on the table invites contemplation beyond questions about what symbolic references it carries in this context, for the viewer becomes conscious of the other viewer, watching them watch, whilst themselves watching. This is no relaxed reverie, but a mode of contemplation that is active and requires cultivation. Without practice, looking at an object is difficult to sustain: the viewer becomes distracted during lengthy episodes. It is Abramovic's desire that such a practice will open the viewer to considering alternate modes of communication, modalities of perception, modes of vision, ways of being/becoming that are conscious of subtle and intricate linkages between 'subjects' and 'objects:' energetic relations.

The 'invisible,' energetic, subtle constituents of subjectivity are a central concern of this thesis, and the first section (chapters one to three) enters this undertaking with a consideration of a form of subjectivity that is conceptualised as radically open: constituted by — and generating — numerous energies or forces. Examining this form of subtle subjectivity, its 'activity' and ontology, implicitly requires focus on the role of relation to and with alterity; in particular the creative propensities emerging through relation with difference. Therefore both the nebulous boundary of the subtle subject and the role of relationship in its construction are the focus of this section.
Chapter One: Subtle Bodies
Irigaray and Dual Subjectivity

Between two living beings, sensibility fluctuates, if it is faithful to perception. The other changes, and I also change. If you remain alive, my gaze, my senses are always aroused by your present intentions, and I cannot fall asleep in my knowledge of you, in the repetition of what I have already felt from you, as long as a stronger sensation keeps me awake. Your gestures, if they are inspired by your desire, attract my intention, my gaze. Its horizon is not closed but remains open upon your mystery, upon the irreducibility of your freedom, upon your intention. Turned towards you, my eyes are centred upon you, but they do not yet have, within, an image or a spectacle. They are always and already virginal when looking at you, at the expression of your desire. But if you are not animated by anything, if you mime or repeat a model, a role, my gaze will be preoccupied and fundamentally altered, it will lack interest in its present and in its future and will no longer be nourished by them. It will remain only stained by what is visible and without possible intentionality or interiorization, held back and enchanted by an incomprehensible nothing: neither subject nor object.¹

This quotation from Luce Irigaray describes her understanding of the relation between two subjects, but they are not two subjects of a similar type, but two subjects of radical difference. In fact her position is more aberrant than what is encapsulated in the quotation: Irigaray critiques the singular subject so readily assumed in Western discourse by proposing dual subjectivity. Irigaray asks why the subject of ontology should be singular. What the above quotation prefaces — in its evocation of relations between one and an-Other — is the central role of perception (and pre-conception) in the creation of dual subjectivity: two distinct subjects.

Perceptual modalities and their cultivation are central to Irigaray's thesis of dual subjectivity. She asserts that she cannot "see" the Other clearly if they are to be perceived as a repeat or variation of the One — that is, if they are conceived (albeit negatively) within what Emmanuel Levinas calls the discourse of the Same. Following Levinas, she argues that the discourse of the Same — the multiple as repetition of the universal one — underlies Western conceptualisations of alterity and inhibits the 'thinking' of radical difference. The Other conceptualised from within this framework can only be a version of the Same and, because of this, relations with respect for radical difference cannot be attained. The relation between 'subjects' and the concept of the Other that Irigaray proposes requires that the radical alterity that is posited as beyond rational thought (alien to the discourse of the Same) be brought to conscious perception: that the un-thought be experienced. In order to enable the perception of this alterity, this Other is reliant on recognition via bodily-

¹ Irigaray, To Be Two 41.
based modes of knowledge (in contradistinction to purely intellectual abstraction). In Irigaray's scheme (and in many Eastern and Esoteric religious traditions) such knowledges penetrate conscious awareness through the cultivation of perception. It is these practices that enable the recognition of radical, new, unique phenomena: that is, for Irigaray an Other is not a different repetition of the singular subject but an altogether Other, outside the bounds of previous experience, thought and self. The very ethical recognition of self and Other is understood as reliant upon perceptual cultivation practices. This is also a conceptual and practical cornerstone of the Hindu yogic disciplines that have informed Irigaray's most recent work.²

For Irigaray, subjectivity is both dual and relational, with permeable boundaries and intimate slippages between selves: it is an intersubjectivity.

To be two would allow us to remain in ourselves, and would permit gathering, and the type of safeguarding which does not restrain, the kind of presence which remained free of bonds: neither mine nor yours but each living and breathing with the other. It would refrain from possessing you in order to allow you to be — to be in me, as well.³

Irigaray's "to be" signals the role of the relation–between in mutual cultivation of dual subjectivity.⁴ In his work to posit ethics (as distinct from ontology) as first philosophy Emmanuel Levinas also proposes an intimate relationship between the One and the Other which is generative of subjectivity itself. That is, in Levinas' view the subject is called into being, evoked, formed in relation with/by the Other. The becoming of both are mutually interrelated, hence ethics as first philosophy, the responsibility to the Other, is primary. Levinas characterizes this intimate interrelationship as a radical proximity.

² See Irigaray, *Between East and West* and *To Be Two*.

³ Irigaray, *To Be Two* 16.

⁴ On choosing the title *To Be Two*, Irigaray notes that she wanted to signal a critique of the singular subject assumed in Western ontology, but also to note that the title also carries the meanings, "being made of two [être à deux], to be two [être deux]." She states her original intention was for a more "sensual" book title, for example "The Embrace" [L'Etriente] or "Meeting Between Us" [Entre elle et lui], but selected *To be Two [Etre Deux] "with a capital D on "deux" for the reference it contains to philosophy: "The book's goal is to intertwine philosophy and daily life...." Irigaray, "The Teaching of Difference" interview with Paola Azzolini, *L'Arena*, April 29, 1994, reprinted in *Luce Irigaray: Why Different? A Culture of Two Subjects: Interviews with Luce Irigaray*, eds. L. Irigaray and S. Lotringer, trans. Camille Colllins (New York: Semiotext(e), 2000): 121-122.
The relationship of proximity cannot be reduced to any modality of distance or geometrical contiguity, not to the simple 'representation' of a neighbour; it is already an assignation, an extremely urgent assignation — an obligation, anachronously prior to any commitment.  

Levinas' theme of proximity is further developed by Irigaray who privileges interiority and its role in enabling intersubjectivity via the articulation and respect of/for difference. Irigaray presents the function of interiority as constitutive of individuality, and it is from this mode of becoming that the relation to the Other is established.

The two be is constituted beginning from a centre of interiority which integrates, at different levels of profundity, the multiple dimensions of our existence: corporeal, psychic, genealogical, sociological.

The relation to the Other is one of interiority not exteriority: a radical proximity established by psychic rather than physical distance: "Distanced by our difference, but present to each other." It is not predicated on the customary model of transcendence. In Irigaray's nomenclature it is an intersubjective "in-stacy" not a subjective "ex-stacy." For Irigaray the plurality which constitutes the self can only be apprehended via a relation of interiority; exteriority she claims, incorrectly apprehends the individual as a single whole without recognition of pluralities. Her perspective reflects an Eastern perspective upon the self and the role of meditative practices in cultivating knowledge of these multiplicities. As will be discussed below, the very model of mind–body recognised in these traditions — the subtle body — is understood as plural.

In Time and The Other Levinas characterises the relationship with the Other as a "relationship with a Mystery." Irigaray continues this line of thought linking the respect and maintenance of this Mystery as intricately interwoven with individual intentionality. In short, the Mystery of the Other is understood as that which enables one's interiority to remain one's own. It is interiority's role to safeguard one's

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6 Irigaray, To Be Two 75.

7 Irigaray, To Be Two 11.

8 Irigaray, To Be Two 28-29.

9 Emmanuel Levinas, "Time and the Other," From Existence to Ethics re-printed in The Levinas Reader 43.
Mystery and enables the safeguarding of the Mystery of the Other. This Mystery is irreducible difference. Irigaray crafts for it the role of renouncing the relations of genealogical oppositions; establishing horizontal relations with the Other (in contradistinction to Levinas' model of a "necessary" father-son relation); and establishing the relation between Other as Other as fundamental to her philosophy of sexual difference.  

It is impossible to enter a discussion of interiority/difference/sexual difference without also opening relations to intentionality and desire. These threads however will be held-over for more elaborate discussion in chapter two.

Both Irigaray and Levinas contemplate relations of proximity between I–Other to open discussion about how relations with difference can be conceived, and indeed how difference itself is essential to the formation and respect of each other.

We are irreducible in us, between us and yet so close. Without this difference, how do we give each other grace, how do we see each other, the one in the other?  

In this way difference is presented as enabling intersubjectivity (rather than delineating the bounds of the single subject) — enacting an ontologising of difference which is also a characteristic of the work of Gilles Deleuze, a topic developed later in this chapter. At this point it is essential to note that Irigaray's concept of dual subjectivity is founded upon a relational ontology: subjects do not so much stand solidly on Heidegger's ground of being as constitute one another through perpetual movement between selves. This is reflected in Irigaray's positing of air as the elemental force for considerations around the constitution of subjectivity, a proposition strongly and directly influenced by Hindu metaphysics.  

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10 Irigaray, *To Be Two* 110-111.

11 Irigaray, *To Be Two* 10.

Relational Ontology and Process Metaphysics
In "Prolegomena to Any Post-Deconstructive Subjectivity" contemporary theorist Simon Critchley discusses the etymological precedents of the word 'subject' and the particular ways in which the term has been employed in the Western philosophical tradition. Of note is its derivation from the Latin subjectum — "that which is thrown under" — and the Greek hupokeimenon — "that which lies under" — correlated by Critchley to a concept of foundation, something that supports, upon which all things are predicated but for which itself there is no predicate. Critchley's etymological analysis recapitulates that of Martin Heidegger's in the essay "The Age of the World Picture." In this essay Heidegger draws attention to the translation of the Greek term for subject meaning "that-which-lies-before" as counter-pointed to the Latin subjectum: "that being upon which every being, in its way of being and its truth is founded."

Clearly, focusing on the latter meaning, such a subject is a metaphysical one, evoking questions of knowing the foundation; of examining the 'entity' at the base of all 'entities'; of thinking the very beingness of existence itself. Critchley's prime concern in the essay "Prolegomena to Any Post-Deconstructive Subjectivity" is the philosophical project of Martin Heidegger and its emphasis on this interpretation of subjectivity.

Modestly stated, the aim of Heidegger's thinking is simply to renew the experience of the question of Being as a question, as a source of perplexity about what it means for entities to be.

Critchley investigates Heidegger's metaphysical conceptualisation of the 'ground of being.' A consideration that ruminates upon questions such as: What is prior to the

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14 Critchley, "Prolegomena to Any Post-Deconstructive Subjectivity" 13.


16 Critchley, "Prolegomena to Any Post-Deconstructive Subjectivity" 14.

17 Heidegger's conceptualisation of "Being" and its "earthbound" status is critiqued by Luce Irigaray in The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger.
proposed subject-object split? Out of what, from where, does the subject come? Is there indeed anything prior to the subject?

In the investigation of subtle subjectivity that follows, these questions are addressed with consideration of several metaphysical and ontological perspectives drawn from Eastern, Western and esoteric religious and philosophical traditions. A shared feature of those propositions examined herein is a process-oriented conceptualization of subjectivity that valorizes the role of relation (interrelation) in the formation of subjectivity.

It has already been suggested above that both Irigaray and Levinas propose the subject as created via a relation with an Other: in essence a co-created subject–Other. The fluid dynamics that such an ontology presuppose are the heart of process metaphysics, as distinct from substance metaphysics. The primacy of becoming that process metaphysics privileges underlies the concept of body–mind that Irigaray incorporates into her work through the influence of Eastern philosophy–religion. Before turning to look directly at the subtle body it is useful to commence with an examination of a process ontology which supports the fluid formation of subjectivity proposed by Irigaray. And further, it will be shown that this particular ontology shares the concept of matter-mind that is inherent in concepts of the subtle body.

Henri Bergson's concept of \textit{durée}\footnote{Bergson's concept of \textit{durée} is generally translated as duration in English editions of Bergson's and Gilles Deleuze's work. A notable exception is F.C.T. Moore's preference for the term "durance:" he claims that this term both carries the meaning of duration, "a measurable period of time during which something happens," as well as being closer in his reading to the French meaning of "the fact or property going through time," the latter implying for Moore a less measurable form of time. To indicate the ambiguity raised by Moore in the translation of \textit{durée}, and to avoid terminating or limiting the term's interpretation (a term itself invoked to represent a "whole" that is both temporal and open), I have chosen not to use the English translation (although it was approved by Bergson) but to signal the concerns noted by Moore and use the original French term. See F.C.T. Moore, \textit{Bergson Thinking Backwards} (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 58-59.} proposes a model of becoming, a type of subjectivity that privileges a particular type of 'sight' that is closely related to Irigaray's project. However, the inherent duality of the subject and the prescription

\begin{footnotesize}\footcite{Rescher, Nicholas, \textit{Process Metaphysics: An Introduction to Process Philosophy} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).}\end{footnotesize}

\begin{footnotesize}\footcite{Moore, F.C.T., \textit{Bergson Thinking Backwards} (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 58-59.}\end{footnotesize}
of sexual difference as radical difference are not directly encapsulated within its scope. Durée does, however, share correspondences and similarities with concepts from Eastern and Esoteric metaphysical traditions and with Irigaray's work, and these will be further elucidated as this thesis unfolds. Significantly it foregrounds temporal dynamics and presents a fluid concept of self that forms the mobile ground on which a relational ontology/ethics can be constructed. The focus will be on durée as a 'framework' for fluid subjectivity, and on Gilles Deleuze's adaptation and exploration of durée as an ontology (rather than a metaphysic) through a discussion of his presentation of difference and multiplicity.

**Durée: Fluid Foundations for Subjectivity**

We are seeking only the precise meaning that our consciousness gives this word "exists," and we find that, for a conscious being, to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly. Should the same be said of existence in general?  

Bergson strongly advocated that explorations into the nature of being should be undertaken with the consideration of concrete reality rather than through abstract philosophical speculation. This stems from his belief that durée, unlike materialist concepts of the absolute, has a "place in concrete time, in the time which we feel to be the very stuff of our life."  

For Bergson the fundamental mode of being, of existence, is fluid, forever in a process of transformation and change. This reflects a general process philosophy belief that the foundation of being is mobile and processural (rather than a causal generating substance or form), that the fundamental nature of existence is a becoming.

Bergson presents durée as a heterogeneous whole comprised of inherently fluid matter-consciousness in continual dynamic flux. In Bergson's scheme durée is comprised of images (matter-consciousness): these images are fluid and interconnected, and exist, not in a separate absolute space but, within concrete time and space (whether or not they are perceived).

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21 Bergson, *Creative Evolution* 240.
In a commentary on Bergson's work, F.C.T. Moore writes that Bergson said of durée "'In it we live and move and have our being.'" This phrase is of peculiar note, as it is used by Theosophists to describe their relationship to part of the absolute they term the Universal Oversoul — "One in whom we live move and have our being" — as well as being found in the Christian Bible Acts 17:28, "For in him (God) we live and move and have our being." Given these associations and precedents, there can be no doubt that Bergson proposed durée as an absolute (or universal), but one which exists in an inherent and intimate relationship with concrete reality. Unlike Platonic concepts of the absolute, durée is not conceived of as abstract, as removed and separate from concrete reality.

There does however, seem to be an ambiguity as to whether durée is inherent in matter or whether matter exists within, but is not inherently comprised of durée. In a commentary on the work of Gilles Deleuze, Michael Hardt supports the latter perspective: "The discussion of ontological movement relies on Bergson's claim of a fundamental difference between time and space, between duration and matter." The mapping of durée and matter onto the time–space dualism may not be as clear-cut as it initially appears. In Bergsonism Deleuze writes:

he does not retract any of the ambiguity of Matter and Memory which consisted in integrating something of space into duration, in order to find in duration a sufficient reason (raison suffisante) of extension ... there is always extensity in our duration, and always duration in matter.

Duration is only the most contracted degree of matter, matter the most expanded (détendu) degree of duration.


23 Theosophists: members of the Theosophical Society founded by H.P. Blavatsky and Colonel H.S. Olcott in New York in 1875.


These quotations reflect an uncertainty in attributing a clear and complete distinction between *durée* and matter. Central to this confusion is Bergson's description of *durée* as a type of consciousness and his prescription that the difference between matter and consciousness is not in kind, but in degree: "No doubt also the material universe itself, defined as the totality of images, is a kind of consciousness ... ." Bergson also conceptualises matter constituted by/as linear time itself: "matter, the further we push its analysis, tending more and more to be only a succession of infinitely rapid moments... ."

In a commentary on the extension of Bergson's work undertaken by Deleuze, Constantin Boundas delineates that, for Bergson, presenting duration as ontology represents "the victory over the initial dualism of duration and space." Differences in degree are discussed by Deleuze as tensions. Matter and duration represent different degrees of tension, of expansion and contraction and indeed *durée* and matter present two types of difference: *durée* being differences in nature and matter difference in degree.

Thus what differs is relaxation and contraction, matter and duration as the degrees or intensities of difference ... Because to do philosophy is precisely to start with difference, and difference of nature is duration, of which matter is only its lowest degree.

What is significant to note here, is that the fundamental difference signalled by Hardt may be between types of ontological difference and not between ontologically distinct types of substance as generally understood (although for Deleuze difference itself becomes akin to a substance, a substance constitutive of both matter and *durée*).

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28 Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 93.


30 Bergson, *Matter and Memory* 221.


On a superficial level, one could read the proposed ontological nature of *durée* ("everything is duration") as suggesting an implicit interrelation and constitution of concrete reality. Certainly it seems that the aforementioned ambiguity leads to readings of matter and duration as mutually constitutive to varying degrees, a perspective widely different from what is implied in Hardt's terms, "fundamental distinction." "For Bergson matter, like mind, is comprised of rhythms of duration." The latter perspective seems particularly prevalent in readings emerging from Creative Evolution (Gunter, the author of the above quotation, provided the "Introduction" to the UPA 1984 translation).

**Perception and the Body**

Leaving aside the uncertainty as to whether matter is fundamentally distinct from *durée* or whether *durée* is implicit in matter, it is crucial to elucidate the role perception plays in selecting "images" (matter–consciousness) from *durée*, as it is this selection which forms what in Bergson's reading is generally (mis)understood to be reality. That is, the "subjects" and "objects" of reality, are limited by the perceived potentiality of the object: perception is presented as if it were within the object, rather than an aspect of consciousness projected onto an already delineated "object." The Image is drawn out of the whole (*durée*) and in so doing its extensity and activity limited.

But the separation between a thing and its environment cannot be absolutely definite and clear-cut; there is a passage by insensible gradations from one to the other: the close solidarity which binds all the objects of the material universe, the perpetuality of their reciprocal actions and reactions, is sufficient to prove that they have not the precise limits which we attribute to them. Our perception outlines, so to speak, the form of their nucleus; it terminates them at the point where our possible action upon them ceases, where consequently, they cease to interest our needs.

This involves a selection and limitation of the Whole (*durée*), and the resulting movement produces "sets" of Images (matter–consciousness) and it is these that we mistakenly perceive as distinct objects, rather than temporarily bounded Images (matter–consciousness) selected from an interrelated heterogenous fluid *durée*. In short, with perception placed within the 'object' and sensation within the 'subject,' the

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33 Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 76.


dualism between consciousness and matter is no longer supported and, in keeping with such a move, neither is the distinction between subject and object.

This is to place ourselves in pure duration, of which the flow is continuous and in which we pass insensibly from one state to another: a continuity which is really lived, but artificially decomposed for the greater convenience of customary knowledge.  

Bergson proposes that the body is a place of passage, "a hyphen" that provides a link between images which act upon it and images upon which it acts. As matter–consciousness is understood to be an aggregate of images in flux, the body is identified as a special type of image, a centre of action. Other images can only be known through this centre of activity (the body) and its potential action upon them. Perception is matter-consciousness (image) "referred to the eventual action" of the body.

This special image — "my body" — exists not only in relation to images selected and limited by the perception of their potential action upon it: it also exists in relation to the whole of durée, the interconnected, unified aggregate of images. However, its interactions and interrelation with durée are not, Bergson proposes, in general consciously realised and apprehended. Inner vision or intuition is required to perceive the rhythms or durée and, for Bergson, the creative and meditative processes generally understood to be utilised by artists and mystics have provided the most conscious examples of apprehending or representing durée. These 'visions' and their articulations are the subject of later chapters.

Here, then, is the body as hyphen articulating two types of perception or sight. Firstly, a sight which selects, juxtaposes and disassociates images, that encompasses an exteriority, placing perception in the object itself, viewing itself — the body — in

36 Bergson, Matter and Memory 186.

37 Bergson, Matter and Memory 151.

38 Bergson, Matter and Memory 17-24.

relation to these defined images. Secondly, the inner sight, that Bergson termed "intuition" through which *durée* is perceived, and within which the essential interrelationship and fluidity of images is comprehended. The first type of vision maintains and creates distinctions between subject and object, carves out boundaries, creates "betweens" assumed empty of matter-consciousness. This is the type of vision which supports the general contemporary concept of subjectivity in Western culture, that of the individual body bounded by skin, which terminates and solidifies the separate being. However, the second type of sight — inner vision, a core focus of this study — fractures this concept of subjectivity and opens onto models of interpenetration and coexistence positing a subtle, fluid, temporal subjectivity. It is this form of subjectivity that Irigaray incorporates into *To Be Two* although Irigaray's project does not explicitly foreground the most radical applications of this model of intersubjectivity.

**Subtle Bodies and Radical Intersubjectivity**

In general the concept of subtle bodies presents the subject as comprised of interpenetrating and extensive sheaths of matter–consciousness which extend beyond the physical flesh boundary (the physical body is considered as one sheath of matter–consciousness), and are not perceived by the five senses. Similarly in *To Be Two*, Irigaray seeks acknowledgment of an "irreducible invisible" aspect of subjectivity that is also not evident to the five senses: "Beyond the color of his eyes, the tone of his voice, the quality of his skin, things that are sensible to me, for me, there exists in the other a subjectivity which I cannot see, either with my senses or with my intellect."40

In subtle body schemas, subjectivity is inherently plural, comprised of a multiplicity of bodies. This is most clearly present in Eastern conceptualisations of the body–mind, specifically Hindu and Buddhist traditions (prominent in Yoga and Tantra and Tibetan Vajrayana), but the concept can also be found in many other cultures including the indigenous cultures of North America and Africa, Polynesian Kahunas, ancient Egyptians, Incan and early Christian cultures.41 It also has

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40 Irigaray, *To Be Two* 20. Although Irigaray argues that the invisible aspects of Other can be apprehended — but never in their entirety — at this point in the text her reference to senses seems restricted to the five: taste, smell, sight, touch, hearing.

precedents in the foundations of Western philosophy, as cited by contemporary theorist Elizabeth Grosz, who (amongst others) refers to Aristotle's *pneuma*, a universe animated by an energetic source. Grosz also identifies the subtle body as a precursor to the psychoanalytic concept of the 'body image.'\(^4\) Across these various traditions the number of subtle bodies is debated and it varies according to specific traditions.\(^4\)

What is very similar in hue however, is the fundamental concept of matter-consciousness that the modality of subtle bodies embraces. The concept embodies a process perspective that views matter and consciousness as ontologically similar. A generally given view of process philosophy is that matter and consciousness are not discrete substances, but are understood at their fundamental level of 'beingness' to be comprised of the same 'stuff,' often referred to as energy, or an energetic principle.\(^4\)

It is variations of this degree of 'stuff' that enables variety of substance. The difference is in degree, not in kind. This is, as previously outlined, keenly reflected in the work of Henri Bergson who was himself interested in parapsychology (his sister Mina [also known as Moina]) Bergson was a central member of one of the most notorious British esoteric groups, The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn). This familial relation is of note, because Esoteric philosophy has furnished the model of subtle bodies which has been widely filtered through Western society via the Theosophical Society.

Founded in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry S. Olcott, the Theosophical Society adapted Hindu and Buddhist scripture and combined it with Western Esoteric Philosophy (strongly Neoplatonic and Hermetic) to outline a seven

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\(^4\) Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994) 63. 'Body Image' includes both conscious thoughts about our body and the pre-reflective, unconscious 'map' of our body, it is understood as mediating between mind and body. See Gail Weiss, *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999).

\(^5\) Tansley, *Subtle Body: Essence and Shadow*.

layered subtle body schema. It has been this schema that has been widely adopted and promulgated by contemporary "New Age" discourse.

It is also notable that conceptualisations of the body–mind as comprised of varieties of force, and intensities of 'matter–consciousness,' are closely allied with other contemporary philosophical considerations of subjectivity aside from those proposed by Irigaray. Most notably the work of Gilles Deleuze with Félix Guattari (influenced by Bergson) develops concepts such as the Body Without Organs (BwO) that embrace aspects of extensity in conceptualising matter-mind-becoming, presenting subjectivity as unbounded by physical form:

it is matter that occupies space to a given degree — to the degree corresponding to the intensities produced ... defined by axes and vectors, gradients and thresholds, by dynamic tendencies involving energy transformation and kinetic movements... .

This exemplifies points of conceptual interrelation between Western and Esoteric philosophical traditions; its concepts have, in various forms, tangentially flowed alongside and across the boundaries of the disciplines. As will become

45 Seven is a symbolically loaded number in Esoteric philosophy, and Modern Theosophy's seven-layered subtle body scheme may reflect the influence of Jacob Böhme's septenary based cosmology as explained in the following quote from Arthur Versluis: "The cosmos is hierarchic and emanatory: 'above' are the seven spirits of creation, 'intermediate' are the seven planetary qualities, and 'below' are all the myriad of forms of phenomena, each of which represents unique combinations of these partly hidden inward forces or qualities." Arthur Versluis, Wisdom's Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) 16.


48 As Antoine Faivre has pointed out, Esotericism per se has been the victim of academic marginalization: "Since the Academy, by definition, is curious about everything, it could have long ago established both a curriculum and a research program devoted exclusively to esotericism. At least two obstacles stood in the way.

First of all, the transdisciplinary character of esotericism is hardly compatible with the separation of the disciplines, which resemble well labelled jars lining a pharmacy shelf. In the past few years, it is true, the use of communicating vessels has somewhat modified the situation, although genuine transdisciplinarity is still often confused with casual pluri-or interdisciplinarity. The second reason relates to the first. Vast areas of our Western cultural history, obscured a priori by theological or
increasingly obvious throughout this work, subtle bodies intertwine the philosophical and the spiritual and reflect the more general aspect of Eastern thought in which the philosophical and religious (spiritual) are not classified as distinct disciplines but as mutually constituted.

In a general sense, many Western Esoteric traditions and certainly modern Theosophy provide a concept of matter-consciousness that proposes no ontological difference between matter and consciousness. The rigid dualism between mind and body, flesh and spirit, cannot be sustained with their process conception of matter–consciousness. It is an analogous concept of matter–consciousness that forms a general foundation of Hindu philosophy, as Richard King argues:

Although the distinction between mind and body is regularly made within Indian culture, there is no sharp distinction between the two as they are usually conceived as inter-related and existing on a continuum rather than as wholly separate realities. This is as true in Hindu philosophy as it is in Buddhist thought.49

Subtle matter–consciousness is understood in the Sāmkhya tradition50 to be brought into being by the interrelation between pure consciousness and primordial materiality or puruṣa and prakṛti respectively.51

These creative forces are gendered, they are ascribed as masculine and feminine respectively, and perhaps Irigaray’s model of dual subjectivity is influenced by this metaphysical dualism. It would provide a basis for her assertion that female and

epistemological positions, were deliberately omitted, abandoned to the curiosity of eccentrics or even cranks and to capricious handling, which only increased the distrust of serious, albeit somewhat prejudiced investigators and established thinkers vis-à-vis this peripheral domain. The distrust is so pervasive that many scholars are still wondering what esotericism is or whether it truly merits study."


The academic marginalization of esotericism as a discipline of study is also a point made by Wouter Hanegraaff, See Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) 381-383


50 The Sāmkhya Tradition or "School of Enumeration" is understood to have been founded by Kapila (c. late 7th – early 6th century BCE) and is "one of the six orthodox schools of interpretation (darśana)." Its development is characterised by three periods: Early period 900BCE-300 CE; the Classical Period 350-1000 CE and later period of decline 1000 CE forward. It is considered influential to the philosophy of the Yoga tradition. Bowker, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* 533; 848. See also King, *Indian Philosophy* 62-66.

51 King, *Indian Philosophy* 186.
male energy move in different ways, as the dynamics of puruṣa and prakṛti are understood to be of fundamentally different natures.⁵²

Fidelity to one's own gender opens the way to another becoming: a becoming woman, a becoming man, a becoming together.

If the energy of each moves in a different manner, if they have a different relationship to sounds and colors, perhaps they can teach these differences to each other, each being simultaneously — as man and woman — master and disciple for the other. ⁵³

Puruṣa (or puruṣha) is the "male" term, signifying transcendent consciousness, what the Buddhists term "witness consciousness." In Vedānta⁵⁴ terminology it is also called ātman. There is debate amongst the various traditions as to whether there is only one singular puruṣa or multiple puruṣas but they are understood as the heart of Self, an omnipresent Self 'beyond' the gross and subtle realities of existence.⁵⁵

Prakṛti is the "creatrix" or a term for "Nature." It is conceived as constantly in motion, animated by the interrelation of the three qualities or constituents (guṇas) — sattva, rajas, and tapas — these are understood to be the foundation of "everyday" reality including, as Georg Feuerstein notes, the psychic attributes of ego and mind.⁵⁶

The Sāṃkhya tradition is dualist, but the ontological distinction is not between matter and mind as usually characterised in the post-Cartesian Western tradition: rational thought, along with all other psychic phenomena is considered as matter. Pure consciousness, distinct from subtle and gross matter-consciousness is the transcendental spirit that seers seek to realise. As Feuerstein puts it, "The

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⁵² It should be noted that in their conceptualisation (in the Hindu Sāṃkhya tradition), prakṛti and puruṣa, are not understood to manifest as distinct substances in this world, but rather, that it is prakṛti that manifests the world, but 'it' cannot do so without the 'force' of puruṣa. King, Indian Philosophy 64-65.

⁵³ Irigaray, To Be Two 55.

⁵⁴ Vedanta: Sanskrit 'Veda' (knowledge) + 'end' — "The End." Refers to the final section of Vedic texts the Upanishads. The Vedanta traditions are primarily concerned with the realisation of metaphysical knowledge. Bowker ed., The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions 1019; King, Indian Philosophy 53-54.

⁵⁵ Feuerstein, Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga 281.

⁵⁶ Feuerstein, Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga 264.
Katha–Upanishad (V.3) also refers to the puruṣha as the "dwarf" (vāmana) who dwells in the middle of the body, that is, at the heart.\(^{57}\)

Before moving on from this cursory sketch of Sāṃkhya metaphysics — a precursor to Yogic metaphysics — it is interesting to note with regard to Bergson's theory of Image previously outlined, that the Sāṃkhya tradition also proposed a theory of Image in which perception takes place within the image, the external object (a form in subtle matter). As emphasised by Richard King, this theory — sākāra–vāda — proposes perception (and the modalities of consciousness it utilises: manas and buddhi) as a subtle material object, just like the object it perceives.\(^{58}\)

The Sāṃkhya philosophy also presents the interrelation of matter and consciousness — implicit in the concept of subtle bodies — as emerging through the dynamic relation between puruṣa and prakṛti. Subtle matter is the result of this creative encounter, the result of "puruṣa the pure consciousness becoming besotted by prakṛti" as Richard King describes it.\(^{59}\)

**Subtle Body Scheme: An Originary Map**

George Feuererstein identifies the Taittirīya–Upanishad as containing an understanding of the individual as being comprised of multiple bodies. Composed three thousand years ago, the Taittirīya–Upanishad outlines five bodies or "sheaths."\(^{60}\)

1. **Annamaya–kośa**

   This term refers to the physical body and is understood as the "sheath composed of food."

2. **Prāṇamaya–kośa**

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\(^{58}\) King, *Indian Philosophy* 186-187.

\(^{59}\) King, *Indian Philosophy* 187

This sheath is understood as being comprised of the energy that supports the physical body. It is conceived as the link between the physical body and the mind (manas).

3. Manomaya-kośa
The "sheath composed of mind" refers to what are considered "lower" mental functions: the perception of sensory input. Often aligned with desire, this "sheath" is understood to facilitate a rhythmic movement of externalisation and internalization. That is, consciousness turned towards the world, and consciousness turned inward into the realm of imagination.

4. Vijñana-maya-kośa
This body references the mind in its "higher" function: discernment. It is the "sheath composed of intelligence," and the higher mind (buddhi) is conceived of as enabling a point of stillness and lucidity as it is not caught in the illusions of the "lower" mind.

5. Ánanda-maya – kośa
This body in some traditions is equated with Ātman, or the transcendental Self. The "sheath composed of bliss," references the ultimate realisation of Self.

All these bodies are understood to be composed of subtle matter-consciousness in varying degrees and, although the number of bodies and their relation to one another vary greatly within the diversity of Hindu traditions, generally their underlying constituent is understood as energy or prāṇa.

Prāṇa literally means "breathing forth," and is used to signify universal life force. Feuerstein draws a correlation between it and pneuma, noting a correlation of both terms with spirit. Like subtle bodies, it is conceptualised in many ways by divergent Hindu traditions, different types of prāṇa are associated with different functions and locations within the physical body. For example the Yoga–Yājnavalkya places it at the centre of the abdomen (a similar location to the Japanese "Hara" centre) and attributes to it the function of "separating water, solid food, and the 'essence.'" Although associated with different organs and channels of the physical and subtle body, prāṇa is, at its most fundamental level understood to

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be a "vibratory power" foundational to all manifest reality.\(^{62}\) It is very closely allied to consciousness and, considering its role as an animating principle parallels could be drawn between the concept of prāṇa and élan vital: Bergson's term for animating spirit.\(^{63}\)

Prāṇa although considered the fundamental constituent of gross and subtle bodies, is also understood to move through the bodies in concentrated form via nāḍī (channels) and to form intense centres (formed by the crossing of many channels) called chakras or cakras (wheels) [fig.2].\(^{64}\) Once again, different traditions configure different numbers of chakras. Yoga and Tantric\(^{65}\) schools identify seven centres (as do Western Theosophical Schemes and the majority of "New Age" versions). Because of the centrality of the "lived body" and emphasis on praxis in these two traditions and the affinity this accords with Irigaray's work, it is the seven-chakra model that has been selected to exemplify subtle anatomy below.

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\(^{62}\) Feuerstein, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga* 266.

\(^{63}\) Introduced by Bergson in *Creative Evolution* [1907], élan vital refers to an animating life force, or process of spirit.

\(^{64}\) There is an enormous amount of literature explicating Indian and Buddhist Chakra systems. The New Age has been central to the dissemination of the anatomical scheme in the West, presenting various adaptations of the Hindu scheme outlined above. The Western presentations often emphasise psychology for example texts by Judith Anodea, *Eastern Body Western Mind: Psychology and the Chakra System as Path to Self* (Berkeley: Celestial Arts, 1997) and *Wheels of Life: A User's Guide to the Chakra System* (Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1999). The classic texts on the subtle body in twentieth century Theosophy (in the tradition of Esoteric philosophy) were authored by Charles W. Leadbeater and include *The Chakras* (Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1973).

\(^{65}\) Yoga: Sanskrit for "yolking" or "joining" it refers to a discipline of achieving 'liberation' through dhyāna (meditation), āsana (postures), prāṇyāma (breath control), pratyāhāra (sense withdrawal), dārāna (concentration), tarka (contemplative inquiry) samādhi (absorption) and yama (discipline). Different schools of Yoga utilise differing combinations of these activities. The *Bhagavad-gītā* outlines three types of Ŷoga: Karma Yoga — "the performance of action without attachment to its result"; Jhāna Yoga — "knowledge of God; and Bhakti Yoga — "devotion to God." Hatha Yoga, very popular in the west, was originally part of Patanjali's Rāja Yoga, or 'Royal Yoga' and is used primarily for physical health. Various schools do sometimes include aspects of Tantric Kundalini Yoga. See Bowker ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* 415; 1058-1059.

Tantra is Sanskrit for "warp on a loom" and "extension" refers to texts (also called Tantras) in which a dialogue between Siva and the Goddess (Devi) takes place. The earliest is thought to have been generated 400-700 CE. Tantrism sits uncomfortably in relation to orthodox Vedic traditions, but none the less is an important Hindu religion. It is especially noted for its emphasis on the cosmic divine feminine principle and the centrality of the physical body as providing a means and method of achieving liberation. Tantrism practices include Kundalini Yoga which emphasis practices involving sound (mantra), vision (yantra and mandala), deities (devatā) and sexual intercourse (maithuna). See Bowker ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* 948-949 and 1059; Feuerstein, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga* 363-365; David G. White, *The Alchemical Body* 1-2.
Symbolised by lotus flowers, each *chakra* is ascribed a particular number of petals that are understood to unfurl and open as the subject themselves opens to an interconnection with Self (or spirit) and acquires increased perceptive abilities [fig.3]. With this unfurling comes access to different modalities of perception resulting in different conceptualisations of the interrelation between self, Self and Other. These themes are explored more fully in subsequent chapters. Numerous correspondences are attributed to each *chakra* in any given tradition, from deity to colour, and it is impossible herein to undertake a cohesive representation of the enormous array of associations. The brief outline below represents a sample of *chakra* symbolism and correspondences most consistently found across diverse traditions.

7. *Sahasrāra*-cakra

The "thousand-spoked wheel" is located at the top of the head. It is depicted as a bell-shaped, thousand petaled-lotus and is related to the state of bliss; unlike other *chakras* no sound or element is attributed direct correspondence. It is however, understood to carry all sounds of the Sanskrit alphabet, as they are understood to be inscribed on the petals: fifty letters on each of the twenty layers of petals forming the bell shape. This *chakra* is attributed responsibility for the 'higher" mental powers like discernment (*buddhi*); if utilised it leads to illumination and mystical experience.66

6. *Ājña*-cakra

Often referred to as the "third eye," the *Ājña*-cakra or "command wheel" is located in the middle of the head, above the bridge of the nose. Depicted as a two-petaled lotus, the petals symbolically refer to a series of dualism: shiva/shakti: yes/no, etc. It is particularly related with *manas*, or "lower mind" that is understood to deal most specifically with such dualisms. Om is its corresponding sound, and it is generally not attributed a corresponding element. Its function is understood as enabling telepathic communication and clairvoyance.67


5. Viśuddha–cakra
The throat cakra or "pure wheel" is located at the throat and is symbolised by a sixteen-petaled lotus. Associated with communication and creativity, it is also understood to generate balance, both metabolic and in terms of breath (intake and expiration) and sound/silence. Its sound or "seed syllable is ham and Ether" (understood as the "source" of all material elements) is its corresponding element. Contemplation of this cakra is understood to result in intuitive comprehension of the Vedas.

4. Anāhata–cakra
Known as the heart lotus, the "wheel of the unstruck [sound]" is located in the centre of the chest. It is considered the seat of the divine (or consciousness) within the body. Understood to have twelve petals, this cakra is associated with the qualities of compassion and love. Corresponding with the sound om and the wind element, it is of central significance within the cakra network and its unfolding is understood to harmoniously activate the unfolding of all other chakras. Meditating on this cakra is thought to enable clairaudience and clairvoyance.

3. Maṇipūra–cakra
"Wheel of the jewelled city," the ten-petaled Manipūra-cakra is located in the solar plexus region between thoracic and lumbar vertebra. It is understood to govern willpower and it corresponds to the sound ram and the element of fire. Contemplation of this cakra is thought to develop powers that can create and destroy elemental materials.

2. Svādhiṣṭāna–cakra

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68 David Gordon White notes that in the Sāmkhya and various Tantric traditions, Ether is identified with vyoma, the sexual fluids or essence of the Goddess. David G. White, The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 211.

69 Feuerstein, Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga 396-397; Feuerstein, Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy 154-155; Ozanic, Chakras 88-89.

70 Feuerstein, Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga 22; Feuerstein, Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy 155-56; Ozanic, Chakras 80-82.

71 Feuerstein, Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga 210-211; Feuerstein, Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy 156-157; Ozanic, Chakras 72-74.
The sacral *chakra, Svādhīśthāna* or "own-base centre" is located near the genitals. Each of its lotus' six petals is associated with lower ego desires — lust (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*), greed (*lobha*), delusion (*moha*), pride (*mada*) and envy (*ahamkāra*). It is understood as the centre of creativity, procreation and pleasure, and has an elemental association with water. It corresponds to the sound vam.\(^72\)

1. *Mūlādhāra–cakra*
The base or "root" *chakra*, it is conceived as located in subtle matter at the perineum, the base of the spine. Four petals constitute its lotus, each petal symbolising a direction (north, south, east west). It is understood as essential for stability and balance, and has elemental associations with earth. It corresponds to the sound lam.\(^73\)

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Figure 2: "The Seven Major Spinal Chakras" and "Energy Flow Through a Chakra."
Figure 3: "Subtle Body Chakras."
Idā, Piṅgalā, Suṣumnā and Kuṇḍalinī.

Although the chakras are understood to interrelate with one another via many nādi (the number of nādi attributed to an individuals subtle body is generally 72,000: once again this number can vary depending upon the tradition) of these pathways/currents three vertical channels have a central significance, and are considered prāna's super highway. The Suṣumnā (most gracious channel) begins at the base chakra and rises through all the other chakras, following the line of the spinal column until reaching the seventh Sahasrāra–cakra. Weaving across the Suṣumnā is the Idā and Piṅgalā. Idā is associated with the moon, whilst the Piṅgalā forms its counterpart and is associated with the sun. The Idā rises from the left-side of the base chakra and the Piṅgalā from the right. All three are understood to meet at the Ājña–cakra where they weave together into a single current of energy generating bliss and liberation. The crossing pathway up the spine is reminiscent of the Caduceus of Hermes-Mercury: two serpents crossing a central sword or staff. Indeed the Suṣumnā is understood as the channel for Kuṇḍalinī — "serpent power" — a form of shakti energy (or the divine feminine energy) it is the task of the Tantra and Haṭha Yoga adept to raise this force from the Mūlādhāra–cakra, where it dwells, coiled until activated, to the Sahasrāra–cakra, where it is united with the divine masculine Shiva. Thus the masculine–feminine "polarity within the body is united."

Indeed, the final aim of the yogin, like that of any tantric practitioner, is twofold. On the one hand, he [sic] strives toward liberation (moksa, mukti) from conditioned mortal experience; at the same time,

76 Ozanic, *Chakras* 17-21.
77 The Caduceus is understood as the messenger's staff — mediators moving between heaven and earth along an axis mundi symbolised by its central staff — but is also associated with medicine — the two serpents representing healing and poison, the hermetic and the homeopathic. Centrally it represents the dynamic synthesis of opposites and the role of the mediator between divine and mortal worlds. It is most directly associated with the Greek Hermes (Roman Mercury), but has also been attributed to the Egyptian God Anubis and Phoenician Baal. See J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978) 28.
however, he [sic] also seeks to realise for himself the enjoyment (bhoga, bhukti) that the absolute Siva, knows in his very being.\textsuperscript{81}

The awakening and cultivation of \textit{Kuṇḍalinī} is considered a highly dangerous practice, which without expert guidance (the role of an accomplished Siddha)\textsuperscript{82} could result in psycho-physical trauma.\textsuperscript{83} In \textit{Kuṇḍalinī} Yoga, the activation of \textit{Kuṇḍalinī} energy is achieved by emptying \textit{prāna} from the \textit{Ｉdā} and \textit{Piṅgalā} into the \textit{Suṣumnā} channel. The development of \textit{Kuṇḍalinī} is understood to involve the dissolution of elements as it forges a path through successive \textit{chakras} enacting an alchemical transformation within the body (microcosm).

In hatha yoga, the raising of the yogin's energy, figured as the female kundalini serpent, through the system of the cakras, also effects a resorption of gross into subtler elements. Thus, when the kundalini rises from the muladhara cakra (located at the level of the perineum and identified with earth) to the svadhisthana (located at the level of the sexual organs and identified with water), the element earth becomes resorbed into and encompassed by the element water.\textsuperscript{84}

The perceived role and function of the \textit{chakras}, \textit{Ｉdā}, \textit{Piṅgalā}, \textit{Suṣumnā} and other \textit{nāḍīs} are much more complex than what has been rendered in this brief map. This outline has been given not only as a general guide to conceptions of the subtle body, but to foreground that these multiple and coextensive bodies share and are constitutive of a fluid framework, a network of energy conduits that are understood to be intimately interrelated with the physical or "gross" body and with the wider environment. This sketch also aims at highlighting the interrelationship between the cultivation of perception and the body, and the Hindu traditions primarily referred to — Yoga and Tantrism — both consider the body itself, not as an impediment to be 'got over' or cast aside in order to achieve liberation, but as a microcosm of the macrocosm, and as such implicitly interrelated with the Divine, the body itself conceived as containing or being a pathway to enlightenment.

\textsuperscript{81} White, \textit{The Alchemical Body} 220.

\textsuperscript{82} Siddhas refers to Yogic and Tantric adepts who have achieved mastery or 'liberation' through the cultivation of their \textit{prāna}: such attainment includes the development of paranormal powers. David G. White notes in his book on the Medieval Siddha tradition that the thirteenth-century commentator Jayaratha "identifies the term with pindasthairya, 'stability of the body.'" See Feuerstein, \textit{Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga} 344-346; White, \textit{The Alchemical Body} 137.


\textsuperscript{84} White, \textit{The Alchemical Body} 208.
The Subtle Support of Irigaray's Two

Returning now to the considerations of Irigaray's dual subjectivity in light of Subtle body schemas, it can be recognised that her project (bearing a phenomenological heritage) is one which firmly places subjectivity in the lived body and, further, that such embodied subjects are gendered subjects. Secondly, the influence of Yoga (both theory and practice) has resulted in this embodiment being considered in *To Be Two* as energy: "Each, faithful to him or herself, would bring to the other his or her own energy and his or her manner of cultivating it." 

This energy of which Irigaray speaks is analogous to the "irreducible invisible," that part of the subject that she designates as not being able to be perceived by the five senses. It is through the cultivation of this energy — which in some Hindu traditions is undertaken through various types of yoga, that may include breathing techniques, meditation practice and physical activities, all understood to bring to conscious awareness one's subtle matter–consciousness — that one can develop an awareness of one's own subtle bodies and an apprehension of the dynamics of another subject's subtle bodies: "the other, because he is not mine, remains mobile in me, an energy tied to him but free between us: an energy linked by an inclination and by a 'not.'" 

In Irigaray's relations of dual subjectivity, the subject's energies interpenetrate one another. The energies are understood to interrelate in relations of radical proximity, and therefore, an inherent respect for difference is also a feature of the relation — hence Irigaray's "not" — the other, even as an intersubjective, energetic relation remains unknowable as a totality. This form of interrelation could also be understood as the interaction of subtle bodies, of subtle subjects, especially considering the extensive nature of embodiment the concept proposes, and the links implicit — as exemplified in the discussion of the different *chakras* — to different types of conscious apprehension and different senses: "I regard you, then, as

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85 "Even today, in the teachings of yoga, for example, one deals more with a cultivation of energy than with a transmission of theoretical knowledge." *To Be Two* 54. Irigaray writes more directly about her Yoga practice in *East Meets West*.

86 Irigaray, *To Be Two* 55.

87 Irigaray, *To Be Two* 52.
invisible, even if you are perceptible to my eyes: I see the diffusion of your interiority beyond your visible forms.\textsuperscript{88}

In the above quote there is a clearer sense of Irigaray attributing an extensive form to the energetic aspects of subjectivity that she is discussing. To enter into respectful relations with the Other then requires acknowledging the 'presence' of these extensive energetic aspects without seeing them with the physical eyes. The borders of Irigaray's 'bodies' that were fluid, overflowing in \textit{Elemental Passions},\textsuperscript{89} in \textit{To Be Two} still retain their mobility, albeit that it is presented as imperceptible, and it will be the task of perceptual cultivation to render these constituents of subjectivity knowable: "there exists in the other a subjectivity which I cannot see, either with my senses or with my intellect."\textsuperscript{90}

In the process of considering dual subjectivity and sexual difference, it seems at this point necessary to take a step back, and to consider the ontologising of difference upon which such a proposal rests. For this to take shape, this chapter now returns to Bergson's fluid ontology of \textit{dureé} and its development by Gilles Deleuze.

\textbf{Difference, Ontology and Multiplicity: Deleuze on \textit{Durée}}

Bergson's thesis could be expressed in this way: real time is alteration, and alteration is substance. Difference of nature is thus no longer between things or rather two tendencies, difference of nature is itself a thing, one tendency opposing itself to the other.\textsuperscript{91}

Bergson's largest grievance with the practitioners of philosophy was that they did not correctly identify the object of their study — confusing differences in kind with differences in degree. As presented in \textit{Matter and Memory} and taken further by Deleuze in \textit{Bergsonism}, the ability to identify the object of study in its 'essence,' clearly comprehending what it is and what it is not, is central to the success of philosophical discourse. For Bergson and Deleuze the method required to enact

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{88} Irigaray, \textit{To Be Two} 8.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Irigaray, \textit{To Be Two}. 20.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Deleuze, "Bergson's Conception of Difference" 48.
\end{itemize}
such discrimination correctly is intuition. Deleuze deemed Bergsonian intuition to be "one of the most fully developed methods in philosophy."  

However, difference, as read by Deleuze, is not only employed in Bergson's philosophy as an aspect of discrimination between degrees and kinds, but is ontological, implicit in the idea that *durée* is difference — or more precisely (in Deleuze's nomenclature), the movement from the Whole/Virtual (*durée*) to the real (matter–consciousness), the process of actualisation is differenciation: "In short, duration is what differs, and what differs is no longer what differs from something else, but what differs from itself. What differs has become itself a thing, a substance."  

In this way difference is not only what articulates 'things' but it also can be conceived of as a 'something,' that it has a nature, finally that it will deliver Being to us." That is, that difference has an ontological substantiality, it is not only a "not this" relation premised on identity, it has its own internal relation of differentiation.  

Deleuze delineates three 'acts of difference:' differenciation, to represent the process of actualising the virtual; differentiation to represent difference bounded by, or operating within, an "idea-structure" and together both these acts are seen as movements of the process of "different/ciation" as explained by Boundas: "Different/ciation refers to the complex relations between problems and solutions, questions and answers, virtual idea-structures and their actualisation."  

Durée as inherently fluid, is always different to itself: its fundamental nature is that of continual difference. Rather than perceiving *durée* as a bounded, complete 'whole,' Deleuze emphasises its dynamic nature, as an open whole, ever creating new

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92 Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 13. As a method, Deleuze posits that intuition enables clear distinctions to be made between differences in kind and differences in degree. In this context therefore intuition does not refer to instantaneous revelation, but rather to a certain type of discrimination that enables perceiving *durée*, a particular mode of viewing the 'object' and its relation to the 'self.'

93 Deleuze, "Bergson's Conception of Difference" 48.

94 Deleuze, "Bergson's Conception of Difference" 42.

95 Boundas, "Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual" 91.
forms. This act of continual difference and its movement of actuality — differenciation — is presented as a generating, creative force.

In the case of life, Deleuze-Bergson chooses to call the dynamic springs of differenciation an 'élan vital.' Élan Vital is not an occult power, but rather the name of the force(s) at work each time that a virtuality is being actualized, a simplicity differenciated, and a totality divided up. Élan Vital is difference passing into action.96

Bergson's élan vital is an animating spirit (and Bergson's oeuvre can be read as seeking to elucidate the proposed inherent relationship between matter and spirit) whilst, as Boundas has identified, Deleuze does not employ the term "spirit" when discussing élan vital but, rather, refers to "the world as a 'living animal.'"97 To momentarily shift across philosophical traditions, this evocation seems similar to a defining tenet of Esotericism: "Living Nature," delineated by Antione Faivre as "the idea of a Nature seen, known and experienced as essentially alive in all its parts…."98 Both Bergson's élan vital and the Esoteric "Living Nature" can be read as attributing a volitional, ontological force — a vitalism — to the world's phenomena.

Difference therefore is not only a spatial or linear time–based phenomena, "not exterior or superior to the thing" but is "internal" to things in themselves. This is the conception of difference that Deleuze terms "internal difference."99

By presenting difference as an ontology, Deleuze argues that Bergson identified the debate between the one and the multiple as a false problem, a problem that is overcome by conceiving of durée as a type of multiplicity. Deleuze argues that one of the "least appreciated aspects" of Bergson's philosophy is the delineation and presentation of a "logic of multiplicities."100 The relations that characterise multiplicity can be considered as analogous to Irigaray's Levinasian inspired relations of "radical proximity" as figured in the proposition of dual-subjects, in

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96 Boundas, "Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual" 91.
97 Boundas, "Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual" 95.
99 Deleuze, "Bergson's Conception of Difference" 43; Deleuze, Bergsonism 38-39; 43-44.
100 Deleuze, Bergsonism 117.
which difference not only separates subjects but is simultaneously co-constitutive of them in a relation where their radical alterity — their ontological singularity — is not erased.

Deleuze and Bergson identify two types of multiplicity: one actual, discrete, spatial; the other continuous, temporal, virtual.

What defines them essentially is this: discrete multiplicities are extended magnitudes whose nature changes each time they are divided, whereas continuous multiplicities are intensive magnitudes whose nature changes each time they are divided. ¹⁰¹

It is the continuous multiplicity that is correlated with *durée*. In a sense, one can read multiplicity as a noun representing the continual action of *durée* as essentially a self-differentiating nature (substance): "It seems to us that Duration essentially defines a virtual multiplicity (what differs in nature)." ¹⁰²

Therefore in presenting *durée* as an ontology, difference is a central constituent of becoming, it is the essence/substance of *durée*, and out of this arises the delineation of multiplicity as the generative nature of *durée*.

Duration is a kind of succession which implicates, in a latent form, past, present and future. Segments of duration implicate each other, each one of them is present in all others and all of them in each one. Duration is succession, but a succession which is *sui generis*. Succession and coexistence must both be asserted of it. ¹⁰³

Similarly, the ontologising of difference is central to Irigaray's project, requisite for her presentation of sexual difference as radical difference. It is fundamental to the conceptualisation of dual subjectivity (however dynamic and interrelated those subjects are considered) and inherently evoked in her critique of the singular subject of ontology.

Pluralities of becoming can be considered as comprising an individual, if that individual is considered to be comprised of multiplicities of subtle bodies, differing sheaths of matter–consciousness. This individual would be inherently open and

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¹⁰¹ Boundas, "Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual" 83.

¹⁰² Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 112.

¹⁰³ Boundas, "Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual" 93.
extensive, each becoming identifiable not by form or boundary, but by force, intensity, velocity.

**Summary**

How are the two people facing each other across Abramovic's *Wounded Geode* relating? What constitutes the temporal dynamic being articulated? How does one perceive and express this dynamic? What resistances, differences, boundaries are operable between (and within) each? How can their subjectivity be figured? How do the 'non-living' elements of the installation affect/effect their subtle dialogue? These questions are to remain open, left to resonate throughout the body of this thesis.

The scope of this chapter has been inevitably broad, as the style of intersubjectivity that is being explored and the concept of subtle bodies which underlies it, necessarily requires a transdisciplinary and cross-cultural investigation as it results from a long process of conceptual cross-fertilisation. It is not enough to enter into discussion of Irigaray's dual subjectivity and Subtle body schemas without thinking about the model of matter–consciousness, process ontology and the ontologising of difference that can be recognised as informing it. It is this material that the discussions of Bergson and Deleuze aimed to convey and open out.

A shared feature of the dialogue between the various theories and concepts presented is the centrality of the experience of the lived body as intimately involved in the cultivation of self, and relations with Others (including the Divine).

The next chapter turns more fully to face Irigaray's position vis-à-vis sexual difference and the central role of force and intensity in the particular style of Subtle Bodies discussed. The question of a subtle subject's agency will be opened through the consideration of desire as both an ontological and ethical constituent of this movement towards/between self and Other.
Section I

Subjectivity
Chapter Two: Difference

Our body itself carries those measures which lead to a respect for each person and for the relationship between.

Before turning to examine the onto-ethical role of desire within a subtle body model of intersubjectivity, it is necessary to traverse a wide terrain. Firstly, Irigaray's position vis-à-vis sexual difference as universal difference needs articulation and consideration with relation to the work of Bergson, Deleuze and Derrida on difference. The presentation herein aims to outline the general scope and influence of the arguments and positions. The debate between an ontological difference with an assumed neutral subject and the dual subjectivity of sexual difference cannot simply be ignored, even though, as noted by Elizabeth Grosz, it is undecidable. This chapter will 'trace' a consideration of this issue, focused on difference's ontological role in the relations between subjects. The processural activity of difference will be highlighted as centrally significant in the consideration of this "undecidable" conundrum.

In addition, this emphasis on the between of subjects acknowledges that the divergent models of ontology proposed privilege different modes of knowledge and perception. As such, alterity must also be understood to be implicitly bound to considerations of aesthetics and ethics. The focus therefore, is not only on how to conceive an individual subjectivity, and what ontological status to ascribe to it, but it is also to acknowledge that the ontological ascription generates the bounds of a subject's comprehension and perception of their relations to 'objects' and 'others.'

Sexual Difference

As I have already mentioned, the difference is there. It does not have to be created from nothing. We need merely to be attentive to what already exists: an insuperable silence between man and woman, subjects who are irreducible to each other.

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1 Irigaray, To Be Two 90.


3 Irigaray, To Be Two 65.
Irigaray's dual subjectivity is founded upon the view that sexual difference is radical difference. That the body not only 'marks' this difference, but that it also carries within it the 'measures' required for creating respectful relations between I–Other.\(^4\)

She attributes to each sexed being a unique becoming that, in respectful relationships, is negotiated in relation with the Other. It would be the relation — that she posits takes place in the 'between' of the two subjects — that is understood to enable such ethical relations to develop. This between — as an 'angelic' realm — is the focus of later chapters (a more radical perspective would be to consider it as constitutive of them): suffice to note here, it is both that which is understood to radically separate the masculine and feminine subjects whilst also enabling their congress. In an *Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Irigaray argues strongly that the acknowledgement of ontological sexual difference necessarily requires a radical refiguring of all subjective relations.

A revolution in thought and ethics is needed if the work of sexual difference is to take place. We need to reinterpret everything concerning the relations between the subject and discourse, the subject and the world, the subject and the cosmic, the microcosmic and the macrocosmic.\(^5\)

The type of relations Irigaray is moving towards articulating in this refiguring, resonate with conceptions found in Western Esoteric philosophy (especially *mundus imaginalus*, the subject of chapter four), a tradition that embraces methodologies of self-cultivation and proposes the interrelation of immanence and transcendence, micro- and macrocosms. However, Irigaray does not acknowledge the Western Esoteric religious and philosophical tradition.\(^6\) As previously noted, she does acknowledge Eastern philosophy and religion as pre-eminently embodying these types of relations (most specifically articulated in *Between East and West*). In specific reference to sexual difference as radical difference, Irigaray is centrally concerned with, and praising of, an ontological gendered dualism. This is a core feature of Hindu metaphysics and cosmology (as discussed in chapter one): that is, 'reality' is created by the interrelationship of the two principles of *puruṣa* and

\(^4\) Irigaray, *To Be Two* 90.

\(^5\) Irigaray, "Sexual Difference" 61.

\(^6\) A similar blindness to the cultivation of breath in Western mystic traditions is also evident in *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*. 
prakrti. Irigaray incorporates this universal (metaphysical) understanding of sexual difference into her work.

In our age especially, each person must learn to be faithful to him/herself in the acknowledgement and love of the other, the others. Sexual difference, a universal difference, can serve as a base for this learning experience.7

Presenting the conviction of sexual difference as a universal difference, and the totalising that this implies, carries with it the potential charge of essentialism — the attribution of certain characteristics as essentially and implicitly feminine or masculine — a debate that has shadowed Irigaray's work for some time. Representing all the arguments proposed by feminist theorists on this issue is outside the scope of this work, but in considering the validity of the charges, two perspectives seem of relevance in this context, as they specifically address the question from the perspective of the ontological relations between the metaphysical and the 'physical' (or real).

Firstly, Elizabeth Grosz has tendered the argument that Irigaray's presentation of the body relies on her reading of it as a morphology, a term she considers to have been mistakenly equated by some feminist theorists (most notably Toril Moi) with anatomy. Grosz seeks to highlight that the term is used by Irigaray in an effort to render a concept of the body as pure or natural as "meaningless" and to highlight corporeality as "structured, inscribed, constituted and given meaning socially and historically."8 Morphology in Grosz's reading is a "psycho-social and signifactory concept:" in other words, it is not purely physical anatomy but also its ascribed representation, meaning and value.9 She notes: "Bodies are not conceived by Irigaray as biologically or anatomically given, inert, brute objects, fixed by nature once and for all."10

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9 Grosz, Sexual Subversions xix-xx.
10 Grosz, Sexual Subversions 112.
There is a sense of activity underlying the terminology that is central to considering
Irigaray's presentation of bodies and subjects. The emphasis is on becoming,
process, and relations with 'other' forces. The physical body is not being presented
as a fixed, knowable essence (or being constitutive of one) but rather the act of
interrelation is being identified as the meaning-making, subject-making movement.
Further, the systems of 'encoding' are considered as internalised, problematising the
making of distinctions between what is essentially 'biological' and what is social or
constructed from the 'outside.' This perspective is articulated by Grosz in the
following:

In a rather more complex fashion, systems of language and representation must be internalised, taken
on as one's own, in order that speech and language are possible, and that the subject's perceptions and
experiences acquire meaning and thus value within its terms. The body is organised and structured as
unified, cohesive, controllable through psychical development and its specularisable or representable
only through the acquisition of signification.

There is, in short, a parallelism, an isomorphism between patriarchal power relations, the structure of
the dominant or socially recognised discourses, and the socially produced phallic male body. This
isomorphism is not the result of a male conspiracy. It is not based on men's psychological need to
dominate, nor is it an effect of a 'natural' impulse (whether genetic, hormonal or physiological). ... It
is not the anatomy of the male body which seeks its own image in dominant discourses. Rather, the
preexistence of patriarchal social relations relies on the production of a specific form of male
sexuality through internalisation of images representations and signifying practices. 11

Grosz's discussion highlights the implicit interrelations between representation,
physiology, and expression, that elides a neat division between what can be ascribed
to being internal or external to the subject as well as what can be understood as
generated by it or as acting upon it. Specifically, she notes that the dominance of
patriarchal value systems and discourses is not caused by some implicit biological
determinism, it is not "the anatomy of the body," but rather patriarchal relations are
produced and maintained by a more complex interrelation between "internalised"
images, relations and discourses. Similarly, in an essay that posits sexual difference
as inhabiting both the worlds of gender theory and psychoanalysis, Emily Zahkin
argues that sexual difference cannot be attributed "to either side of the sex/gender
debate." The consequences of such a figuring is that it can be attributed neither as a
consideration of biology nor of social-historical construction.

Sexual difference, therefore cannot be assimilated to either side of the sex/gender dichotomy. It
cannot be assimilated to sex, because this has been understood in strictly biological or natural terms
.... It cannot be assimilated to gender, because this has been understood in strictly cultural or
conventional terms .... Moreover, this claim about sexual difference, that it is neither sex nor gender,

11 Grosz, Sexual Subversions 111-112.
neither nature nor culture, is a claim that it is inclusive of both body and psyche, which are in fact not opposed. The concept of sexual difference undoes the dualism between body and mind. Sexual difference refers to the relation a subject has to the signifier, a relationship which transverses body and psyche which indeed is *psycho-somatic.*

Like the subtle body model of subjectivity, Zahkin's conception of sexual difference interrupts any position that attributes a clear distinction between body and mind (although her "neither sex nor gender, neither nature nor culture" could be more usefully considered from a "both and" perspective rather than "neither nor"). What her perspective accommodates, without clearly stating it, is the inherent ontological implications of the concept of sexual difference. It is this point that Tina Chanter argues is primary to Irigaray's project in *Ethics of Eros.* Specifically, Chanter reads the essentialist critiques as not taking due account of the philosophical nature of Irigaray's project. Chanter argues that her work is to be read specifically in relationship to/with the canon of Western philosophy. She maintains that Irigaray's concept of the body results from phenomenological considerations of a Heideggerian 'lived body,' and that her modality of questioning is greatly influenced by Heidegger's quest to think the difference between Being and being. Irigaray's project incorporates the lived experience of sexuate bodies into the consideration of 'the' ontological difference. Leading from this analysis, the being-in-the-world is an embodied and specifically sexed being: "we must ask the question of the other as touched and touching. And of an other whose body's ontological status would differ from my own."

Elizabeth Grosz makes a similar point stating that Irigaray's project is directed by emphasis on the 'lived body' a body inherently interrelated with the 'social body.'

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14 Chanter, *Ethics of Eros* 9; 130.

15 Chanter 129.


17 Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* 111.
Feminist critiques of the phenomenological concept of the lived body have highlighted the assumed masculine subjectivity that the concept presupposes, and this critique has been extended to Irigaray's use of the term. Dorothea E. Olkowski addresses these criticisms by arguing that Irigaray's ontology is entirely distinct from a phenomenological model, because it proposes that an interval exists 'between' subjects, this is the space between which she proposes is essential for the cultivation of ethical relations. Whilst as clearly articulated by Merleau-Ponty, for example, no such interval space for 'relation' exists in his phenomenological model.

Like the natural man, [sic] we situate ourselves in ourselves and in the things, in ourselves and in the other, at the point where, by a sort of chiasm, we become the others and we become world.

Olkowski cites Bergson's rendering of the interval as informing Irigaray's position. On the count of the centrality of the interval or between in Irigaray's ontology she is most certainly correct: it does not support the type of ontological continuum as exemplified in the above quotation. Olkowski is focusing on the interval space as that which calls into question all "traditional metaphysical relations" stating that Merleau-Ponty's positioning of the subject continues to carry the assumptions of Western metaphysical discourse vis-à-vis masculine subjectivity and its correlation with time; feminine subjectivity and its correlation with space. Her reference to Bergson is employed to highlight the conception of the interval as a creative space, able to generate the 'new.'

On Bergson's account the interval is the moment between two movements: one, a stimulus received affectively via the sensory-motor perception, and two, a movement executed in response to the call for action of the stimulus; thus the interval lies between affective excitation and reaction. This sensory-motor moment is the interval at the intersection of matter and memory. ... Thus, the interval is the moment, the gap, the abyss, between affective temporality and active extensionality, between time and space.

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19 The figuration of the between with regard to Irigaray's dual subjects and the radically intersubjective subtle bodies will be addressed in chapter four.


21 Olkowski, "The End of Phenomenology: Bergson's Interval in Irigaray" 82

22 Olkowski, "The End of Phenomenology: Bergson's Interval in Irigaray" 82; 83.
Olkowski does not explicitly acknowledge that it is the body which forms (is) the interval in her discussion. The role of the body in Bergson's schema, what he terms a "special image — the body," is that which receives and responds to Images (matter–consciousness).

My body, then, acts like an image which reflects others, and which in so doing, analyzes them along lines corresponding to the different actions which it can exercise upon them. ... The diverse perceptions of the same object, given by my different senses, will not, then, when put together, reconstruct the complete image of the object; they will remain separated from each other by intervals which measure, so to speak, the gaps in my needs. It is to fill these intervals that an education of the senses is necessary. The aim of this education is to harmonize my senses with each other, to restore between their data a continuity which has been broken by the discontinuity of the needs of my body, in short, to reconstruct, as nearly as may be, the whole of the material object.23

The interval between the two lines of becoming that Olkowski identifies is akin to two modalities of perception, one which creates distinctions between subjects and objects, and the other, intuitive perception, which apprehends the whole (movement of durée) and thus apprehends the subtle interrelationship between subject and objects. Similarly, this perceptive dualism is also ascribed to the two different modes of memory (as identified by Bergson) — habit memory and pure memory. The first enacts repetitive patterns, the second however, although not understood to be consciously known (it exists theoretically), allows, when intermixed with perception, the passage of the past into the present.24 It is this movement which Olkowski identifies as the creative interval, as exemplified in the quote below (which also sets out her dual lines of becoming).

There is a becoming that orientates itself toward what is called the outside, towards matter, perception, and objects, thus toward the spatialized representation and the actualisation of social space, which is shared. Additionally, there is a becoming that orients itself in accordance with memory, recollection, and the subject that is, in accordance with affectivity in its connectedness to the world. ... Each recollection is actualised, according to Bergson, not as the past of its own present, but as freedom. As a new present, a moment of creation, and this takes place precisely in the interval. Thus, the interval is the moment, the gap, the abyss, between affective temporality and active extensionality, between time and space.25

In ascribing these separate lines of becoming (correlative to different perceptive modalities/modes of vision) Olkowski overlooks the fact that the movements are understood by Bergson to only exist as pure states in a virtual form, and as such...
their actualisation requires that they form relations of degree. Further, at their fundamental level, they are understood to be ontologically similar and co-constitutive (being generative of/from durée). Thus the positing of an absolute interval between time and space (matter), between reception and response (as in above quotes) is similarly problematised. This is to replace ourselves in pure duration, of which the flow is continuous and in which we pass insensibly from one state to another: a continuity which is really lived, but artificially decomposed for the greater convenience of customary knowledge.  

For Bergson, as discussed in the previous chapter, matter is a form of time (as pure repetition of the instant), and the instant is considered part of durée (albeit without 'memory') as it is understood to be in the process of becoming the durée kind of time and is therefore constitutive of it. Like memory, there are constructed two different 'types' of time, which at a certain level are one and the same (only distinct in their virtual forms). At the heart of the Bergsonian system is a continuum — which is constituted by heterogeneous and dynamic difference, durée — which renders the positioning of any decisive interval difficult to maintain; rather, as will be discussed later, it is the operation of difference which is generative and creative, which constitutes the interval. Bergson is concerned with apprehending the 'insensible gradations' which he posits exist between things, the creative and constitutive movement of durée.

Irigaray, is concerned with positing an absolute ontological difference that separates subjects, an interval which can be traversed via the cultivation of perception which enables relation to alterity. Both Bergson and Irigaray advocate the cultivation or education of perceptive modalities to enter into relations with the interval or between space. However, for Bergson, such practices result in apprehension of a shared fluid, singular ontology (although Deleuze will disrupt this singularity); while for Irigaray it is proposed to enable knowledge of self and knowledge of Other, that remains ontologically distinct.

Therefore the two lines of becoming that Olkowski identifies in Bergson's work can be understood as inherently interrelated, rather than signifying an absolute

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26 Bergson, Matter and Memory 186.
ontological fissure. Bergson and Irigaray's intervals are not correlative in an ontological sense.

In contradistinction to phenomenology, as identified by Olkowski, Irigaray's focus on the lived, corporeal body brings to prominence the role of the individual body in knowing difference. She privileges the meaning of sexual differences that underlie feminist discourse, which Chanter argues is much like the Being critiqued by Heidegger as being left unexamined by philosophical thought: sexual difference is the un-thought of feminism: "Sexual difference is what gets passed over but remains an unstated ground of feminism; Being is what is forgotten yet allows beings to appear as they are."28

Read in this way, Irigaray's project is two-fold: firstly to uncover the sexual specific bias (the assumed masculine subjectivity) carried within and constituting Western philosophical discourse with its 'othering' of the feminine in a less-than equation (<), whilst also seeking acknowledgement that this positioning of the feminine enables this dominance: and, secondly, to consider sexual difference from a non-hierarchical perspective.29 In her recent work that focuses on Hindu philosophy/religion she continues to articulate her keen interest in "horizontal" relationships: "This implies passing beyond predominantly genealogical traditions, be they matriarchal or patriarchal, that are today in opposition, toward the constitution of horizontal relations between the sexes."30

This once again reinforces the role that her concept of the 'between' or 'interval' plays in destabilising the types of relations privileged in patriarchal discourse, that emanate from perspectives assuming an ontological singular subject, and privileges the types of relations that are understood to be constitutive of subtle bodies.

27 For a further account of Olkowski's reading of Bergson and Deleuze's reading of Bergson vis-à-vis an ontology of difference see Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999) 89-146.


30 Irigaray, *Between East and West* 15.
Rather than re-enforcing patriarchal concepts of femininity that position it as quintessentially corporeal/ 'nature' contra their 'brain'/ culture, through her presentation of sexual difference as radical difference, Irigaray is seeking to side-step either position's polarities. She seeks to signal a subjectivity outside of the discourse of the Same (the discourse in which the polarities are prescribed). She subscribes to polarities at the level of a generating ontology, but does not seem to carry them into her conceptualisation of the 'lived body' and its articulations in the 'real.' It is true that some of the characteristics she ascribes to the feminine are also attributed to the feminine within the discourse of the Same: for example her focus on fluids and fluid relations as feminine. Has it not been the 'uncontrollable,' fluid emotions understood to elide reason and the perceived inability to bind these emotions that have supported the ascription of the feminine to (a particular rendering of) 'nature'? The assumed boundary-less nature of the feminine has been perceived as both the threat to and 'fascination' (also a potential danger) of the dominant discourse. It is a strange irony that she prescribes an ontological duality in order to undermine a singularity that plays itself out as a series of dualisms. However, it remains that, in seeking a position of sexual difference as radical, ontological difference, Irigaray is implicitly positing that the 'speech,' the 'recognition' and the subjectivity of the feminine has not yet been rendered knowable, and that by its very positioning within this discourse it can't be rendered knowable except via a discontinuous series of filaments, or traces. She is not prescribing limits about how the feminine can be 'identified' or represented, but searching for a 'space' within which such an exploration can take place and for methods and strategies of articulation.

Irigaray is staunch in stating that there is difference between the masculine and feminine, that difference exists. She does not however project upon the difference 'solid,' wholly knowable categories and qualities. On the count of arguing for a feminine specific ontological status Irigaray could be charged as an essentialist — however, it is an essentialism not predicated purely on biology. For Irigaray what is essential to feminine subjectivity is an ontological fluidity and creativity. The feminine is bounded by process, both its own and others. It is necessarily interrelated with the masculine through relation: this conceptualisation of dual subjectivity must therefore also affirm a fluid, creative nature to the masculine subject (although this is not stated by Irigaray). Both are understood to be drawn forth though their mutual interrelation (becoming) to respectful relations.
Derrida and the question of sexual difference

Must one think "difference" "before" sexual difference or taking off "from" it?31

In the above quote Derrida states quite succinctly the heart of the problem that thinking sexual difference as ontological difference carries. What relation does sexual difference have to difference?

It is difficult to open out a discussion of this area without first taking into account the figuration of difference 'in general' and how it has previously been characterised philosophically. However, even in the most broad strokes this is a consideration too large to be rendered herein (let alone the loss of complexity and detail that such a task would involve). There are however, essential concepts and positions that must at least be sketched, as they sit sometimes quietly and sometimes more prominently interior to Irigaray's position. Of central import is Heidegger's figuring of difference and Derrida's position vis-à-vis this conceptualisation: the movement from 'the' ontological difference to différance.

Metaphysics, insofar as it always represents only beings as beings, does not recall Being itself. Philosophy does not gather itself upon its ground. It always leaves its ground — leaves it by means of metaphysics. And yet it never escapes its ground. Insofar as a thinking sets out to experience the ground of metaphysics, insofar as such thinking attempts to recall the truth of Being itself instead of merely representing beings as beings, thinking has in a sense left metaphysics.32

Unconcealment of being, however, is always truth of the being of beings, whether such beings are actual or not. Conversely, in the unconcealment of beings there already lies in each case an unconcealment of their being. Ontic and ontological truth each concern, in different ways beings in their being, and beings of being. They belong essentially together on the grounds of their relation to the distinction between being and beings (ontological difference).33

The ontological difference is what Heidegger delineates as the movement between presencing and present, between Being and beings. The focus of this analysis is centred in the "of." It is the 'of' that signals/constitutes the operative difference,


placed between the terms Being and being, and it is Being and its relation to beings (this movement of difference) that Heidegger delineates as being forgotten by metaphysics.

In the relation of Being and beings figured by Heidegger there is a concern as much for their interrelation (as temporalities) as for their distinction. The 'of,' the ontological difference, is understood to be mutually constitutive of both. In a commentary on Heidegger's presentation of difference, Walter Brogan notes the following:

The expression 'the Being of Beings' indicated that there is a belonging together of Being and beings. Beings emerge from Being and into Being and thus are. Being gives itself to beings. This movement which the of [sic] expresses is called by Heidegger a genesis, a coming forth (Herkunft) of the present from presencing. Further however, this presencing is presented by Heidegger as achieved through the withdrawal of Being from beings, of the presencing from the present. Being's movement towards nothing also makes nothing the possibility of being's presence. Nothing is attributed an ontological status.

Therefore in its withdrawal away from beings, Being is implicit in their present. The operation of Being for Heidegger is one of movement, it gives beings presence by withdrawing itself from them.

It is difficult to think an absolute alterity within Heidegger's system, unless it is as an interiority. As noted by Tina Chanter, dasein — "being there"/human existence is understood to become authentic with the movement from the inauthentic "they-self" (collective) to the authentic (singular). There is not an ontological distinction between the they-self and Dasein, no absolute alterity seems figured (even through


35 Martin Heidegger, What is Metaphysics [1929], trans David Farrell Krell Martin Heidegger Pathways 91.


lack/absence) in horizontal relations. The surpassing of beings by Dasein in the movement towards "That being that it is"\textsuperscript{38} is a transcendence: "transcendence designates the essence of the subject, that it is the fundamental structure of subjectivity.... Rather, to be a subject means to be a being in and as transcendence.\textsuperscript{39}

Considered thus, the withdrawal of Being that enables presencing is at one and the same time 'separate' from beings, but it cannot be an absolute separation as they 'share' a mutually constitutive 'nothing.' An interior alterity.

To put it another way, this means, and could only mean: "The human being holds the place of the nothing." This sentence says that the human being holds free the locale for that which is quite other than beings, so that within this openness something like coming to presence (being) can be given. This nothing, which is not beings and which is nevertheless given \[und das es gleichwohl gibt\] is nothing negative. It belongs to presencing.\textsuperscript{40}

To repeat Derrida's question: How is this foundational ontological difference, the movement/relation of Being and beings, to be thought in relation to sexual difference? And further, can they even be understood to belong to the same order of relations? The questions cannot be thought of as analogous, for in such a scheme one sex, either the masculine or the feminine would need to be rendered in the position of the big 'B' Being, whilst the other, as the little 'b' beings carrying the onto-theological inequality that such a relation implies. There remains in Heidegger's thinking of ontological difference a hierarchical generative relation: one term enables or permits (even by its absence) the presencing of the Other, whilst Irigaray's ontology of sexual difference carries a metaphysical horizontal relation. This difference is reflected in the title of Irigaray's critique of Heidegger \textit{The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger} — air understood to circulate between subjects as opposed to the anchor of Heidegger's ground (upon which the subject stands and which forms the base of a transcendent hierarchy).

Metaphysics always supposes in some manner, a solid crust from which to raise a construction. Thus, a physics that gives privilege to, or at least that would have constituted, the solid plane. Whether philosophers distance themselves from it or whether they modify it, the ground is always there. As long as Heidegger does not leave the "earth" he does not leave metaphysics. The metaphysical is written neither on/in water, nor on/in air, not on/in fire. Its \textit{ek-sistance} is founded on

\textsuperscript{38} Heidegger, "On The Essence of Ground" 108.

\textsuperscript{39} Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground" 108.

\textsuperscript{40} Martin Heidegger, "On the Question of Being" [1955], trans. William McNeill \textit{Martin Heidegger Pathways} 316-317.
Irigaray's analysis and critique of Heidegger's "ground" draws attention to an assumed construction of a metaphysical a priori, a conceptual foundation that albeit often modified is never itself questioned. She questions the static, "solid" nature of this "ground," and asks how metaphysics would be "re-written" if its conceptual foundations are built upon more fluid, ephemeral, proccessural elements: air, water, fire. Her argument contends that considering these other elemental 'foundations' as the 'ground' of metaphysics would bring to light the intersubjective aspects of being.

In considering the relation between 'the' ontological difference and sexual difference as radical difference, further examination is needed of Derrida's re-reading of Heidegger's project, and in particular différance and the trace.

The Trace: Derrida's Différance

Already we have had to delineate that différance is not, does not exist, is not a present-being (on) in any form ... and consequently that it has neither existence or essence. It derives from no category of being, whether present or absent... Différance is not only irreducible to any ontological or theological — ontotheological — reappropriation, but as the very opening of the space in which ontotheology — philosophy — produces its system and its history, it includes ontotheology, inscribing it and exceeding it without return.  

In the above quotation, it would seem that Derrida is claiming that his concept of différance achieves what he critiqued Heidegger as failing to achieve in his investigation of the meaning of being — escaping the discourse of metaphysics. Derrida argues: "Is not the quest for an archia in general, no matter with what precautions one surrounds the concept, still the "essential" operation of metaphysics?"

Derrida's figuring of difference as différance focuses on difference as entirely foreign from the discourse of presence and absence, as itself incapable of being either, but

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41 Irigaray, The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger 2.


43 Derrida, Margins 63.
rather operates as an indelible but unknowable (definable) "trace" inherent within the text of metaphysics.

It is thus that the difference between Being and beings, the very thing that would have been "forgotten" in the determination of Being as presence, and of presence as present — this difference is so buried that there is no longer any trace of it. The trace of difference is erased. If one recalls that difference (is) itself other than absence and presence, (is) (itself) trace, it is indeed the trace of the trace that has disappeared in the forgetting of the difference between Being and beings.  

It is the remembering (or role) of this trace to presence (without presencing) "entirely other texts" — alterity. The trace enacts an interface between difference and the Same, and a means through which its logic is elided.

Such a différance would at once, again, give us to think a writing without archia, without telos, a writing that absolutely upsets all dialectics, all theology, all teleology, all ontology. A writing exceeding everything that the history of metaphysics has comprehended in the form of the Aristotelian grammē, in its point, in its line, in its circle, in its time, and in its space.  

Derrida's différance signals (whilst not being a sign or concept) that which escapes encapsulation and representation within philosophical discourse whilst at the same time it is (as much as it can be said 'to be' in a sense other than present–absent) an indelible mark of alterity within that discourse.

Henceforth it must be recognised that all the determinations of such a trace — all the names it is given — belong as such to the text of metaphysics that shelters the trace, and not to the trace itself. There is no trace itself, no proper trace. Heidegger indeed says that difference could not appear as such (Lichtung des Unterschiedes kann deshalb auch nicht bedeuten, dass der Unterschied als der Unterschied erscheint: "Illumination of the distinction therefore cannot mean that the distinction appears as a distinction" — p.51). The trace of the trace which (is) difference above all could not appear or be named as such, that is, in its presence. It is the as such, which precisely, and as such, evades us forever. Thereby the determinations which name difference always come from the metaphysical order.  

At the conclusion of his essay "Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from Being and Time" [1968] Derrida prescribes a difference "more unthought" than the Heideggerian difference between Being and beings, and that "perhaps difference is older than Being itself." In a Levinasian manner he speaks of this difference — différance — as "Beyond Beings and beings" and in a continual process of "ceaselessly differing from

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44 Derrida, Margins 65-66.
45 Derrida, Margins 67.
46 Derrida, Margins 66.
47 Derrida, Margins 67.
and deferring (itself), would trace (itself) (by itself)." As such a "writing" forever unable to be bounded by conceptual markers. A fluid, temporal "ground"? And if "older" than Being, is \textit{différence} thus to be conceptualised as Being's archaic, unthought (pre-Greek) ground? In a desire to move out from within dialectical bounds, Derrida still — with the untraceable trace — remains within the dialectic of knowable–unknowable: originary–secondary. Postulating that \textit{différence} is of a different 'order' to Being/beings raises the question of how is (it) ever to be discernible? In his quest to escape the presence–absence polarity, Derrida's \textit{différence} and its trace are still conceptualised as a movement of erasure: a continual oscillation between present/absent — a movement between.

There is a residue of the Levinasian 'beyond' in Derrida's response to his own question regarding how to think difference in relation to sexual difference, and in particular his concept of the sexual otherwise.

\textbf{The "Sexual Otherwise"}

Derrida's work sits in a contentious relationship to various feminist projects. Amongst the criticism his work has received, Elizabeth Grosz identifies charges of attempting to speak in all subject positions (Jardine),\textsuperscript{48} to appropriate a feminine subject position as a strategy to remain "master of discourse" (Irigaray),\textsuperscript{49} and, conversely Margaret Whitford's\textsuperscript{50} criticism that he does not clearly inhabit any position at all, does not adequately speak "in his own voice," but adopts an "elusive" voice of the "feminine."\textsuperscript{51}

Grosz counters these critiques by discerning two strategies within Derrida's oeuvre concerning the question of sexual difference. Of the first she writes:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{49} Irigaray, quoted by Grosz "Ontology and Equivocation" 81; quoted by Margaret Whitford, \textit{Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine} (London: Routledge, 1991) 132.
    \item \textsuperscript{51} Grosz, "Ontology and Equivocation: Derrida's Politics of Sexual Difference" 81.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Derrida deals with the question of sexual difference largely indirectly, through his readings of various texts in which women, femininity, or sexual difference function either as invisible but traceable supports (Heidegger) or as the explicit objects of secondarization or derision in a philosophical system (Levinas, Nietzsche).\textsuperscript{52}

She argues that the difficulty Derrida's position creates for feminism is his refusal to take a position on either side of the pre-sexual ontology – ontology of sexual difference binary, that is, he refuses to situate himself within the limits of the question he proposes. This is seen most clearly in the second strategy identified by Grosz, the proposal of the "sexual otherwise."\textsuperscript{53}

In a now notorious interview, "Choreographies," Derrida briefly outlines the "sexual otherwise."

what if we were to rework, what if we were to approach here (for one does not arrive at this as one would a determined location) the area of relationship to the other where the code of sexual marks would no longer be discriminating? The relationship would not be asexual, far from it, but would be sexual otherwise: beyond the binary difference that governs the decorum of all codes, beyond the opposition feminine/masculine, beyond bisexuality as well, beyond homosexuality and heterosexuality which come to the same thing. As I dream of saving the chance that this question offers I would like to believe in the multiplicity of sexually marked voices.\textsuperscript{54}

Irigaray fully embraces the binary of sexual difference, immerses subjectivity in its irreducible existence, whilst Derrida seems to be trying to open tendril-like pathways which destabilise the definitive division. Irigaray is deeply suspicious of the multiple as being another rendering (albeit repetitious) of the One, whilst Derrida seems to offer multiplicities as enabling the possibility of escaping the binary. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that Irigaray's binary requires mediation by a 'between' for relation between ontologically different subjects to take place: therefore their radical difference must need be considered fluid and porous, and therefore, also potentially enable sites for the types of slippage Derrida proposes.

Irigaray's interpretation of how the feminine operates within the dominant discourse is akin to Derrida's ascription of \textit{différence} in its inability to presence itself within the discourse (and also within its role of enabling the presence and dominance of the

\textsuperscript{52} Grosz, "Ontology and Equivocation: Derrida's Politics of Sexual Difference" 86.

\textsuperscript{53} Grosz, "Ontology and Equivocation: Derrida's Politics of Sexual Difference" 92.

\textsuperscript{54} Derrida, "Choreographies: Interview" 39-40.
logos). There is, of course, the discourse's own general positioning of the feminine as Other, that is very clearly rendered by Levinas:

What matters to me in this notion of the feminine is not merely the unknowable, but a mode of being that consists in slipping away from the light. The feminine in existence is an event different from that of spatial transcendence or of expressions that go toward light. It is a flight before light. 55

An implicit correlation is made between feminine–other–mystery as different from/to the order of metaphysics within which it cannot be articulated. Levinas evokes the polarity of light–dark and in so doing, its correlative valuations as prescribed by the discourse of the Same. 56 Once again the feminine, although presented as entirely Other, is measured (by metaphor) within the discourse as an Other of less-than equal relations. The feminine Other, not simply just other, but negatively so.

The Sexual Other Derrida proposes requires the erasure of "the code of sexual marks" from any discriminatory significance, seeking a code 'other' than that which maintains the binary. This erasure, however, becomes more difficult to envisage if the 'otherwise,' outside of the binary, is already marked as a feminine Other. It is troublesome to render an 'otherwise' relation as tabula rasa. Irigaray does not propose a utopic space in which the masculine/feminine binary is 'overcome,' but rather — through the recognition and 'habitation' of difference — the silence that separates the terms speaks.

This work is based on the recognition of sexual difference, of the irreducibility between man and woman, men and women; an irreducibility which should be treated as a civil and cultural value and not only as a natural reality to be overcome in culture and in community. 57

In its presentation by Derrida, différenciation is known as a repetitive movement of haunting erasure, wave-like in its articulation, silently and imperceptibly eroding the ground of dominant discourse. Perhaps Irigaray's presentation of the body as holding the ability to know difference, to dialogue with 'mystery,' requires that it too be considered as a continual movement of erasure and reclamation: ceaselessly undulating beyond its corporeal borders.


56 For a discussion on the polarities of vision and touch, including the metaphors of light and dark in the work of Levinas and Irigaray see Cathryn Vasseleu, Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

57 Irigaray, To Be Two 67.
Difference — Sexual Difference — Difference

"Must one think 'difference' 'before' sexual difference or taking off 'from' it?"58 is the same as asking, Which comes first difference or sexual difference? Such a question, bounded by linear logic, can never escape a metaphysical discourse, let alone be answered by it. The very terms with which it is formulated carry the bias of the logos (discourse of the Same), with a quest (however covert) to presence difference (sexual or otherwise). Does this not still work against Derrida's rendering of différences?

Considering the Hindu influence of her later works, Irigaray could be read as presenting an answer which posits the concerns as concurrent: the movement of two principles is the generative difference from which creation is brought into being: it inherently arises from the interaction of sexual difference, from which all other differences (sexed or otherwise) are generated. It is interesting to note that David Gordon White reports that, in tenth to eleventh century Tantric Siddha traditions, humans (with subtle bodies) were viewed as microcosms of this larger macrocosmic generative force:

Here, all humans were viewed as essentially androgynous with sexual intercourse an affair between a female serpentine nexus of energy, generally called the Kundalini and a male principle, identified with Siva, both which were located in the subtle body — its relationship to the brute matter of the gross body as well as to the universal divine life force within, the bipolar dynamics of its male and female constituents, etc. — was developed in every tantric school.59

Rather than seek only to map its 'trace,' in To Be Two Irigaray presents difference as desirable, potentially intimately knowable and implicit in corporeal relations. It is presented as process-oriented. Such a perspective was figured in the opening quotation of this chapter: "Our body itself carries those measures which lead to a respect for each person and for the relationship between."60

It was argued earlier that this body was a subtle body, comprised of interpenetrating, extensive sheaths of matter–consciousness, that are distinguished from one another

59 White, The Alchemical Body 4-5.
60 Irigaray, To Be Two 90.
by variations in degree, in intensity. Such a body's constituents are intimately bounded to figuring difference. For in subtle body schemas, the inherently open sheaths of self are understood as implicitly interrelated to the Other whether perceived or not, just as the subtle matrix of the self, its effects and limits, may go un-recognised by the individual. It is the cultivation of alternate modes of perception that is understood to enable recognition of difference, whilst at the same time it engenders the self.

In the compressed sketch of the figurations of difference that this chapter contains, an overarching similarity is the positioning of difference as mediating with a processural activity. It seems somehow to be implicitly placed in a ternary structure (whilst at the same time understood to be, to some degree, constitutive of the dyad it mediates), rather than as one of the contrary poles. This is most clearly seen in Irigaray's presentation of the role of difference in To Be Two: "Buddha's contemplation of the flower suggests that we learn to perceive the world around us, that we learn to perceive each other between us: as like, as freedom, as difference."\(^6\)

It is a shifting, (non-singular)\(^6\) difference — not similarity — that enables relations between the two subjects of sexual difference.

There seems to be a conceptual correlation between Derrida's positing of différance and Deleuze's ontologising of Bergson's durée (as discussed in chapter one) that privileges a view of difference as a continually differentiating difference, always in the relationship of differing, even from itself.\(^6\) It is also within considering this correlation — or the interstice 'between' the figurations of difference that this chapter outlined — that a mediating principle, or more correctly, a way to think sexual difference and difference 'at the same time,' arises. This is a perspective that does not enact reductive or priority positioning, but proposes a way, a strategy to think neither as 'first,' but rather as co-extensive.

Irigaray approaches such a perspective in her thinking of dual subjectivity, which requires thinking difference from outside the bounds of singularity, breaking its

\(^6\) Irigaray, To Be Two 25.

\(^6\) But not 'multiple' in the 'traditional' sense.

\(^6\) Deleuze, "Bergson's Conception of Difference" 48
coupling to the referent of singular presence. However, even the metaphysical
dualism at the heart of Hindu religion, upon which she draws so heavily, is actualised
(in the Deleuzian sense of the term) through interrelation, dispersion, variations of
degree.

The crux of the issue seems to lie in the ability to 'hold' a thinking of radical
difference that does not associate fixed states or qualities with its rendering. It
requires, as Derrida argues, a refusal to position, or presence whilst at the same time,
as Irigaray argues, a delimiting of it as a singular 'agent.' Arguments around the
relation of the binary of sexual difference – difference, are only sustainable if the
singularity bias is still accorded, and if difference itself is presented as transfixed,
held outside of a temporal flux, or attributed to a singular movement within it. The
discussion in chapter one, that outlined Deleuze's work in ontologising Bergson's
*durée*, posited difference as a temporal multiplicity.

In reality, duration divides up and does so constantly: That is why it is a multiplicity. But it does
not divide up without changing in kind, it changes in kind in the process of dividing up. This is
why it is a nonnumerical multiplicity, where we can speak of "indivisibles" at each stage of the
division. There is other without there being several; number exists only potentially. In other words,
the subjective, or duration, is the virtual. To be more precise, it is the virtual insofar as it is
actualised, in the course of being actualised, it is inseparable from the movement of its actualisation,
through divergent lines, and creates so many differences in kind by virtue of its own movement.\(^6\)

Deleuze's Other of duration is not tied to singularity, it is not a multiple of the one, it
is a multiplicity, and further it is not static. Such a perspective enables one to think
difference as existing in immeasurable relations to a subject which is itself
immeasurable.

In *Bergsonism* Deleuze is concerned to work through Bergson's often contradictory
presentations of *durée*, to enter the paradox between its presentation as a monism
and the dualism of Bergson's distinction between differences in kind. To this end he
perceives four articulations of the concept:

It is in this sense that Bergson's various texts are perfectly reconcilable and contain no contradictions:
There is only one time (monism), although there is an infinity of actual fluxes (generalised pluralism)
that necessarily participate in the same virtual whole (limited pluralism). Bergson in no way gives
up the idea of difference in kind between actual fluxes; any more than he gives up the idea of
differences of relaxation (*détente*) or contraction in the virtuality that encompasses them and is
actualized in them. But he considers that these two certainties do not exclude, but on the contrary

\(^6\) Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 42-43.
imply, a single time. In short: Not only do virtual multiplicities imply a single time, but duration as virtual multiplicity is this single time and same Time.65

The emphasis is on the virtual coexistence of multiplicities (the virtual being clearly distinguished from the concept of the possible that is understood as tied to the limiting concept of actuality).66 Deleuze claims that the "heart of Bergson's project is to think differences in kind independently of all forms of negation."67 In considering durée, Deleuze argues that dualism has not been "suppressed" but that it is itself constitutive of, a movement of, the monism (durée). Two dualisms are understood to comprise Bergson's process: firstly the identification of differences in kind that enable the identification of impure composites and secondly, the fourth and final movement in the process a "genetic dualism," that results from "differentiation of a simple or a pure (sic)." This dualism is explained with a discussion of how each instant of "pure" duration is simultaneously divided in two directions: past and present.68 This is the creative, ontological operation of difference, and it is possible only by the progress of dualism (lines of differentiation). As Deleuze argues, "Differentiation is always the actualization of a virtuality that persists across its actual divergent lines"69 and further, "differentiation is never a negation but a creation, and that difference is never negative, but essentially positive and creative."70

Difference as inherently creative cannot be positioned as ever entirely knowable, repeatable, singular, nor as existing in a negative relation (or relation of erasure or absence) with regard to the "present" subject. It must somehow be considered co-constitutive of the subject, and again, such thinking approaches the Levinasian concept of radical proximity (if difference is aligned with the concept of the Other) that is used by Irigaray to provide a model of relation for her dual subjects.

65 Deleuze, Bergsonism 82-83.
66 Deleuze, Bergsonism 96.
67 Deleuze, Bergsonism 46.
68 Deleuze, Bergsonism 5-96.
69 Deleuze, Bergsonism 95.
70 Deleuze, Bergsonism 103.
To return once again to the difference-sexual difference discussion that plagues the thinking of dual subjectivity: from an ontological perspective it seems the most productive way in which to approach the relation is to endeavour to think both concurrently, without reducing one figuration to the dominance of the other. This relation itself needs to be approached in the same manner as Irigaray proposes the dual subjects of sexual difference should approach one another: as an irresolvable, unknowable being—together that neither privileges or subsumes.

The order of thinking in linear time or logical development — whether difference should be thought prior to, or post, sexual difference (an argument relevant only within the discourse which will forever fail to figure it adequately) — could be considered as veiling the more central question of ’operation' or 'activity' itself: What is the relation between difference as an ontological creative force and subjectivity, through which (by which/as which) difference is articulated/actualised?

The emphasis is then focused on difference's relation to dynamism rather than a subject of ontological singularity or duality. Irigaray goes as far as critiquing the singularity with which difference is thought, but does not move into a 'realm' where difference is uncoupled from the concept of the subject entirely (even as a dual subject: a subject in relation).

Forever pushing against the grain of the discourse which seeks to know it: difference as creative dynamism necessitates a re-conceptualisation of subjective agency that includes an inherent openness (such as attributed to subtle body schemes). It is through consideration of a subject of openness (not pitched in a dyadic relation to difference) that one may catch a glimpse of alterity as creative activity.
Section I

Subjectivity
Chapter Three

Subtle Subjects of Desire: The Élan Vital and 'Other' Forces

[I]t is Bergson who launches an eco-logical vision of the contemporary world, the world grasped as an integral developing interrelationship of matter and spirit, mind and body. And not merely interrelationship, as if mind and body, spirit and matter, and so on, were first separate and then related, as if so-called 'secondary' qualities could be added to 'primary' qualities. Rather, Bergson begins with the inextricable intertwining, the integral unity of what previous thought had separated. ¹

In the previous chapter, the ontological difference – sexual difference debates were briefly outlined to position Irigaray's argument within the philosophical system she both utilises and critiques, as well as to provide a context for the conceptualisation of intersubjective desire that this chapter articulates. As previously discussed, what is a point of significant focus herein is the consideration of difference as a multiplicitous ontological 'movement' that is constitutive of both subjectivity and radical alterity. The first chapter outlined the concept of subtle bodies as a radical refiguration of subjectivity that is inherently open and dynamic, and it is the relation between such a subject of ontological dynamism and difference that this chapter (and indeed the rest of this thesis) turns to address.

This chapter commences with an examination of Bergson's concept of the élan vital and its prescribed creative agency in regard to considerations of the constituents of the 'between,' and as an evocation and correlation of a proposed onto-ethical model of desire. The model of desire introduced here is elaborated and developed through subsequent chapters. At its first exposition it will be presented as both akin, in an ontological sense, but contradistinct, in an affective sense (creating rather than limiting subjective relations) to a type of subtle body delineated in the discourse of the Theosophical Society: the Astral or Desire body. Secondly, this chapter will commence a discussion of precedents in the attribution of desire as intersubjective and analogous to various degrees with will, consciousness, spirit (a shared pneumatology) in a discussion of desire as figured by German philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel (1770-1831).

Several times in the last two chapters esoteric concepts such as the mundus imaginalis and microcosmic-macrocosmic relations have been referenced in passing.

Increasingly the role of various perceptive modalities and their interrelation with what has generally been described as 'religious' or 'mystical' experience (strongly identified with the collapsing of definite divisions between subject–object) will be correlated with the model of subtle subjectivity and the cultivation of perceptive capacities it compels. In this chapter, the role of Esoteric philosophy/religion in creating, disseminating, and influencing models of subtle subjectivity becomes more prominent. Reflecting the emphasis upon conceptual dialogues across disciplinary areas is a prime concern of this research, the relation between Western philosophical thought, Esoteric philosophy and Eastern religion/philosophy is a core element in the consideration of subtle subjectivity and the aesthetic and ethical relations it accords. The Theosophical Society can be considered as arising from a juncture between Western, Eastern and Esoteric philosophy/religion, and is therefore a particularly apt example.

**Élan Vital: the Movement of Difference**

What does Bergson mean when he talks about *élan vital*? It is always a case of a virtuality in the process of being actualized, a simplicity in the process of differentiating, a totality in the process of dividing up: Proceeding "by dissociation and division," by "dichotomy," is the essence of life.²

Central to Deleuze's reading of Bergson's concept of *durée* as a monism which is constituted by various dualisms is the role that the *élan vital* plays in Bergson's scheme. Variously defined as a life force, or vital impetus, the *élan vital* is often correlated with spirit and certainly carries the sense of being an enlivening, animating, creative agency or 'life spark,' which are attributes also allied with the role of spirit in various religious traditions. Often associated with Vitalism,³ Robert C. Grogin proposes the following conceptual precedents for Bergson's *élan vital*:

Bergson's vitality was part of a long and established tradition in nineteenth-century France which could be traced from the country's spiritualist philosophers who found mystical ideas so congenial. Paul Joseph Barthez and Marie François Bichat helped establish vitalism among French biologists, and they in turn were influenced by their great contemporary, Jean Baptiste de Lamarck. Bergson's *élan vital* was directly anticipated by Jean Marie Guyau's 'expansion of life' philosophy which admitted only spontaneity and novelty in nature, and the term itself was used first by André Lalande

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² Deleuze, *Bergsonism* 94.

³ Vitalism, in general, contends that matter is animated by a force which is not attributable to scientifically measurable phenomena. Reese ed., *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* 819.
Grogin's text, *The Bergsonian Controversy in France 1900-1914*, considers Bergson's oeuvre in relation to political, scientific and religious debates of the period, and significant focus is given to its relationship to occult philosophies and practices. Indeed, Grogin argues that the primary purpose of *Matter and Memory* was to attest to the reality of telepathy and survival after death by establishing the human spirit as independent and immortal. Bergson's prominent public interest in parapsychology was well known (he was appointed President of the Society of Psychical Research in 1913 and was member of the Institute Psychologique Internationale and the Institute Général Psychologique from 1900). He must have also been no stranger to the more esoteric and occult philosophies of the day, as his sister Mina (Moina) was a central member of the most notorious British occult group of the period The Order of the Golden Dawn. Indeed, she was married to its leader Samuel MacGregor Mathers who, it is reported, expressed frustration with Bergson's reticence to embrace the esoteric fraternity given he showed him "everything that magic can do and it has had no effect on him."  

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5 Grogin, *The Bergsonian Controversy* 53; 56.

6 Mina Mathers, née Bergson changed her name to Moina at her initiation into the "Isis-Urania Temple of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn" on March 1, 1888. She was the occult Society's first fully initiated member. See Mary K. Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn: Rebels and Priestesses* (Rochester, Vermont: Park Street Press, 1995) 56.


The Golden Dawn was founded in 1887 in England. As described by Mary Greer, its occult practices focused on the expression of Will — as a creative force — of which a particular type of desire was an aspect: "The Order of the Golden Dawn was a hermetic Society whose member studied the principles of occult science and the magic of Hermes (also known as Trismegistus, Thoth, and Mercurius). The student's goal was to unite the Will with the highest Self. Will (with a capital W) was the consciously focused intention of one's highest, divine, or God-like Self, charged by a desire that was purified of all ego-content and actualized through an imagination that used all the senses but was untainted by material illusion." Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn* 57.

The concept of *élan vital* can be considered to embody scientific, philosophical and spiritual precedents and, as further noted by Grogin, a German Vitalist tradition is also identifiable in the work of Arthur Schopenhauer [1788-1860], Friedrich Nietzsche [1844-1900] and biologist Hans Driesch [1867-1941]. This conceptual interrelation will become more evident when considering the relation between the *élan vital* and Deleuze's rendering of Nietzschean 'forces' in subsequent chapters. What is most important to foreground at the outset of considering the *élan vital* is the concept's inherent link, or interrelation with mysticism and modalities of perception associated with mystical experience. In fact for Bergson mysticism, as a form of religious experience, is defined by its relationship to the *élan vital.* In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion,* Bergson distinguishes between two types of religious experience: one which is termed "static" and the other "dynamic;" and it is the latter which is valorised in the work. Religion, he argues "is a defensive reaction of nature against what might be depressing for the individual and dissolvent for society, in the exercise of intelligence." That is, static religion arises out of the individual's attempt to make sense of life in an intelligent (intellectual) fashion and, in particular, to rationalize occurrences which are perceived as seemingly negative or purposeless, for example, death. Bergson considers it to be the result of a myth-making function, and static religion is characterised by offering security and serenity to society, whereas dynamic religion is characterised by a "God Who effectively reveals himself." The emphasis is on the individual being entering into an experiential process by which they will establish an active relationship with God. Bergson concedes that such an experience of pure mysticism is rare, and that what is more commonly found is an admixture of static and dynamic religion: although different in kind the differences are experienced by degree.

Thus may arise a mixed religion, implying a new direction given to the old, more or less marked aspiration for the ancient god who eminated from the myth-making function to be merged into the God who effectively reveals Himself, Who illuminates and warms privileged souls with His presence [sic]. Thus do we find interposed, as we were suggesting, transitions and differences, ostensibly of degree, between two things which are as a matter of fact radically different in nature and which, at first sight, we can hardly believe deserve the same name.

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8 Grogin, *The Bergsonian Controversy* 100 fn 22.

9 Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* 213.

10 Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* 205.

For Bergson the transition to dynamic religion includes moving from a mystical practice based primarily in what he (erroneously) assumes is a passive state of contemplation, to an active mysticism, which following Henri Delacroix,\textsuperscript{12} he considers a hallmark of the greatest mystics. He uses this reasoning to critique the practices of Yoga and Buddhism for not being "a complete mysticism." In contradiction to Irigaray's eager embrace of yogic contemplative practices for the changes to subjectivity they afford, Bergson correlates the practice of Yoga with a state similar to hypnosis, intent on inhibiting sensation and personal agency, which he then equates with ineffectivity in the world. Similarly, Buddhism is also critiqued because of a perceived lack of "warmth and glow" which was also equated to "efficacy of human action."\textsuperscript{13} Bergson does credit Ramakrishna\textsuperscript{14} and Vivekananda\textsuperscript{15} with practicing a "complete mysticism" comparable to what he considers the greatest of all mystic traditions, Christian mysticism.

For Bergson, mysticism was considered to have profound social consequences, intrinsically important to the 'everyday' operations of selves and society\textsuperscript{16} (rather than being a rarefied practice of the spiritually elite divorced from the 'real' world, as it is most generally rendered in modern conceptualizations\textsuperscript{17}). To support this


\textsuperscript{13} Bergson, \textit{The Two Sources of Morality and Religion} 225–226.

\textsuperscript{14} Ramakrishna 1836–86, was a Hindu mystic who is most commonly remembered for claiming that "all religious paths lead to the same goal." John Bowker ed., \textit{The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions} 796.

\textsuperscript{15} Vivekânanda (1863–1902) was a disciple of Ramakrishna and founder of the Ramakrishna Mission. He represented Hinduism at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Bowker ed., \textit{The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions} 1028.

\textsuperscript{16} It seems that even in its day, Bergson's discussion of mysticism did not receive populist attention. Evelyn Underhill in the \textit{The English Review} 1912 draws attention to the lack of debate and comment: "During the past twelve months the philosophy of Henri Bergson has been discussed from many points of view; the value of its contribution to our understanding of biology, ethics, art, and social life has been carefully investigated. Yet, strangely enough, one group of phenomena, one type of activity on which it throws remarkable and unexpected light, has so far been left out of consideration. I mean that group of phenomena, that kind of life which by friends and enemies alike is generally called "mystical." Underhill, "Bergson and the Mystics," \textit{The English Review} 10 (1912): 511.

\textsuperscript{17} Modern conceptualisations of mysticism are discussed in more detail in chapter four.
argument he cites the influence of Jewish prophets as providing the example of an active mysticism embraced by the Christian mystics.\(^{18}\)

And yet no current of thought or feeling has contributed so much as the thought and feeling of Jewish prophets to arouse the mysticism which we call complete, that of the Christian mystics. The reason is that, if other currents carried certain souls towards a contemplative mysticism and thereby deserved to be regarded as mystic, pure contemplation they remained, and nothing more. To cover the interval between thought and action an impetus was needed — and it was not forthcoming. We find this impetus in the prophets: they longed passionately for justice, demanded it in the name of the God of Israel; and Christianity, which succeeded Judaism, owed largely to the Jewish prophets its active mysticism, capable of marching on to the conquest of the world.

The invasive function and colonising ambitions accorded to active mysticism in the above passage is indeed acutely disturbing. Considered in its most benign sense, it reflects the interrelated teleological and evolutionary social roles that Bergson attributed to the practice of religion and mysticism in particular, with its greater degree of 'active' \textit{élan vital}.

Interestingly, René Violette traces the conceptual precursors of Bergson's concept of the \textit{élan vital}, noting similarities with Hindu metaphysics, however he privileges the influence of Neoplatonism, a conceptual inheritance absorbed by Bergson via the Neoplatonic idealism of Lachelier and Ravaissan.\(^{19}\) Neoplatonism itself was influenced by Hindu Metaphysics, and there is substantial research devoted to the study of the complex and rich conceptual exchange between it and Indian thought. The ancient city of Alexandria is accorded as the location where the exchange was most visibly fervent.\(^{20}\)

Neoplatonism is identified as a strong influence in the development of modern Esotericism: in particular, Faivre notes that techniques for "accessing the

\[^{18}\text{It should be noted that Bergson was Jewish, although in his will of 1927 he wrote: "My reflections have led me closer to Catholicism, in which I see the complete fulfillment of Judaism." He is further reported to have claimed: "I would have become a convert, had I not foreseen for years a formidable wave of anti-Semitism about to break upon the world. I wanted to remain among those who tomorrow were to be persecuted." Mary Greer notes that although during World War Two Bergson was offered personal exemption from the restrictions placed on Jews, he gave up his chair at the College of France. The \textit{Britannica Guide to the Nobel Prize}, 1997, 10 April 2004 <http://www.britannica.com/nobel/micro/64_69.html>; Greer, \textit{Women of the Golden Dawn} 42.}\]

\[^{19}\text{René Violette, \textit{La spiritualité de Bergson: Essai sur l'élaboration d'une philosophie spirituelle dans l'oeuvre d'Henri Bergson} (Toulouse: Éditions Edouard Provat, 1968) 4.}\]

\[^{20}\text{For an introduction to the diversity of this area of research see: R. Baine Harris ed., \textit{Neoplatonism and Indian Thought} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982).}\]
suprasensible" were taught from Plotinus (205–270) to Damascius (c470–530). It is also marked by a clear concern for communicating with intermediaries which are posited as existing between the One and the Many; a theme that shall be the focus of the next chapter, as figurations of the "between" and what is to be found "there" are mined in more depth.

Bergson was not an Esotericist per se, however, in his desire to render the interrelationship between spirituality and social justice, he does privilege the type of spiritual practices which (within the Western tradition) embrace an esoteric vision: a perspective where perceptive modalities such as the intuitive are to be cultivated. In general terms, the mystic is understood to exemplify a particular form of subjectivity considered unusual because of its highly sensitised perceptive capabilities. It is therefore a model of subjectivity that is similar to subtle bodies as delineated in chapter one, as both privilege and share a modality of subjectivity constituted by highly developed perceptive skills. It could be further argued that they share a conceptual pneumatology, if the élan vital is considered a correlate with an animating form of desire and desire itself is considered as a form or expression of spirit (a thread left to dangle here a moment until it is picked up again in later discussion).

In modern understanding, mystics, and in particular those with clairvoyant abilities (considered across various traditions) have often been attributed with the ability to 'see' the movements of the life force both interior and exterior to the physical body. Considered thus, there is an inherently ethical dimension to the mystic's practice, for their experience endows the potential to cultivate and control this life force and thereby alter relations between not only the divine and self, but self and other. Bergson's depiction of the mystic and their agency is considered by Deleuze in the final few pages of Bergsonism:

21 Faivre, Access 52.

22 Bowker ed., The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions 691.

23 Bergson jabs at Secret Societies in Two Sources of Morality and Religion: "They merely strengthened the religious spirit among the initiate by adding to it that satisfaction which men have always had in forming little societies within the larger one, and setting themselves up as privileged beings on the strength of an initiation kept jealously secret." 217. Grogin notes that Bergson's daughter became an occultist, The Bergsonian Controversy Chapter 3, fn 40.
At the limit, it is the mystic who plays with the whole of creation, who invents an expression of it whose adequacy increases with its dynamism. Servant of an open and finite God (such are the characteristics of the Élan Vital), the mystical soul actively plays the whole of the universe, and reproduces the opening of a whole in which there is nothing to see or to contemplate.24

The mystic is thought to enter into the most intimate and open relationship with the Whole (durée) and is the subject who most adequately "invents an expression of it." Mystics are understood by Deleuze to personify the intuitive 'method,'25 and to occupy a position of privilege in their ability to know and render durée: difference continually differentiating in itself. Deleuze classifies Bergson's élan vital as the movement of differentiation.26

It can be understood that élan vital is durée's ontological force, its inherent dynamism.

Duration is differentiated within itself through an internal explosive force; it is only affirmed and prolonged, it only advances, in branching or ramified series. Duration, to be precise, is called life when it appears in this movement.27

In "Deleuze–Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual," Constantin V. Boundas seeks to confirm the élan vital as difference's dynamism whilst distancing the term from its less credible esoteric associations. He writes:

Élan vital is not an occult power, but rather the name of the force(s) at work each time that a virtuality is being actualised, a simplicity differenciated, and a totality divided up. Élan vital is difference passing into action.28

Bergson's specific and repeated discussions of the élan vital in association with mysticism (dynamic religion) makes a succinct disavowal of "occult" influence on the figuring of the concept and its operations difficult to sustain, no matter how uncomfortable the Western philosophical fraternity is with such "unorthodox" ideas and practices. In fact, it will be argued that, as a form of spirit, a relation can be

24 Deleuze, Bergsonism 112.

25 For Deleuze, Bergson's idea of intuition is "one of the most fully developed methods in philosophy" a method which apprehends durée and thereby embodies multiplicities of meanings and provides a way in which these meanings can be made known to consciousness. Deleuze, Bergsonism 13.

26 Deleuze, Bergsonism 112.

27 Deleuze, Bergsonism 94-95.

28 Boundas "Deleuze–Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual" 91.
drawn between the élan vital and Hegel's and Nietzsche's renderings of the will which were both heavily influenced by beliefs about spiritual agency and its role in relationship formation between self–Other and between subject and divinity. The élan vital can be considered as a way of thinking a relation between immanence and transcendence, a reconciliation which does not neutralise (collapse) either term. Such a practice is also considered as central to the discourse of Western Esotericism (which includes the "occult" sciences) as Antoine Faivre points out:

And yet to perceive spirit even in inanimate matter or to strive to see, through innumerable "signatures" scattered throughout nature and discoverable in our soul, the rungs of Jacob's ladder uniting heaven and earth — this is what esotericism is concerned with, and the Greeks had already said much on the subject. In the end, it is a question of reconciling transcendence and immanence.

This reconciliation between immanence and transcendence will be further elaborated as this thesis progresses, but central to its 'accomplishment' is the acknowledgment of intersubjective relations with alterity: that the spirit which remains, in its difference in a necessarily transcendent relation with the subject is also immanent in relation to their subjectivity, and potentially knowable through the cultivation of 'everyday' mystical practices. From such a perspective the relations between spirit and subject are those of a radical proximity.

Returning to Deleuze's discussion, the élan vital is what animates and is the movement of durée. It also seems to be the essence of alterity at durée's core — the internal difference. The view that differentiation is always a creative act, and not a negation is inherent in this proposition. As Deleuze argues: "These lines of differentiation are therefore truly creative: They only actualize by inventing, they create in these conditions the physical, vital or psychical representative of the

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29 Faivre notes that the distinction between Esotericism and Occultism "did not really enter the vocabulary until the middle of the nineteenth century" and attributes Eliphas Lévi with coining the term "occultism." Faivre, Access 34–35. Wouter Hanegraaff is critical of aspects of Faivre's methodology, identifying what he perceives as a prejudice towards the historical and theoretical aspects of Esotericism, rather than more contemporary manifestations and praxis. Part of Hanegraaff's project is to emphasise the legitimacy of occult sciences and Reformation "spiritualism" in the field of Esoteric religion. Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 402–403.

ontological level that they embody, and "differentiation is never a negation but a creation, and that difference is never negative but essentially positive and creative." Therefore the actual products of the process of differentiation can "resemble" each other whilst the virtuality "they embody" and the process of differentiation which actualised them, remain essentially creative and dissimilar.

Further, Deleuze goes on to present a particular type of emotion — creative emotion — as essential to the method of intuition and the apprehension of the élan vital. Drawn in a distinction from intelligence and instinct, creative emotion is presented as differing in nature from both and, its placement within the interval "between the pressure of society and the resistance of intelligence," renders it as capable of a pure state devoid of connection to representation. This creative emotion is figured as a pure element:

The latter in fact precedes all representation, itself generating new ideas. It does not have, strictly speaking, an object, but merely an essence that spreads itself over various objects, animals, plants and the whole of nature. Although personal, it is not individual; transcendent, it is like the God in us .... In short, emotion is creative (first, because it expresses the whole of creation, then because it creates the work in which it is expressed: and finally, because it communicates a little of this creativity to spectators or hearers).

In this rendering, creative emotion is understood as an ontological substance: it is generative and 'constitutes' that which it generates. Further, its "essence" is intersubjective — its creativity can be "communicated" through relation. Deleuze continues to identify "privileged souls" (mystics and artists) as those who can embody the "cosmic memory in creative emotions," arguing that they enable intelligence to be filtered with intuition.

In the above, several concepts — élan vital, creative emotion and intuition — are correlated and/or intimately interrelated with one another. Rather than focusing on how to distinguish their individual roles in constituting durée, it is their shared

31 Deleuze, Bergsonism 101.
32 Deleuze, Bergsonism 103.
33 Deleuze, Bergsonism 106.
34 Bergson, Two Sources of Morality and Religion, quoted in Deleuze, Bergsonism 111.
35 Deleuze, Bergsonism 110-111.
feature as ontological, generating forces and the means by which such forces can be known, which strikes a resonant chord with a subtle body concept of subjectivity, and the subject's ability to create, direct and apprehend these bodies. As the next section discussing Theosophical subtle body schemes seeks to explicate, there is also a link between the conceptualisation of creative emotion and a concept of desire which embraces both the ontological force of the *élan vital* and the ethical implications of a mystical subjectivity.

**The Body of Desire**

The first chapter outlined a general Hindu subtle body scheme: this section will examine how this scheme has been filtered into, and adapted for a western context. Its focus is the rendering of subtle bodies — and in particular the Astral or desire body — in the literature of the modern Theosophical Society.

The Theosophical Society in its initial flush is located in, and became itself, a significant juncture between diverse ideological and cultural paradigms. These paradigms include the dominant religious beliefs of the late Victorian era and the emergence of modern science, the increasing exposure to Eastern cultures and beliefs to western society — indeed, its founders Blavatsky and Alcott, are both attributed with being the first Europeans to publicly convert to Theravada Buddhism (Ceylon 25 May, 1880) — and the push for women's rights, for example, the suffragette movement.

The late Victorian Era is characterised by a crisis in faith, and with evolutionary theory and the burgeoning development of modern science placing pressure on literal interpretations of the Christian bible, religion, a central pillar of Victorian social mores was under siege. The Theosophical Society's popularity and purpose can be

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read as an attempt to 'cope' with the instability this produced. Its discourses
deavour to present Western (including Esoteric) and Eastern religious and spiritual
ideas (in particular those which argued for a continuation of life after death, a
poignant motive considering the huge loss of life caused by World War One) within
the rubric of a rational, scientific style of discourse. This is clearly evident in
Blavatsky's evolutionary scheme, and the postulation of "root-races" (each with
several developmental sub-divisions), proposed as usurping each other as humanity
"progressively" develops. In this scheme the physical, psychological and spiritual
'development' of the human race are intimately tied together. The following is Bruce
F. Campbell's compressed account of the schemes teleology:

The story of man is told as the story of a succession of seven "root-races," each which inhabits a
specific continent. The history of the races reflects the process of involution and evolution... Man
was once more spiritual than physical and was able to create through inner powers of his mind.
Again, in the distant future, he will create by spiritual will.

The first root-race, called the "Self-born" inhabited the "Imperishable Sacred Land." The lunar
progenitors of this race — the book [Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine* 1888] states that the earth is a
re-embodiment of the moon — furnished the shell into which the living Monad or indestructible
spark of the Eternal Flame entered. Man's body was composed slowly by accretion of matter around
a purely ethereal matrix. The second, the Hyperborean race, appeared on a continent that lay around
the present region of the North Pole. This race is also called the "Sweat-born" and the "Boneless." Both the first two races were sexless: the first evolved out of the interaction of higher forms with
matter, and the second evolved out of themselves.

It was only in the middle of the third, or Lemurian, race that spiritual means of reproduction were
superseded by sexual ones. The third race inhabited Lemuria, a vast continent that extended south
from the Gobi Desert and filled the area of the current Indian Ocean. It was during the middle of this
race's period of existence, about eighteen million years ago, that men first developed bodies. It was
then that humans became responsible for good and evil.

The fourth continent, Atlantis, rose out of the sea in what is now the Eastern Atlantic Ocean. The
last remnants of the Atlantean race died out a few thousand years ago, though most Atlanteans
perished long before. The fifth race, the Aryan, took rise in northern Asia and spread south and west.
The Anglo-Saxon race is the fifth of seven subraces of the Aryan root-race. The beginnings of the
sixth subrace are said to be visible in America. After the appearance of the final two root-races,
humanity will have reached the end of its allotted cycle of evolution, and the life impulse will
withdraw from our globe.39

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38 The research of Wouter Hanegraaff has stressed the Theosophical Society as a central precursor to
the contemporary New Age Movement, a movement whose popularity and presence has been
considered by Paul Heelas as resulting from diverse attempts to counter and cope with the
"uncertainties of modernity." See Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture* 518; Paul

39 Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley:
The developmental nexus of this scheme remains highly problematic because it is indigenous and Eastern peoples that are associated with the earliest (and therefore most 'primitive') "root-races." Thus the Anglo-Saxon stands predictably in this figuration as the most 'evolved' example of humanity, whilst the taint of romantic orientalism and outright racism is clearly evident in the discourse. For example:

For there are, or rather still were a few years ago, descendents of these half-animal tribes or races, both of remote Lemurian and Lemuro-Atlantean origin. The world knows them as Tasmanians (now extinct), Australians, Andaman Islanders, etc.40

The Malays and Papuans are a mixed stock, resulting from the intermarriages of the low Atlantean sub-races with the Seventh sub-race of the Third Root-Race. Like the Hottentots, they are of indirect Lemuro-Atlantean descent.41

Blavatsky's scheme reads the anatomy of different racial types as a sign of their spiritual (and cultural) evolution. Indigenous, Eastern and Asian races are considered the human remnants of Lemurian and Atlantean "root-races." There is a strong influence of a form of social Darwinism in its proposition, and, at the same time that Blavatsky was writing The Secret Doctrine, Sir Francis Galton — a relative of Charles Darwin — was espousing the "science" of eugenics, premised upon the belief that the improvement of human kind lay in selective breeding.42 Eugenics, was influenced by physiognomy and phrenology43 — that share the belief that a subject's personality and morality can be read through recourse to their physical attributes, whether they be the arch of an eyebrow or the location of a lump on the head.

Physiognomy — study of faces to read character — became popular in Western culture in the mid-to-late nineteenth century when Johann Casper Lavater's (1741-1801) books, for example Essays on Physiognomy [German 1775-78; English 1789]


41 Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, vol.2; 779.


43 Peter J. Hutchings draws attention to the non-Darwinian elements of Eugenics in his discussion of the notions of genius in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and its role in the conceptualisation of criminal subjectivity of the period: "For however much Galton takes up Darwinism as a scientific rationale for eugenics, it is hard to disguise the mixed paradigmatic pedigree of that wannabe science: eugenics is wholly pre-Darwinian, the degenerate descendent of physiology and phrenology dressed up as modern discourses through their marriage to Quetelet's statistical methods." Hutchings, The Criminal Spectre in Law, Literature and Aesthetics: Incriminating Subjects (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) 182.
were produced in cheaper editions. Phrenology — the analysis of the position and size of lumps on the cranium — was established by Dr Franz Joseph Gall [1758-1828] in 1796. He proposed that the brain's mental faculties were localized, thus an analysis of the head's surface, its lumps and bumps, would give information about the subject's skill and personality traits, or lack there of. These "sciences" also had an esoteric underbelly:

From the earliest times there were strong associations between physiognomy and astrology: the lines of the forehead, for instance, were allied to the six known planets and the Moon, and were said to affect the personality of the person concerned according to the strength and depth of the line observed.

Like Galton's eugenics, Blavatsky's evolutionary scheme retains strong vestiges of the pre-Darwinian, including specific astrological, and subtle body assignations to the various "root-races." These are developed clearly in the Alice Bailey books, which build on the evolutionary scheme that Blavatsky proposes. For example Atlanteans are understood to be strongly under the 'influence' of Venus, and is aligned with the development of the astral or emotional body:

Then the Lemurian race slowly passed away and the Atlantean race came into existence. During the millions of years this race flourished on Earth there were vast numbers of people with the Lemurian consciousness flourishing at the same time, just as today in this modern Aryan race, there are many, many millions of people who express the Atlantean consciousness and are polarized in their astral bodies, the victims of emotion and of consequent glamour.

And, further, with reference to the development of the subtle bodies chakras ("centres"):

The centres below the diaphragm become fully active, with the major emphasis on the solar plexus centre. This centre eventually becomes the great clearing house for all the lower forces and marks the period of the shift into a higher body, the astral body. This was characteristic of Atlantean racial development.

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44 His work had many precursors, including Giambattista della Porta [c.1535-1615], De Humana Physiognomia [1586], "Giambattista della Porta," 10 April 2004 <http://www.fact-index.com/g/gi/giambattista_della_porta.html>


The Bailey texts contend that the Aryan race has evolved the mental faculty of "higher mind" or discrimination that can be used to control the astral or "emotional" body. This particular type of subtle body is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Not all of the Bailey discourse, allied to the Theosophical Society and its projects, presents its propositions and theories in a pseudo-scientific style. The Alice Bailey texts (Bailey presented herself as acting as an amanuensis or 'channel' for an Ascended Tibetan Master, Djwal Khul) are replete with metaphors drawn from alchemical, astrological, mythological and religious traditions (and the prose style is particularly dense). The sheer breadth and intermixture of the symbology is indeed breath-taking, and results in a discourse characterised by a multi-meaning and multi-layered text. These Bailey books strongly bear the influence of the Western Esoteric tradition.

Western Esoteric philosophy/spirituality is central to the Theosophical Society's discourse. It is a discipline whose various traditions are constitutive of both Eastern and Western philosophical and religious theories and practices. As its central "corpus," Faivre identifies the following:

First, three rivers may be seen, the three "traditional sciences," whose appearance does not seem absolutely tied to a particular epoch: alchemy, astrology, and magic (in the Renaissance sense of "magia," more or less linked to an arithmosophy, or science of numbers, related to different forms of musical esotericism). Still flourishing to the present time, these sciences are closely related. Second, a number of streams of thought have opened their depths to reveal relatively retrievable moments (often beginning with "foundational" texts). These streams, which are by no means strangers to great rivers, begin at the end of the fifteenth century and influence one another: (1) Christian Kabbalah (an adaptation of Jewish Kabalah); (2) neo-Alexandrian Hermeticism, that is, the discourse inspired by the ideas of the philosofia perennis and the "Primordial Tradition"; (3) a Paracelsian and romantic type of philosophy of Nature (a part of German Naturphilosophie); and (4) starting from the seventeenth century, theosophy and Rosicrucianism (beginning in Germanic countries) as well as later groups (initiatic societies more or less arising in their wake).

This definition of the corpus is given here to indicate the scope of spiritual and philosophical knowledge being sifted by the Theosophical Society, whose founding goals (of which there were three of course) included "to encourage the study of all


religions, philosophy, and science; the Society therefore had a very strong focus on comparative religion, and certainly the search for a shared 'core' common to all religion and forms of spirituality was an informing agenda.

Overall, the Western Esoteric tradition can be understood as inhabiting a bridging position, in much the same way that the Theosophical Society attempted to form bridges between religion and science. Underlying both, is the attempt to navigate what is often conceived as the largest gulf of all, between the physical and metaphysical, for which the subtle subject (in various guises) has a central role to play.

The Theosophical account of subtle bodies — as outlined in the writings of Blavatsky, Bailey and A. E. Powell — is presented as a series of seven bodies and, as in the previously described Hindu scheme, each body interpenetrates and exceeds the preceding one in ever finer gradations (vibrations) of matter–consciousness. Although what is marked in the Theosophical system is that matter and spirit — which although inherently interlinked in the Hindu system are still understood as manifesting as discrete substances — in the Theosophical systems they are manifestations of the one substance, comparable to how matter-consciousness (durée) is rendered in the Bergsonian system. Wouter Hanegraaff's research into the esoteric foundations of New Age religion particularly emphasises the differences between the Theosophical Society's and Hindu concepts of subtle bodies. Referencing the work of Glasenapp he argues that "subtle bodies as described in theosophy do not correspond with similar concepts in Hinduism" but rather are more strongly influenced by the philosophies of Agrippa and Paracelsus.

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51 Faivre, Access 92.

52 Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim (1486-1535) composed what Frances Yates (eminent historian of esoteric thought) considers to be "a clear survey of the whole field of Renaissance magic," in De Occulta Philosophia [completed 1510, published 1533]. Yates' reading of the text as survey rather than a magicians instruction manual runs counter to the more widespread presentation of Agrippa as one of the "most important magicians" of the period. Francis Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition [1964] (London: Routledge, 2002) 146-147.

53 Paracelsus, originally Theophrastus von Hohenheim (1493-1541), a physician, alchemist, philosopher and theologian is believed to have founded homeopathy with his law of similars which dictated that like acts on like. He proposed four "Pillars of Medicine:" Philosophia, Astronomia, Alchimia and Physica — his concept of healing extended beyond cure for the physical body and included considerations of spiritual health (and the spiritual bodies). Heinrich Schipperges,
especially with regard to their seven-fold constitution.\textsuperscript{54} There is no doubt that seven is certainly the structural foundation of Theosophical evolutionary schemes and cosmology. The seven subtle bodies correspond to seven planes of consciousness which in turn constitute Theosophical cosmology. Each body is understood to draw its primary 'content' from its corresponding plane. As such, not all subtle bodies are understood to be able to be made manifest on the physical plane (the lowest in the septenary, which is understood to be physical existence) only the 'densest' three (understood as dense in terms of spiritual knowledge as well as materiality) are presented as inhabiting this world: the Physical/Etheric body, the Astral body and the Mental body. Hence it is these three bodies that are attributed the most significance for and influence upon individual subjects.

The recognition and 'control' (the ability to effect their constituents) of each of these three bodies is attributed by Theosophists to a corresponding increase in spiritualisation of the subject with resultant increases in knowledge and perceptive skill. As Sellon and Weber note, the evolution of physical form (and this includes subtle bodies) in this system is inherently linked with a growth in consciousness or spiritual development, and therefore has ethical ramifications.

Evolution does not cease with achievement of the human condition, but becomes internalized as the search for union with the true, spiritual Self. The goal of evolution, which is self-development, self-realization, and self-transcendence, is therefore inherent in its processes.\textsuperscript{55}

The idea that human growth is ongoing, and that human spiritual development lies in one's own hands, leads to a deepening sense of responsibility for the state of the world which is our human condition.\textsuperscript{56}

Of the trio of bodies manifesting on the physical plane, one body is of particular relevance herein, amongst the discussion of forces, creative emotion and the burgeoning discussion of desire: it is the Astral or Desire body.

As Georg Feuerstein outlines, the \textit{Manomaya–kośa},\textsuperscript{57} subtle body, the Theosophical Astral body could be considered an adaptation of the Hindu Tantric precursor. In

\textsuperscript{54} Wouter Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture} 454.


\textsuperscript{56} Sellon and Weber, "Theosophy and the Theosophical Society" 327.
both cases this body is presented as being acutely receptive to and generative of sensation and perception, as well as being constitutive of and affected by desire. In Theosophical literature its role as a bridging body — between the physical/etheric and the mental bodies — is prominent, thus it is a subtle body whose prime role is mediation and relation. However, this mediation could only be considered beneficial if the inherent content of the Astral body (drawn from the Astral plane) was first 'cleansed' and 'controlled.' Thus the 'astral' or 'desire' body poses potentially significant challenges to the process of self cultivation. Its assumed interrelation with emotion, desire and lower intuition (or lower forms of psychism) has led to suspicious and derisive depictions within Theosophical discourse.

It is not surprising, considering the wealth of negative connotations ascribed to desire within Eastern and Western theological and philosophical discourse that the Astral body, its role and contribution to subjectivity, is heavily 'demonized' in Theosophical discourse. Its 'emotional' content was cast as highly suspect with the need for the 'enlightened' to 'control' this body through cleansing it of desire's selfish power. Alice Bailey stresses the urgency of this process in the *Treatise on White Magic*:

One of the most vital things every aspirant has to do is to learn to understand the astral plane, to comprehend its nature and to learn both to stand free from it and then to work on it .... it is through the use of the mind, as analyzer and separator, that the astral body is brought under control .... . Students are therefore begged to deal drastically and potently with their emotional natures, remembering that victory descends from above and cannot be worked on from below. The soul *must* govern and its instrument in the warfare is the consecrated mind.58

The goal was to make the Astral body mirror-like, still and reflective, enabling it to fulfill its perceived role of linking the physical with the bodies of the 'higher mind,' to enable other modes of consciousness (higher intellect and Intuition) to be brought into the physical and everyday consciousness through it, fulfilling its bridging role.

Given that the subtle body network is founded on processural dynamics, with each sheath distinguished by its 'vibrational' quality, it is of significant interest that the content of one particular body or sheath of matter–consciousness is expected to keep

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57 Georg Feuerstein traces the origin of these subtle body delineations to the three thousand year old *Taittriya–Upanishad*. See *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy* (Boston, Mass.: Shambhala Publications, 1998) 141.

58 Bailey, *Treatise on White Magic* 221-2; 228.
still. Not only still, but also silent: "Let him [sic] not be betrayed into the trap set for him by the serpent of illusion, but let him shut his eyes to the colourful tracery upon its back, and his ears to the melody of its voice." ⁵⁹

This is but a little of the advice given to overcome the illusion and 'glamour' of astral matter. And how is it to be controlled? Predictably, by the demon (emotions) slaying mind (reason–intuition)! Mind, in this context, refers both to the intellectual faculties of reason and intuition; however, the model of intuition presented by the Theosophists is one in which any association with emotions or the 'irrational' has been purged (this is why the Astral body needs to be so heavily policed: it is the site in which the purging is to take place). Therefore, it is a particularly 'reasoned' style of intuition (often symbolised by sword, a symbol esoterically equated with the discriminating, reasoning intellect). It seems to be conceived of as a unique form of reason for the spiritually mature, the structure and order of which makes 'sense' once a particular level of spiritual development has been reached (referred to as the third initiation in the Bailey texts). Although correlate with the Mental subtle body (the higher four planes of) and the Buddhic subtle body, and therefore inherently constituted by matter–consciousness, its conceptualisation and depiction within the literature strongly disassociates it from the fleshier aspects of embodiment.

That the will has to be imposed upon the personality until it has become the automaton of the soul. Then the intuition takes control, and energies from the intuitive or buddhic plane begin to make their impact upon the form nature, the personality.... Until the third initiation, however, it is the illumined mind which is the dominant factor, and not the pure intuitive perception, or pure reason. ⁶⁰

This particularly rational concept of intuition, is perhaps a legacy of Hegel's philosophy. As noted by Mark C. Taylor, Blavatsky references Hegel early in The Secret Doctrine: "(1) The ABSOLUTE; the Parabrahm of the Vendântins, or the one Reality, SAT, which is, as Hegel says, both Absolute Being and Non-Being." ⁶¹ Taylor argues that the formal structure of Hegel's theoaesthetics — the philosophical intertwining of religion and aesthetic discourse — is identical to Theosophy, deeming

⁵⁹ Bailey, Treatise on White Magic 223.
⁶⁰ Bailey, Treatise in White Magic 383.
it a "popularised version" of Hegel's philosophy. Certainly, a familiarity with Hegel's development of the self-conscious subject as presented in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is reminiscent of the types of progressive and hierarchical development of spiritual selves outlined in the Theosophical paradigm. The two systems both share the positioning of desire as instinctual and, therefore, basic in a negative sense: a stage of development to be overcome.

On intuition Hegel writes:

intuition is consciousness filled with the certainty of Reason, whose object is rationality determined .... Mindless intuition is merely sensuous consciousness which remains external to the object. Mindful, true intuition, on the contrary, apprehends the genuine substance of the object...

Hegel draws a distinction between an immediate (simple) intuition — an immersion with the external material — and an intuition which is tempered by reflection, and it is the latter which grasps the 'true' nature of things. This intuition, is for Hegel "the beginning of cognition" which eventually leads to "intelligence." Hence, as with the Theosophical form of intuition, it is understood, through the practice of reflection, to have reason brought to bear on its apprehension.

The place and role ascribed to the Astral body in Theosophical discourse reflects and re-presents a deep suspicion of desire and its associated interrelations with corporeality (or the "personality") via 'ego' based pleasure pursuits. Considered the product of human desire it is correlated with 'animal' and 'base' natures, with what are considered lower forms of intelligence like instinct. Those 'aspirants' strongly polarised in their astral nature (that is, with an undisciplined Astral body) are depicted as selfish, highly susceptible to external stimulus, emotionally unbalanced, and unable to control physical urges.

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62 Taylor, *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* 54. Taylor identifies two main differences between Blavatsky and Hegel's theories. He argues that Hegel has a more positive perspective on the role and place of the material and, secondly, that Blavatsky "sacrifices the individual to the universal" in a radical monistic ontology. See Taylor, *Disfiguring: Art, Architecture, Religion* 57.


64 Hegel, *Hegel's "Philosophy of Mind"* §450; 201.

This rendering of the Astral body and emotion by Theosophists can be considered as mapping a suspicion of the feminine and its ascribed modes of articulation (the emotions) onto the role of the Astral body. Desire and the flesh enact a coupling which many diverse religious doctrines have sought to distance from the Divine, and Theosophical discourse continues to enforce this separation (of course, the mystic can be read as a pure sign of spiritualised flesh, the desire for union with the Divine culminating in an episodic annihilation of subjectivity, a most replete erotic encounter). Spirit — as something distinct from flesh and most akin to abstract or rarefied thought — and the body — as a type of handbag for the mind capable of undertaking such reasoning — are the general conceptions which carry this estrangement into popular thought. The feminine as stereotypically embodying the hysterical edges of emotive behaviour was marked as emanating from and being a repository for, a potentially dangerous desire. Such beliefs run counter to the emancipatory role the Theosophical Society played for women, encouraging female membership with many women occupying senior positions within the organisation. The Society's programs did not exclude women from philosophical and religious discussion but encouraged participation actively (and openly) promoting their studies and publications.66

There are, however, other ways of conceptualising desire and the 'operations' of the Astral body which render it a productive and creative force: one that rather than limiting self-cultivation, enables it, and more radically, enables respectful relations with alterity; an understanding of desire as an enlivening, motivating, energetic force which animates, opens and interrelates subjects — comparable to the activity of the élan vital. It is not desire understood as purely sexuate, nor premised on a psychoanalytic lack, nor an Hegelian desire to subsume. It renders desire as an ontological force fundamental to becoming and, further, as a potentially ethical force through a practice of self-cultivation. This does not automatically propose that all articulations of desire are ethical (that would be irresponsible) but, following a Levinasian theme, this model of desire requires (creates) an open subject, one called forth by their very constitution to be both a 'witness' to alterity and responsible for the articulation of its relation.

The dilemma arises as to 'where' — both from amongst the numerous renderings of desire in Western philosophical and religious traditions and with regard to a consideration of the 'subject' and 'object' relation — to select a starting point for a re-figuration of desire and an onto-ethical desire?

Desire in its many conceptualisations traverses the 'between,' and it is its intersubjective role which is of prime concern. As such, therefore, the most suitable starting point is a non-point, an oscillating location. In ensuing chapters the intersubjective role of desire is to be followed as a pneumatology (albeit not distinct from corporeality), ensuring an intimate alliance of both mind–body, subject–object, subject–divine. Some of the precedents for this have already been examined: the élan vital (as a particular movement of durée), and the type of 'energy' or matter–consciousness constitutive of subtle bodies. Indeed these renderings of ontological becoming or movement can be understood not only to share a pneumatology, but also a philosophical heritage — Naturphilosophie — that bridges both the Western and Esoteric traditions (which is to say nothing of Eastern influence and correlates at this point).

In this figuration, desire requires an interrelation, or correlation with active forces and — as a type of these forces — with 'the' individual will, as the determining/enabling activity in the world, to be both ontological and ethical. It requires emphasising an open, initiating subjectivity: one intimately wed to the 'between.'

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67 Naturphilosophie designates part of German Romanticism (1790–1815) and is inclusive of F.J.W Schelling (1775–1854), Franø von Baader (1765–1841) and Friedrich von Hardenberg (alias Novalis 1772–1801). Faivre designates the following three characteristics of Naturphilosophie: "1) A conception of Nature as a text to decipher by correspondences. Nature is filled with symbolic implications; its signification resides outside itself, so much so that rigorous science is only a necessary point of departure for an inclusive grasp of invisible processes, i.e. a "nature naturing." 2) A taste for the living concrete and for a plural universe. Natur-philosophers are all more or less specialists (chemists, physicists, geologists, engineers, physicians), but specialists whose thought rises to eclectic syntheses and tries to embrace a polymorphic world comprised of different levels of reality in its complexity… 3) The identity of Spirit and Nature, considered as two seeds of a common root (matter and Nature rest on a spiritual principle, for Spirit inhabits them). By the same token, knowledge of Nature and knowledge of oneself go hand in hand." Faivre, Access 82-83.
The Interval of Desire

Desire occupies or designates the place of the interval. Giving it a permanent definition would amount to suppressing it as desire. Desire demands a sense of attraction: a change in the interval, the displacement of the subject or of the object in their relations of nearness or distance. 68

The interval has already been discussed in chapter two as an inherently active 'place,' whether conceptualised as the enabling abyss in Irigaray's ontology of dual subjectivity, or as inhabited by a Bergsonian subject siphoning durée's Images. It has, in all instances thus far, been rendered as inherently constitutive of the act of relation and, specifically, interpretative relation. The site of creative flux, the interval is also the realm of desire (which is perhaps the same thing). It is nigh impossible to think about desire as an active force or movement from outside the bounds of a ternary framework: as an action between or an intersubjective 'mechanism' allowing both connection and difference to exist.

In the quotation above, Irigaray interrelates the interval, desire and alterity. It is the conceptual inter-folding of these terms, their close reciprocity and mutual speaking-together, that enables correlations to be drawn between desire and ontological agency (as will be explicated with durée and the élan vital in Section Two) and ethics (Section Three). The interval is to be understood as not so much the location of desire (an empty place desire happens to fill up or traverse), but something whose very being is called forth and constituted by desire. It is the foundational third: presencing without space.

Although there are many relevant sources from within the discourse of Western philosophy to choose as a point of departure for considering desire's operations in and as a between — for example Lacanian psychoanalysis — it is hard to ignore Hegel, whose haunting is pervasive and indefatigable. This is for several reasons within this context: most significantly the relation between desire and self-consciousness he makes in the Phenomenology of Spirit [1807] and the positioning of desire as constitutive of will as discussed in the introduction to Elements of the Philosophy of Right [1821]. These aspects of desire's 'action' and 'constitution' — in contradiction to and in agreement with Hegel's positioning of desire — shall be seen to support a reading of desire as ontological and pneumatological, and to provide an

68 Irigaray, An Ethics of Sexual Difference 8.
entry point into consideration of the dynamics of intersubjective relation (the interval).

**Hegelian Desire: the bonds of unequal recognition**

As Hegel unfolds the self's quest for self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* his progressively evolving subject moves between the Universal and the Particular in search of the Individual resolution: the apprehension of a resolution in the individual (in the same way that Hegel's reasoning oscillates between emphasising 'practical' and 'theoretical' attitudes). The style of the text — philosophy as a pilgrimage to the shrine of Self — presents the subject traversing (and 'overcoming') numerous modes of self-consciousness, a journey which commences (and never adequately dispenses) with desire.

Certain of the nothingness of this other, it explicitly affirms that this nothingness is *for it* the truth of the other; it destroys the independent object and thereby gives itself the certainty of itself as a *true* certainty, a certainty which has become explicit for self-consciousness itself *in an objective manner*.

In this satisfaction, however, experience makes it aware that the object has its own independence. Desire and the self-certainty obtained in its gratification, are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superseding this other ... Thus self-consciousness, by its negative relation to the object, is unable to supersede it; it is really because of that relation that it produces the object again, and the desire as well. It is in fact something other than self-consciousness that is the essence of Desire; and through this experience self-consciousness has itself realized this truth.69

This quotation raises several key points and contentions regarding the role desire plays in Hegel's system. Firstly, the "I" seeking confirmation of its existence, does so in relation to another self-consciousness which exists as an object external to itself: "A self-consciousness exists *for a self-consciousness.*"70 However the relation is deemed problematic as it relies on the experiencing of neutral and mutual recognition (a theme developed further in chapter eight), which eventually leads Hegel to develop the "Life and Death Struggle" modality of self-consciousness. At this initial point of development, self-consciousness gains self-certainty by its relation to an external object. Nevertheless, this self-certainty is rendered incomplete because the relation to the external object is predicated on desire's role in

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70 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* §177; 110. Hegel's emphasis.
"superseding" this other: in absorbing it into itself, and thus, forming another paradox — the object which enables self-certainty is in the process of this enabling erased, leaving the "I" wanting and requiring another self-consciousness to again achieve self-certainty. Hence, the self's foundation is inherently unstable.

This relation intrinsically links the concept of individuality with control: once the object which the subject desires is attained, dominated and/or destroyed (which appears to be Hegel's preferred mode of interaction) Individuality — as a reconciliation of universality and particularity — no longer has anything upon which to exert control and therefore define itself. Further, as elucidated in the "Lord–Bondsman" relation, the vanquished retains the power for enabling the recognition of the Lord, and is therefore the linchpin in the relation. Moreover, Hegel argues that, in deferring to the will of the Lord (even though initially based on the instinct to avoid death) the Bondsman's submission to service enables the development of an independent consciousness which is not available to the Lord: "Through his service he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it." Work, Hegel defines as "desire held in check," as an activity it is understood as suspending the consummation of desire (and therefore the erasure of the Other as a force of recognition), through the construction of object-hood (in which the

71 A.V Miller has translated the German Herr and Knecht as "Lord" and "Bondsman," and the terms are used herein in reference to the Miller translation, from which the quotations are taken. However, a more common translation is "Master" and "Slave," for example Howard P. Kainz's translations. Discussing his translation of the section title IV.A. Selbstständigkeit und Unselbstständigkeit des Selbstbewusstseyns; Herrschaft und Knechtschaft [IV.A. The Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Masterdom and Slavery] he argues: "As a translation of Herrschaft, "masterdom" is preferable to "lordship," which has medieval/feudal connotations, since the imagery of the present chapter is not restricted to the medieval; it is also similar enough to "kingdom," "fiefdom," "Christendom," and so on, to reduce the possibility of confusion with "mastery," which in present-day usage primarily designates creative proficiency and has nothing to do with a master/slave relation.


72 Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit §194; 117.
consciousness sees its "own independence") in which the Bondsman enacts the formation of their own being-for-itself. 73

The unequal relations depicted by the Lord–Bondsman dynamic clearly illustrate the mediating and subject constructing role desire plays in Hegel's scheme via subjection and control. Foundational to this dynamic development of self-consciousness is this rendering of desire's interrelation with Geist (spirit)74 expressed through action in what is an essentially intersubjective relation.

A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as 'object.' With this, we already have before us the Notion of Spirit ... absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousness which, in their opposition enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I.'75

That is, Spirit like desire is presented as intersubjective: absolute substance is understood to be the "unity" of individual self-consciousnesses that, in their particularity, are independent. Thus, there is an ontological relation between self-consciousness: "A self-consciousness exists for-a-self-consciousness [Es ist ein Selbstbewußtseyn für ein Selbstbewußtseyn];" it is this other self-consciousness that enables it to posit itself as an "I." The "I" therefore, is only because it is simultaneously a "we."

73 Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit §195; 118.

74 Howard P. Kainz argues that, in the context of the Phenomenology of Spirit, the term Geist is most adequately translated as Spirit, with a particular communal sense pre-figured in its use by figures like Montesquieu, who discussed the "spirit of nations." Kainz writes: "Hegel's main focus is on Spirit as a community of consciousnesses in which individual "spirits" maintain a rapport with the totality of Spirit." "Notes on the Translation," Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit" xvi. Robert R. Williams identifies two "modes" of Absolute Geist. The first an "intersubjective model" where it acts as a "communication medium," and the second, as identified by Jürgen Habermas, where Geist is considered a "transcendental subject which unconsciously produces nature, and then re-discovers itself in its investigation of nature, and thereby returns to itself (i.e. becomes self-conscious) out of nature as its other." Robert R. Williams, "Hegel's Concept of Geist," Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit, ed. Peter G. Stillman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987) 11-12.

75 Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit §177; 110.

76 Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit §177; 110.

Action: Corporeality — Geist

The human I must be an I of Desire — that is, an active I, a negating I, and I that transforms Being and creates a new being by destroying the given being.78

Alexandre Kojève's explication of desire in Hegel's philosophy as a self in process indicates what the relation of this I is to corporeality, the body, and, in so doing, illustrates the way in which Geist can be understood to be both constitutive of self-other and of multiple desires. Action is the expression of Geist. As Kojève continues:

Now if — on the other hand — there is a multiplicity of these Desires for universal Recognition, it is obvious that the Action that is born of these Desires can — at least in the beginning — be nothing but a life and death Fight (Kampf auf Leben Tod).79

The multiple desires described by Kojève are not multiplicitous in the Deleuzian sense: they are understood as distinctly bounded acts directed by Self and Other to achieve recognition and domination. It is the role of these desires to unfurl in brutal fashion the subject (whether impinged on by one's own or another's will). It is Action which allows the transformation of the 'given' and unrealised self into the self-conscious self that recognises (and embodies) Absolute Spirit (thereby becoming a free, independent consciousness).80 Action is implicit in the ontological becoming of the subject. It is a manifestation, an expression of a divine impulse or force. This force is conceived by Hegel to be a fluid force; however, unlike Vitalist accounts of spirit, Hegel does not presuppose this spirit as an unseen but ever present dynamic of vitalistic agency that is simply awaiting perception. Rather, spirit has to be cultivated, to be consciously 'grounded' by the individual in Action.

In thinking through the source of Hegel's concept of action, Guy Planty–Bonjour argues that its heritage strongly includes Aristotle's concept of energeia.

In order to understand what Hegel's doctrine about action is, we must not forget that neither poiesis nor praxis nor even the unity of both represents perfectly the concept of action. What Hegel calls


79 Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel 40-41.

80 Kojève, Introduction to the Reading of Hegel 48.
The distinction Planty–Bonjour is drawing is between conceiving action as either a scientific-based practical action \((praxis)\) or as making or producing \((poiesis)\): two of the divisions Artistotle accords to the production of knowledge. \(\text{Energeia}\) however, is presented in contradistinction to his concept of potentiality and, in particular, is the power of the state of completion, the "actuality characteristic of every individual substance towards some end."\(^{82}\) Its meaning consequently carries a virtual, developmental teleology, that is encapsulated in the etymology of \(Tätigkeit\).

In this sense, Action does not reveal \(Geist\), it \textit{is} it in its essential becoming and, as such, it cannot be discreetly separated from the 'real,' the corporeality which is implicit in its becoming. As with Bergson's \(élā\ ν\it{t}\ α\it{i}l\), spirit, as an ontological agency is expressed in action, as movement, and can not be divorced from the substance which moves. Rather than a creative movement, however, Hegel's \(Geist\) is a movement of negation.

Desire is constitutive of this subject–forming, \(Geist\)–expressing movement, albeit that, for Hegel, it is rendered as mere animal instinct, to be conquered. It is, nonetheless, the foundation from which the conscious subject begins its developmental quest seeking manifestation and recognition of Absolute Spirit in the world. It is a return to (and re-figuring of) this purportedly instinctual, foundational desire and its intersubjective operations that is to be now traced herein with regard to aesthetic and ethical relations; commencing by drawing more closely together the concepts of Desire and \(Geist\) (the beginning and end of the Hegelian pilgrimage) via a brief consideration of the constitution and role of Hegelian Will.

In the Introduction (§4) of \textit{Elements of the Philosophy of Right Or Natural Law and Political Science in Outline}, Hegel clearly correlates the "realm of spirit" and will:

The basis [\textit{Boden}] of right is the \textit{realm of spirit} in general and its precise location and point of departure is the \textit{will}; the will is \textit{free}, so that freedom constitutes its substance and destiny

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[Bestimmung] and the system of right is the realm of actualized freedom, the world of spirit produced from within: itself as a second nature.\textsuperscript{83}

That is to say, the actualisation of free will — which designates a system of right — is concurrently the actualisation of Spirit, because the activity of the will is that of spirit. Hegel's Philosophy of Right is a political, ethical, social and legal philosophy of 'self-conscious' Action in the world. In this world the will is the volition of practical Action, and as such is an embodied ontological movement. It is presented as a particular modality of spirit.

But they are not two separate faculties [thought (spirit) and will]; on the contrary, the will is a particular way of thinking — thinking translating itself into existence [Dasein], thinking as the drive to give itself existence.\textsuperscript{84}

The will is the 'site' of the resolution of Universality and Particularity in the Individual, and it is delineated as being formed by two elements: indeterminacy and determinacy.

The will contains (α) the element of pure indeterminacy or the 'I's' pure reflection into itself, in which every limitation, every content, whether present immediately through nature, through needs, desires and drives, or given and determined in some way is dissolved; this is the limitless infinity of absolute abstraction or universality, the pure thinking of oneself.\textsuperscript{85}

In discussing the will's indetermination, Hegel argues that, if this constituent remains only theoretical, it "becomes in the religious realm the Hindu fanaticism of pure contemplation."\textsuperscript{86} As previously discussed with regard to Bergson, such a perspective erroneously equates the physical passivity of contemplative states with inhibited human agency and a lack of practical application. However, the situation does not become anymore acceptable for Hegel if an actuality is brought to bear on the will's indeterminacy, because such a task would require a negative movement, as indeterminacy inherently seeks the annihilation of particularity: "Thus, whatever such freedom believes [meint] that it wills can in itself [für sich] be no more than an


\textsuperscript{84} Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right §4; 35.

\textsuperscript{85} Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right §5; 37.

\textsuperscript{86} Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right §5; 38.
abstract representation \(\text{[Vorstellung]}\), and its actualization can only be the fury of destruction."\(^{87}\)

It is, therefore, not sufficient that the 'I' be able to free itself from everything through recourse to the will's indeterminacy, but it must also be able to posit something determinate because: "Through this positing of something \(\text{determinate}\), 'I' steps into existence \([\text{Dasein}]\) in general — the absolute moment of the \(\text{finitude or particularization}\) of the 'I.'"\(^{88}\)

The "particular will" is the realm of desiring consciousness which, as previously defined, instigates the subject's quest for self-consciousness. The two 'moments' (indeterminacy–determinacy) are understood as interrelated in the Individual, an 'I' not cast in self-defining, self-reflexive solitude, but drawn forth (however traumatically in the Hegelian scheme) in relation to an Other.

In this determinacy, the human being should not feel determined; on the contrary, he [sic] attains his self-awareness only by regarding the other as other. Thus, freedom lies neither in indeterminacy nor in determinacy, but is both at once.\(^{89}\)

In the same way that the Theosophists present the subject as comprised of various forces existing in both immanent and transcendent relations with Spirit through the very constitution of their subjectivity/ corporeality, so too does Hegel propose the subject as comprised of forces — albeit rendered inherently conflicted — that require development, harmonisation and Action (through his rendering of will as both indeterminate and determinate): that is, these forces require articulation and expression to fulfill a self-conscious, spiritually purposive life, one marked by an intimate 'knowledge' of and relation to the Divine (Christian God for Hegel).

Although presented as immanent to the world through Action, the will also remains in a transcendent relation to the subject because the individual is in Hegel's account unable to apprehend will in its entirety, it is a totality beyond the command of the individual:

\(^{87}\) Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* §5; 38.

\(^{88}\) Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* §6; 39.

\(^{89}\) Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* §7; 42.
so that the will, insofar as it expresses an external aspect, is in this taken back into itself without exhibiting a determinate aspect by which it can be grasped: thus, what are velvet paws for one are claws for another; but no matter how we try to grasp the will we feel only smooth satiny which we cannot hold on to. The will is thus a totality and therefore unassailable.  

Thus it is Hegel's proposition that will is practical spirit, which is not devoid of intelligence but, rather, springs forth from a "spirit" which "is initially intelligence." Such a spirit, therefore is not clearly cut from the force of desire within Hegel's scheme. Practical will is desire, which remains a mutual constituent of Individual will. Desire is Action: the intertwining of corporeality and spirit, the will embodied and expressed. There is a layering and overlapping of movement between these terms (like subtle bodies they seem to interpenetrate and exceed one another in progressive development) whilst movement itself remains a common property. At the earliest stages of the development of self-consciousness — the desiring self — there is an inherent ethical dimension to the role of desire as it is the 'foundation' of the intersubjective dynamic; further, this desire is conceived of in implicit relation to individual becoming marked by the expression of spirit.

Desire can be thought of as not only initiating the first self-conscious footstep, but as the sole upon which the 'I' can most adequately tread towards the Other (and the most likely location for the feminine excluded from logocentric discourse to take a foothold). Leading into the interval — the movement of desire(s) — a subject constituted by multiple bodies and forces, that is inherently open and attracted to the world enters an exchange that need not be individually annihilating (as in Hegel's scheme), but creative and open (like Bergson's mystic subjectivity) and co-constitutive of self and other (in an inherent relation of radical proximity with difference) in non-reductive relations.

Implicit in the previous discussion, but not addressed directly, is Hegel's assumption of the subject as masculine. Heeding the previous discussion of Irigaray's dual subjectivity and sexual difference as radical difference, to consider the interaction between subjects of desire is to necessarily disrupt any assumed equivalence between the ontological forces of feminine desire and masculine desire (or indeed any

90 G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-6) with Commentary by Leo Rauch (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1983) 100.

91 Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right §4; 36-37.
individual desire) as well as to question the presentation of desire as itself singular (which is critiqued by Deleuze). It is to consider the movement of radically diverse, of differentiated desire(s).

Irigaray's work has included a critique of the mapping of masculine desire — as articulated in the discourse of logocentrism — onto the feminine subject:

And if your words have such seductive power, such a potent charge of investment, is it not because they come to fill the place of a desire deprived of words? Borrowing their strength from an energy free from any declaration. A fundamental misunderstanding lies within your language: what it carries of persuasive power does not belong to speech but to what it covers in silence.92

That is, she specifically argues that an unarticulated desire (*jouissance*) of the female subject provides (feeds) the "silent" force of the dominant system. The concern is now to think about the way in which silent, presence-less (but presencing) desire(s) can be 'inhabited,' brought to apprehension, as well as considering the enabling of relations between these forces and the desires already articulated and binding. Thus, the next section of this thesis — aesthetics — explores how the subtle subject (constituted by multiplicitous ontological dynamism) can both simultaneously constitute and mediate the interval.

**Summary**

This chapter has examined Bergson's concept of the *élan vital*, the understanding and use of desire and its interrelation with subtle subjectivity in the discourse of the modern Theosophical Society and the Hegelian rendering of desire, to bring to light conceptual correlations and slippages across and between the Western and Esoteric philosophical traditions, including the shared intent of Bergson and modern Theosophy's discourse to establish a continuum between matter and consciousness, and the understanding that the subtle, invisible interrelations between subjects and objects can be apprehended using intuitive sense perception.

In addition, it provided a foundation for, and commenced articulating, a concept of desire that is simultaneously ontological and ethical. In so doing, the chapter drew attention to the predominance of a shared pneumatology in the ideologies it

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92 Irigaray, *Elemental Passions* 52.
examined: as constituting and generating the Theosophical Astral body, as expressed through desire as a constituent of Hegel's free will, and in the operations of Bergson's *élan vital*. This pneumatology — expressed through creation/action — can be understood as a constituent of the subtle subject. Its expression through action, and its association in Bergsonian and Theosophical discourse with mystical subjectivity, and in Hegel's scheme with the achievement of free will, positions the subject in an immanent interaction with the divine (with Spirit): an intimate association with radical alterity that will be further explored in later chapters.

In examining the intersubjective aspects of desire — particularly Theosophical and Hegelian — this chapter has sought to highlight the negative attributions the term desire inherently carries within these contexts, and to examine the prejudice — desires interrelation with the feminine, and the supposedly lower form of apprehension or knowledge, for example instinct — that these conceptualisations are built upon. Future chapters develop a concept of desire that encompasses both an ontological and ethical agency that is made apparent and open to modification and utilisation through the cultivation of perceptive modalities like intuition. Such perception enables the apprehension of the invisible subtle aspects of subjectivity to be brought to conscious awareness.
Section II

Aesthetics
Figure 4. Marina Abramovic, *Crystal Cinema I* 1990
On a small wooden stool, close to the ground, a figure sits huddled, peering towards a large rose quartz crystal. The crystal's mass leads to a point which is directed — like the beseeching nose of a seated dog — towards the figure: the artist Marina Abramovic. This is *Crystal Cinema I* [1990], and the film presentation captured by this photograph is definitely in progress.

Unlike more conventional theatres this is a cinema for the solo viewer (although other installations have catered for larger audiences). The crystal is both the mechanism of projection and the projected; as is the subject that sits opposite. The 'film' is created in the space 'between:' it is a cinema of the intersubjective, that calls for a plurality of perceptive modalities and a subtle form of subjectivity.

Although on first appearances, the static nature of this cinema's projection seems ironic, its medium is no less temporal than the more usual reels of celluloid. Its flux and rhythmic unfurling jointly created by interpenetrating subject-object. How does one look at a temporal intersubjectivity? Are the artist's eyes open at all? If not, how does she see? Further, as an installation that inherently calls for 'spectator' participation to function along lines intended by the artist, *Crystal Cinema* has boundaries which are nebulous and fluid. How does one delineate where and when it terminates if it is so intimately intertwined with the viewer?

The way one watches, the practice of viewing, and the style of sight that this installation calls for is the subject of this section (chapters four to six). A perceptive practice which will be seen to continually configure and erode subjectivity. It calls for an approach to viewing art that requires the 'whole' body-mind whilst not being divorced from the ocular. The changes in subjectivity exemplified in this aesthetic relation makes it also an ethical relation: it questions the character of the bonds with self, other and world.

This mode of viewing calls not for 'new' eyes, but for new sights: for a broadening of perspective and a broadening of the register of subjective-objective affect and agency. The relation between this lump of rock and little stool asks the spectator to unravel themselves as cohesive viewing subjects. However, the call is easily missed as it palpates below the din of the quick look: even the furtive glance is inadequate for its task. It desires a body–mind absorption in the process of looking that
simultaneously enables a detached witnessing, a paradoxical vision achieved through discipline and a conscious re-figuration of self as inherently open.

*Crystal Cinema* requests patience. Patience with the act of looking, with oneself and with the Other. Patience with not-knowing. It both is, and summons, the art of entering gracefully into a subjectivity of suspension.
Chapter Four

'Seering' Desire: The Between Where the Subtle Subject Comes in View

I opened my eyes and saw the cloud. And saw that nothing was perceptible unless I was held at a distance from it by an almost palpable density. And that I saw it and did not see it. Seeing it all the better for remembering the density of air remaining inbetween.¹

Between Abramovic's crystal and Irigaray's clouds ranges a mystery: the interval. It is the intent of this chapter (and others in this section) to explore both the renderings of this 'between' space and proposed methods of interaction with 'it' through considering various modalities of vision. The aesthetic experience of both static and moving images is a site where the types of open subjectivity under examination can be brought to a more conscious awareness. The process and practice of looking, of aesthetic experience with an object, is reflective of the same type of perceptual approach being called for to enable ethical relations between subjects of radical alterity. To 'look' in the ways proposed in this chapter can be considered an act of self-cultivation and a ceaseless modification of subjectivity. The focus of this section is on the between posited between viewer and object.

The experience of looking at visual art practices can be considered as a training ground for the perceptive skills required to see subtle subjects (and the formation/transformation of subjectivity): a style of vision that also enables respectful relations with a radical alterity. In this sense, the subtle subject is not only depicted as constructing transcendent relations — scaling Jacob's ladder — but also immanent relations to the Other via modalities of perception, emphasising that such horizontal and vertical movements require a continual re-figuring of subjectivity. Several conceptualisations of vision from Eastern and Esoteric traditions will be explored with reference to the operations of visuality privileged by the individual theorists prominent in the preceding chapters: especially Irigaray and Deleuze.

At the close of chapter three a draft of Hegel's figuration of desire — articulating desire's intersubjective and mediating role in his philosophical scheme — was presented. Implicit in the relations drawn by Hegel is the assumed visuality of the other, the 'target' towards which the emerging self-consciousness is pitched. The intertwining of desire and vision will emerge more clearly over the next few chapters

¹ Irigaray, Elemental Passions 105.
as the figuration of an onto-ethical desire constitutive of subtle forms of subjectivity necessitates a re-drafting of modernist, vision-centred concepts of sight. In general terms, the critique of modernist regimes of visuality has been a core element in postmodern thought, often working in tandem with the de-centring of subjectivity.\(^2\)

In a similar vein, this chapter entails a move from the prominence of the ocular to the more oracular: to perceptive sensitivities which are subtle, interrelated, and not purely dominated by visual apprehension (but not to ignore or neglect the optical), and to temporal, porous and inherently open subjects.

What will be brought to bear upon the consideration of perception and relation herein are the particular concepts of visuality — centrally *mundus imaginalis* and intuitive or 'crystal' vision — that enable 'mystery' and the 'subject' to remain suspended apart from dominant discourse whilst not undermining their agency and effect. In short, modalities of 'vision' that allow presence to the voices of the interval — albeit in languages so foreign that they are forever 'beyond' mastery by the receiver/perceiver (who, it will be shown is also a co-generator of the interval's discourses). Moreover, the inability of the subject to completely apprehend these discourses further encourages and opens the possibility of the art of simultaneously seeing without seeing: of accepting a particular style of 'blindness' as requisite for intersubjective aesthetics and ethics.

**Irigaray: Divining Self and Other**

The transcendence of the other, however, requires that the invisible in him be respected, including when he is perceived with the senses. Beyond the color of his eyes, the tone of his voice, the quality of his skin, things that are sensible to me, for me, there exists in the other a subjectivity which I cannot see, either with my senses or with my intellect.\(^3\)

As discussed in chapter one, Irigaray proposes subjectivity as dual, as an intersubjectivity silently marked by permeable boundaries and intimate slippages between selves. To cultivate a conscious relation with the Other of dual subjectivity, she proposes the cultivation of perception, a proposition marked by the influence of Buddhist philosophy:


\(^3\) Irigaray, *To Be Two* 20.
Buddha's contemplation of the flower suggests that we learn to perceive the world around us, that we learn to perceive each other between us: as like, as freedom, as difference.  

Here Irigaray makes reference to *I Love to You* a text that highlighted the centrality of cultivating perceptive modalities in Eastern religious traditions. These practices — which include various meditation and ritual activities — are undertaken to enable the apprehension of realities that are understood to exist in immanent and transcendent relation to this everyday, phenomenal world. Such activities are employed specifically to enact a change in cognitive ability which in turn are understood to enact a change in subjectivity. In general terms, Irigaray also appeals to the cultivation of perception, a perception able to apprehend invisible exchanges and interrelations, as a method for re-interpreting and creating one's subjectivity. The cultivation process can be understood as a process of formation and transformation of subjectivity, of both I and Other. Implicit in the consideration of such practices is the dominance of visuality, and its particular style of practice — that is, how one chooses to look — as directly linked with the type and quality of relation being established.

The term 'contemplation' carries within its meaning a sense of time's passage; 'to contemplate' being defined as "to look at with continued attention." Thus, Irigaray's emphasis is on the enduring attention required to apprehend the Other of dual subjectivity. Interestingly, contemplate's etymology (from the Latin *con'temple*) carries with it both a spatial and religious heritage: "*con-* +templum 'an open place for observation, marked out by the augur with his staff."  

The 'marking out' of a place specifically for 'observation' — the creation of a 'temple' — denotes a devotional activity, delineating a style of vision distinct from the type of 'seeing' undertaken in everyday pursuits. The augur is a seer, 'his' staff is used to

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4 Irigaray, *To Be Two* 23.


8 Augur was the term given to Roman religious officials who predicted future events by reading various portents including the "flight, singing, and feeding of birds," the "entrails of sacrificial victims" and "celestial phenomena." "Augur," *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989 ed.
define a between space, an interval in which the physical and the metaphysical co-
exist. To contemplate in this sense then is to define a distinct space and enact within
it a particular modality of vision — a vision interrelated with both the passage of
time and the wider environment including the divine (through the reading of omens).
A space for viewing that is not evident to 'everyday' optical perception: the
tangentially present.

In a similar sense, Irigaray, with her invocation of Buddha (and, in other passages,
personages from the Christian tradition), privileges a type of sight not only
distinguished by its temporal continuity, but also by its association with
transcendent–immanent relations: a vision infused by the traditions of spiritual
practice. Not only does such vision require time to experience, but its very exercise
requires a practice to be cultivated, it takes time to be developed. Irigaray argues that
it is in this passage of time, both in the contemplating and in the learning how to
contemplate, that the subject of radical difference is able to emerge in its uniqueness
— concurrently with the emergence of one's own subjectivity — without being
shadowed or pre-destined by the discourse of the Same. This contemplation not
only allows one to 'enter' the shared between of intersubjectivity, but the very
process is understood to create the mediating 'space'/relation.

This modality of viewing, however is not purely ocularcentric — the apprehension
of the eyes as a discrete sense — but requires an apprehension of bodily-based
modes of perception, in which a unity of body–mind is presupposed — like that
understood to underlie subtle body schemes — and therefore the subject is
considered as capable of 'contemplating' with their entire being (becoming). The
cultivation (contemplation) process enables these apprehensions to be brought to
conscious awareness.

However, there are within Irigaray's presentation of perception and sensation in To
Be Two conflicting accounts of their roles in the establishment of relations between

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9 Morny Joy considers that Irigaray's later work develops a creative form of imagination: "It is an
innovative notion of imagination that she invokes when proposing the idea of women becoming
divine. ... Irigaray is here employing an act of synthetic or creative imagination, which is no longer
confined to the Lacanian model." Morny Joy, "Irigaray's Eastern Explorations," Religion in French
Feminist Thought: Critical Perspectives, eds. Morny Joy, Kathleen O'Grady and Judith L. Poxon
(London and New York: Routledge, 2003) 51. A similar conceptualisation of the imagination as a
creative, generative 'force' is taken up herein with reference to the esoteric concept of mundus
imaginalis in chapter five.
subjects, where Irigaray herself would seem to repeat the logocentric bias she critiques. Sensation is more closely linked with corporeal reaction and the physical aspects of embodiment, and is devalued in relation to a perception that is presented as being tempered by consciousness. She writes: "In order to facilitate the relations between subjects, perception must be cultivated by memory and also by the rigor of thought."\(^{10}\)

In contradistinction, sensation is presented as an ego-based apprehension of the Other, one which is prescribed by previous experience. The subject that uses this modality of apprehension is identified as being unable to manifest an openness to alterity that would allow the emergence of uniqueness.

The subject remains alone with the history of his affections, of his sensations, a history which he [sic] remembers, recounts and repeats. The subject does not construct an active temporality, a temporality-with, but becomes reactive, saturated with intensity, without freedom, without space for initiative or creation.\(^{11}\)

For Irigaray sensibility is "untrained" and considered "infantile." It is associated with what is generally cast as the 'lowest' forms of motivation for action and relationship — instinct\(^{12}\) — a bias that carries the assumption that the ability to reason and suppress instinct is a mark of superiority, a sign of a knowing self-consciousness. As in the Bergsonian system, instinct is positioned as the lowest rung on the ladder of a human consciousness that is depicted as scaling upwards from the 'animal' towards the divine. This assumption is present in Irigaray's argument, as she calls for "a partial renunciation of immediate sensibility."\(^{13}\) This positions sensation, the felt, as distinct from an ethically superior thought, rather than it being allied with a particular type of 'thought' that may equally be capable of ethical relations. Further, the association of sensation with feeling in turn carries a negative evaluation of materiality.\(^{14}\) Irigaray writes: "To respect you requires that, in my perception of

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\(^{10}\) Irigaray, To Be Two 44.

\(^{11}\) Irigaray, To Be Two 45.

\(^{12}\) Irigaray, To Be Two 50.

\(^{13}\) Irigaray, To Be Two 50.

\(^{14}\) It should be noted however that a feature of Irigaray's work has called for revision of the concept of materialism, which as Elizabeth Grosz notes "is neither physicalist/biologist nor historicist, that neither reduces matter to the visible nor the representable." Grosz, Irigaray and the Divine, Local Consumption Occasional Paper 9 (Sydney: Local Consumption, 1986) 8.
you, I do not limit myself to the merely felt, that I refuse to be only moved by you.\footnote{Irigaray, To Be Two 45.}

The term "moved" [émue\footnote{The quotation in the French language edition is "Dans la perception de toi, te respecter demande que je ne me limite pas au senti, que je me refuse à être seulement émue par toi." Être Deux (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1997) 84. The term émue carries a direct reference to emotional experience: "moved; (gratitude) touched; … nervous; … emotional." Martyn Black and Michela Clari et. al. eds, Collins Robert Concise French Dictionary [Le Robert & Collins Compact Plus], 4th ed. (Glasgow; Paris: HarperCollins; Le Robert, 2001) 185.} here can be read to equate with an emotional (rather than intellectual) response and, as such, the feeling-based relation is not enough for Irigaray. But cannot being "moved" by someone also necessitate an opening of subjectivity: a welcoming of the new and creative (even if the experience is arduous)? Does it not imply a change in perception (of self, of Other) as a result of relation with another? This change is not the desired 'type' within Irigaray's scheme because the concept of sensation she is employing has been divorced from association with the spirit. Perception, however, has maintained an implicit relation with spirit: "perception can be trained as a spiritual method. As such, it becomes a means for respecting what exists, for contemplating it and achieving an ecstasy/in-stasy in the relationship with the perceived."\footnote{Irigaray, To Be Two 50.}

Irigaray clearly distinguishes sensation from perception, aligning sensitivity with the body and perception with the soul. Further, she associates sensation with the discourse of the Same, and perception with the apprehension of radical alterity.

Perception is sensibility, but it does not confuse the body with the soul, the work of the sense with the work of thought. Sensation would like to join them together, but before or without the cultivation of perception ... .

Sensation overturns perception in the night of the soul, reducing it to passivity towards an already established order. In contrast, perception remains aroused by what presents itself. It cultivates the attention required to discern reality, truth, love, the world, and other things as they are rather than as I imagine or would like them to be. Sensation remains more blindly passive in what is felt, and does not discriminate between dream, artifice and what is real or true.\footnote{Irigaray, To Be Two 44.}

Sensation understood as a pure immediacy of feeling–response is presented as a naive attempt to draw body and mind together without cultivation (paradoxically
immediacy of apprehension is often a delineating characteristic of intuition that, in a Bergsonian scheme, is the perceptive modality most able to apprehend the 'between'). Sensation is blind, but perception can see the invisible. Ironically sensation is linked more strongly with 'alternative' types of knowledges, for example dream consciousness, whilst cultivated perception is allied with what is 'real' what is 'true.' It is both strange and disturbing to find Irigaray presenting a binary here between artifice and truth and aligning an alternate mode of perception — dream experience — with artifice. Such a division would seem only to re-enforce the dominant privilege of the 'light' of reason over other forms of knowledge — the imaginative, the intuitive, the emotional, the instinctual.

The bias against 'felt,' or emotive aspects of interrelation is further articulated when Irigaray writes: "If it gives rise to affection, association does not arouse thought; rather, it causes reason to regress and, what is more, it brings about a loss of energy."\(^{19}\) As energy is understood as the very constituent of self, Other and the between, this loss of energy (caused by reason's regression) equates to a loss of individuation, and a loss of perception: an inability to 'see' the invisible clearly. However, cultivated perception is also presented by Irigaray as necessarily blind to the entirety of the subject: its vision, like that attributed to sensation, is obscured, partial.

The transcendence of the other however, requires that the invisible in him be respected, including when he is perceived with the senses ... there exists in the other a subjectivity which I cannot see, either with my sense or with my intellect.\(^{20}\)

It is this other subjectivity 'of' Other and self, that not only elides vision but comprises the space between. Irigaray's *To Be Two* is really a Two Be Three, with the between being ascribed an ontological agency which is both of, and not of, dual subjectivity. It is a shared space of creative and dynamic subtle relation.

Understood thus, the between of Irigaray's scheme 'inhabits' the simultaneous roles of being distinguished from the I and the Other and also constituting them by both maintaining their difference and enabling their interrelation. For Irigaray, the cultivation of perception, enabling conscious relation with I, Other and between is a

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\(^{19}\) Irigaray, *To Be Two* 45.

\(^{20}\) Irigaray, *To Be Two* 20.
spiritual activity. The cultivation of perception can be understood as the divination and divinising of self. Articulating this point Irigaray writes: "through contemplation to cultivate my subjectivity, my energy, thanks to perception itself. Subjectivity, therefore arrives at spirituality while remaining sensibility."\(^{21}\)

Here, then, sensibility (and its assumed equivalence with corporeality) is not so clear cut from perceptive cultivation, and is returned to a central position in the cultivation of relations. This seems more in keeping with Irigaray's previous work which argued for the elemental to be taken into account in subject formation and relation. For example, her discussion of air as constituting the 'ground' of being (becoming) in *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*.\(^{22}\) A core issue to this reading is how 'energy' itself is to be understood. As will be explored in more detail later, 'energy' has a deep historical tradition of being associated with spirit and consciousness, as being ontologically distinct from the corporeal, however the concept of subtle bodies permits a reading of 'energy' as also sensate, also corporeal.

The between Irigaray advocates is an idealised 'pure' space, not tainted by the felt. It is marked by an unknowable Mystery. The model of intersubjectivity is based on the cultivation of energy: energy emanating from bodies, and constitutive of self and Other and their relation/interrelation. Even though this energy is presented as inhabiting the between, but emanating from individuals, it is presented by Irigaray as distinguished from previous experience. The energy understood to 'be in' the space between is constructed as *tabula rasa*. The Other is not presented as blank and waiting for inscription, but the space of relation between the two subjects is rendered thus — it is waiting for the dual-inscription of cultivated perception. In this way, Irigaray does not adequately account for the environmental or social agencies of an energy dynamic that might effect the cultivation practice and relationship process of subjectivity: that is, the individual subject's agency is presented as the only source of affective current. In addition, as both of and not of dual subjectivity, the between can be attributed an agency, an energy of its own.

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\(^{21}\) Irigaray, *To Be Two* 50.

\(^{22}\) Irigaray challenges Heidegger's *ground* of being by proposing air as "the groundless ground of metaphysics" and as such "no other element is as originally constitutive of the whole of the world…. No presence without air." *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* 5; 8.
Although in general Irigaray supports an embrace and re-valuation of corporeality — as a critique of a form of embodiment cut off from the mind — the distinction she draws between perception and sensibility seem to play out in another form, the division of mind from body. It fails to account for the most radical interpretation of subtle body schemes in which all the bodies are constituted by both matter and consciousness of varying degrees, such that all from the most ephemeral to the most dense are mind and body together; and that these would necessarily intermingle with the 'others' bodies, and constitute the 'space' between. The teleological development of consciousness and perception accorded in Theosophical models is also evident in Irigaray's: were it not, there would be no reason to advocate a hierarchy of perceptive modalities (and, ironically, champion the one most aligned with reason).

Irigaray's presentation of sensation would seem to equate with Hegel's presentation of desire: it is the basis from which the subject moves towards the Other, but its interrelation with the 'instinctual,' the uncultivated requires that it be superseded by a more reflective, 'conscious' form of relation and thereby be distanced from 'mere' corporeality.

The type of consciousness required to apprehend the dynamics of subtle subjectivity, the invisible of self and Other is not entirely as Irigaray figures it — she is using a concept of cultivation that undervalues the instantaneous and the so called 'pure' sensible with which it is often related — rather than, for example, a notion of cultivation which conceives that the body-mind is also able to be expressed both through the purely sensible and instantaneous. For example, Ch'an (Zen) flung ink paintings, result from the cultivation of perception but instantaneously express a unity of body–mind and its ontological 'foundation' — śūnyāta. The works themselves, as static images, evoke felt, visceral responses in the viewer: they are to be looked at with more than the eyes of the intellect, but with sensation, the physical body. This example is given not to annul the practice of contemplative looking — far from it — but to problematise the sensation–perception dichotomy that has been mapped over the Same-alterity dualism. The instantaneous and the felt are not necessarily alien from the apprehension and development of ethical relations, and can be considered as implicit in the cultivation of perception.
Desire–Perception: Becoming I–Between–You

Turned towards you, my eyes are centred upon you, but they do not yet have, within, an image or a spectacle. They are always and already virginal when looking at you, at the expression of your desire.²³

At the scopic level, we are no longer at the level of demand, but of desire, of the desire of the Other.²⁴

The interrelation of desire and visuality: the exercise of looking at oneself, at others, has dominated psychoanalytic approaches to the mediation of I–Other relations. This has been a vision founded on lack: desire is desire because it is intertwined with a perception, an apprehension, of a something-other than self that is assumed to offer relief and satisfaction to an inherently incomplete self. In Jacques Lacan's figuration, the gaze is an intersubjective relation that comes, is generated, from the field of the Other. Irigaray, as a psychoanalyst and former student of Lacan,²⁵ both builds on and undermines the operations of his scopic regime in her presentation of the relations of dual-subjectivity in To Be Two.

Working in dialogue with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Le Visible et l'invisible [1964]²⁶ and introducing the scopic drive as the field in which desire²⁷ is manifest, Lacan proposes that the split in which the scopic drive is evidenced is not between the visible and invisible but between the eye and the gaze. The eye is allied with the visible, as a form of sight that measures and delineates from a singular perspective

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²³ Irigaray, To Be Two 41.


²⁵ In the 1960's Irigaray took part in Lacan's seminars and trained as a psychoanalyst. She became a member of the École Freudienne de Paris (of which Lacan was the Director). Bridget Holland, "Luce Irigaray: A Biography," 1998, 12 April 2004 <http://www.cddc.ut.edu/feminism/Irigaray.html>


²⁷ Elizabeth Grosz argues that Lacan's concept of desire brings a Hegelian concept of desire as an absence to bear on the Freudian concept vis-à-vis erotic desire and the libido. In this construction "Lacan assumes a concept of desire as the difference or gap separating need and demand: it re-establishes the specificity and concreteness of the satisfaction of need; while it participates in demand's orientation to the other." This presentation highlights the intersubjective aspect of Lacanian desire. Elizabeth Grosz, Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990) 64.
whilst the gaze is understood to encompass all other perspectives and is defined thus:

In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it — this is what we call the gaze.\(^2\)

The gaze is an excess, it "escapes the grasp of that form of vision that is satisfied with itself in imagining itself as consciousness:"\(^2\)\(^9\) that is, the gaze is understood as outside of the control of a subject's consciousness. Lacan quotes Valéry's La Jeune Parque\(^3\)\(^0\) to elucidate the subject's positioning vis-à-vis the gaze: \textit{I saw myself seeing myself}.\(^3\)\(^1\)

As beings in Lacan's design are determined by their capacity to be seen, being looked at is positioned as primary in subject formation. Yet, at the same time, one's inability to "see itself seeing itself," is identified as undermining the individual self's cohesion, and thus the conceptualisation of a 'whole' self is bound to the illusion of seeing oneself seeing. Further, one's inability to see the 'source' of the gaze — the Other — undermines self-certainty. That is, the subject is unable to give 'presence' to itself through its own look:

\begin{quote}
For, \textit{I warm myself by warming myself} is a reference to the body as body — I feel that sensation of warmth which, from some point inside me, is diffused and locates me as body. Whereas in the \textit{I see myself seeing myself}, there is no such sensation of being absorbed by vision.\(^3\)\(^2\)
\end{quote}

It is interesting to note the role of sensation in this quotation as it is the capacity to register physical sensation which is correlated to subjective embodiment and locatedness or presence: a method of defining subjectivity. This depiction runs contra to the one Irigaray presents where sensation undermines and limits subjectivities that are formed through relation to each other. For Lacan, vision, fails to be subject affirming because it cannot be embodied via sensation in the same way.

\(^2\)\(^8\) Lacan, \textit{The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis} 73.


\(^3\)\(^0\) Paul Valéry [1871–1945], \textit{La Jeune Parque} (Young Parque), poem composed between 1913-1917. See Paul Valéry, Jeune Parque et poem en prose (Paris: Gallimard, c.1917).

\(^3\)\(^1\) Lacan, \textit{The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis} 80.

As Lacan expresses it, "there is no such sensation of being absorbed in vision." Such a perspective however is entirely dependent upon the concept of vision that is being presupposed and, as this research seeks to show, other conceptualisations of vision could make possible a sensation of being absorbed in vision apprehensible to consciousness.

With regard to the Other as the source of the gaze, Lacan re-tells with horror, the amusement his friend Petit-Jean found in the 'blind' vision of a sardine can. Petit-Jean pointed out to me something floating on the surface of the waves. It was a small can, a sardine can. It floated there in the sun, a witness to the canning industry, which we, in fact, were supposed to supply. It glittered in the sun. And Petit-Jean said to me — You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!

The sardine can's blind gaze signals a de-centred subject and made apparent to Lacan his inability to master the Other, to direct, entertain or control the gaze of the 'other/Other' so central to subject formation in his system. Thus, the relation established is a ternary one: between the subject, the other and the Other. So too, are Irigaray's relations between the dual subjects cultivated by perception. There is the subject and the other and the Mystery (Other) by which (with which) their relation is mediated: in this way, Irigaray could be considered to continue the model of relations figured in Lacanian scopic regimes as she simultaneously critiques them via her discussion of recognition and the repetition of singular subjectivity. Both Lacan and Irigaray present the relations between I–Other as a ternary relation.

Central to this relation in Lacanian schemes is desire: as Elizabeth Grosz notes,

Desire always refers to a triangle — the subject, the other and the Other. The other is the object through whom desire is returned to the subject: the Other is the locus of signification which regulates the movement by which this return is made possible. The subject's desire is always the desire of the Other.

Therefore the gaze as an elision (through excess) of 'geometric' vision can be allied with desire, because both are constructed as emanating from the field of the Other


(brought to conscious awareness via relations to an other), the field of the Other in Lacan's presentation erodes a unified sense of subjectivity.

The gaze is not only the Other's vision, it is implicitly desire, and — correlated with the gaze as such — this desire is also understood as outside of the subject's mastery. When Irigaray writes of approaching the Mystery that will allow ethical relations with radical alterity to be developed, there is an intertwining of perception (not dominated by a Lacanian 'eye') and desire. It is not however, a desire that posits the fallibility of self certain subjectivity as a negativity (or as allied with the gaze) — Irigaray argues strongly that negation is essential to the establishment of ethical relations — it is desire as the co-creative agent of dual subjectivity. Although Irigaray only writes of a double desire, it is positioned as the third term in the relation. The dual subjects, albeit interrelated, still have as their base an ontological difference, and it is the space between that enables their interaction. It is perception–desire that traverses and constitutes this relation. Desire is the between — as in Hegelian and Lacanian models — but it is not solely directed from the subject toward the object, nor from the unknowable Other toward the subject in an aggressive fashion: it is absolute difference and reciprocity concurrently interrelating with absolute difference and reciprocity; creative, dynamic and elusive.

**Mystery: the Invisible Desire that Maintains Double Desire**

To respect you: to perceive you through the senses, leaving an extra cloud of invisibility. I perceive you, but what I perceive is not the whole of you, and the whole of me is not perception. I perceive what is already apparent. I perceive it with my eyes, my ears, my nose, my ears, my touch, my taste. What can I say of what is not perceptible in this manner? What I feel in excess of it — to whom does this belong?  

As the between which separates and unites dual subjects, the Mystery is the groundless ground (or for Irigaray the co-constitutive air) upon which they are presenced in relation — a processural dynamic that enables their becoming. It encompasses the invisible, the excess and reserve of each subject that Irigaray argues

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36 In *To be Two* Irigaray employs the term "negative" to signal the limits of what can be known of an Other, and the limits of the relation between subjects: "A negative prevents your reduction to me, in me. I will never be you, you will never be mine. A gap remains between me and you, between you and me. I will never be capable of perceiving you completely, and not even of loving you, or of speaking to you completely." *To Be Two* 42-43.

37 Irigaray, *To Be Two* 47.
is both necessary to be withheld from the other's scrutiny and apprehension (and indeed as the above quotation describes, is essentially difficult to be consciously perceived), and also required to be partially perceived. The issue of ownership, of attribution to a subjective agency of the excess raised in the above quotation is to be held over to the third section of this thesis where intersubjective ethics are examined more specifically. At this point it is the perception–non-perception of 'invisibility' central to the dynamic of the relation that is the focus.

There are several aspects in this relationship between self–other, visible–invisible as the following quotation outlines:

What remains to be established is a relationship between the you which exists in space and the you which exists in my thoughts, in my heart. What remains to be given is a spiritual measure to my sensibility, as if I were looking at you with one eye and evaluating you with the other. When the gaze can be harmonized in one, I contemplate you, and I contemplate in you the union of your corporeal and spiritual natures.

You therefore, allow me to see the invisible. The invisible is here. You are visible and invisible. In you, the invisible appears but also remains collected, quiet, calm. It appears and exists.\(^{38}\)

Here, Irigaray firstly calls forth a perceptual splitting of the other into two along the lines of a corporeal and spiritual dualism. Secondly the difference already discussed between sensation and perception is presented again except here rather than perception being offered as the most adequate modality of relation, contemplation is presented as the harmonisation of both sensation and perception (each an eye for ethical and spiritual vision); and, thirdly, with such eyes the invisible becomes a visible–invisible that is not entirely visible.

The visible–invisible can also be understood as co-constitutive of both the dual subjects. When Irigaray writes "I contemplate in you" rather than referring to the modality of looking like peering "in" through a window or a contemplation that allows a look "in"-side, at greater 'depths' than a surface glance, it can be understood in a more literal fashion. She could be proposing actually being "in" the other subject as she looks: this would be a relation of radical proximity, that is a form of subtle subjectivity, requiring a subtle body to be enacted.

The quotation presents a distinction between the physical and spiritual. The eyes are split along this division. Could each eye not be considered as containing degrees

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\(^{38}\) Irigaray, To Be Two 47.
of each? Such a position would more adequately parallel relations of dual-subjectivity: each subject both/and not both, not either-or. When the eyes are considered as acting in unison, Irigaray argues that they are the bridge between dual subjects: "The eyes are a bridge between us, the gestures express a desire, but this shows itself by hiding itself."³⁹

Two sets of eyes looking at one another correspond to the passage of a double desire crossing the between. It also has a double movement in relation to its agent because Irigaray attributes a double intention to desire: to "return to myself" and to "be with you."⁴⁰ Dual subjects both move towards each other whilst simultaneously moving towards themselves. The cultivation of relations with the Other is the cultivation of relations with self. It is this passage that enables the sensible to be coupled with the spiritual.

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 risk of an exchange with what is irreducible to oneself.⁴¹

However as previously recounted, this movement of relation (or between) can be attributed its own ontological status, in which case the desire of both dual subjects is conditioned by (founded upon) a third co-constitutive desire, whose agency is not entirely attributable to either subject. Such a perspective has strong correlates with the Eastern concept of śūnyāta — the groundless ground of becoming — and these are further explored in chapter seven. This third co-constitutive desire could be considered as analogous to Irigaray's "between-us," when she writes that desire "longs for an existence of a between-us."⁴²

The "hiding" of desire refers to the "reserve" of individuality which must be kept to oneself, even in relation. It forms the Mystery, the unknowable and in this way is correlated with the invisible. Although Irigaray proposes a double desire emanating for each of the dual subjects, often within To Be Two she continues to refer to desire as singular and because of this, desire is open to readings of either having its own

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³⁹ Irigaray, To Be Two 47.
⁴⁰ Irigaray, To Be Two 28.
⁴¹ Irigaray, To Be Two 29.
⁴² Irigaray, To Be Two 28.
individual agency, or as still adhering to the discourse of the Same, as it has not been subject to the equivalent uncoupling re-coupling evidenced in the proposition of dual subjectivity. Mostly within the text it is presented as a shared but distinct 'principle,' motivating and constituting relation. Considering this, desire and perception are interrelated and together constitute both a style of approaching the between and the between itself.

**Mystical Experience and the Cultivated Mind–Body**

Onward into a *touch* that opens the "soul" again to contact with divine force, to the impact of searing light.\(^4\)

It is not necessary to enter the beyond in order to find pleasure in it: it is enough to contemplate you, to think of you. It is like the sky which gives itself and withdraws itself, near and distant, always other.\(^4\)

In *Speculum of the Other Woman*\(^4\)\(^5\) Irigaray considers "mystic language and discourse" which she terms *La Mystérique* — an expression noted as not adequately translatable into a single English word, its meaning encapsulating mysticism, hysteria, mystery and "the femaleness."\(^4\)\(^6\) Irigaray argues that such discourse is a 'place' like no other in Western discourse, in which woman "speaks and acts so publicly."

This is a place where consciousness is no longer master, where to its extreme confusion, it sinks into a dark night that is also fire and flames. This is a place where "she" — and in some cases he, if he follows "her" lead — speaks about the dazzling glare which comes from the source of light that has been logically repressed, about "subject" and "Other" flowing out into an embrace of fire that mingles one term into another, ....\(^4\)\(^7\)

This is a consideration of a relation with divinity (a masculine Christian God as divine lover) that annuls, through consuming embrace, subject–object distinctions. It is an experience of relation with Other that slights the role of intermediaries — and of maintaining 'spaces' between — in its evocation: "Any intermediary would risk

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\(^4\) Irigaray, *To Be Two* 47.


\(^4\) Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* 191.

\(^4\) Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* 191.
deferring the fleeting *moment* of its coming."\(^{48}\) It is a very different relation to alterity than what she proposes in her later work (as previous discussed) where horizontal transcendence specifically requires the maintenance of a mutual (and singular) between. Yet, the horizontal transcendence of dual subjectivity can also be considered as necessitating and generating mystical discourse. That is, the cultivation of perception, developing the 'sight' to see the visible–invisible evokes relations with numinosity that flee narration in the discourse of logocentrism. The question Irigaray poses when discussing the more ecstatic experience of consumption is also pertinent to the experience of the visible-invisible (between): "But how to remember all of this if the fire was so fierce, the currents so strong as to remove all traces?"\(^{49}\)

The elemental assignation of the relation with alterity has changed: moving from the furnace of consuming passion to the air of subtle interpenetration. Indeed, the transcendent spirit is recast in an immanent relation to the corporeality of dual subjects — relations of "instasy" rather than ecstasy — that, like Hegel's *geist* is understood to be witnessed (and known) in the perceptual action between subjects. The ecstatic mystic's sight is also marked by a both/and: "Where she sees nothing and where she sees everything."\(^{50}\) The 'problem' of representing, of re-telling, such experiences is central to both immanent and transcendent models of interrelation with an Other.

In the article "Ecstatic Philosophy," Tyler T. Roberts discusses what he considers to be the mystical themes and practices in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche. Roberts does not propose that Nietzsche was a mystic per se, but rather, that his writing engages with mysticism introduced through his consideration of the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer.\(^{51}\) As Roberts recounts, for Arthur Schopenhauer the dissolution of individual identity is understood as the "truth" at the foundation of all philosophy and religion: Eastern, Western and Esoteric. However, as will be noted in this chapter and, in the third section of the thesis — Ethics — mystical experience need not be defined by an annulment of identity.

\(^{48}\) Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* 194.

\(^{49}\) Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* 196.

\(^{50}\) Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* 196.

As presented by Roberts, the mystical ecstatic experience in Nietzsche's work — in particular in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*[^52] — is such that it requires the subject to partake in a radical re-orientation to the 'real' world, and that it is this process (and not the moment of individual dissolution in ecstatic experience) that is the "true" value of mystical experience: "he continues to value an ecstatic abandon that has as its goal a certain reoccupying of the self, a resetting of or rebinding of the self to itself and world."[^53]

This perspective, Roberts argues, reflects the contemporary scholarship of mysticism that argues for a shift away from considering an experience of individual dramatic self abandon as its core definition. This definition is considered to have arisen from a complex set of circumstances including a re-orientation in theological studies towards religious experience, colonial encounters with Eastern religions, and the modern philosophers desire to "marginalize religious truth claims."[^54]

Similarly, Grace Jantzen argues that mysticism defined by the annihilation of subject–object difference; as a passive and an ineffable psychological-spiritual experience[^55] of the subject that is divorced from any interrelation with the public or the political realms of life, is an entirely modern invention largely resulting from the work of William James [1842–1910], particularly *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.[^56] Jantzen contends that a consideration of original sources produced by medieval mystics challenges this definition of mystical experience, as well as those that informed James' work, notably the presentations by Enlightenment

[^52]: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* [1883-1885].

[^53]: Roberts, "Ecstatic Philosophy" 205.

[^54]: Roberts, "Ecstatic Philosophy" 206.

[^55]: On the modern attribution of ineffability to mystical experience Jantzen writes that such a notion "would have simply baffled many of the medieval women and men whom we standrily count as mystics and who wrote volumes about their insights and experiences." Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (1997; Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 326.

philosophers (particularly Immanuel Kant) and Romantic philosophers (particularly Friedrich Schleiermacher). 57

A core point of Jantzen's argument is that what is acknowledged as mystical experience and who is attributed the label of mystic has been previously constructed in ways that are widely different from what is presented by modern conceptualizations of mysticism, and significantly, that gender and power relations have been central to changes in the terms use and definition. For example, she notes that in a Classical context — "in which Christian theology had its beginnings" — mystic was a term applied to individuals who had been initiated into the mystery religions, the rites of which, they were required to keep a secret. As Jantzen notes, there was not anything implicitly ineffable about this experience, mystics were simply "those who kept their mouths shut." 58 In early Christian theology, she identifies the mystical experience of scripture, not as an "intense psychological experience" but rather, as the comprehension of "hidden depths" in the text, where other meanings and narratives are perceived that are not evident as the literal object of the text. This understanding is close to the way that esoteric texts are considered to operate, revealing multiple layers of meaning contingent to the reader's ability and knowledge. Further, Jantzen highlights that this practice was largely the realm of men, as women did not have the education that would allow them to study the texts. 59

Regarding the modern conceptualisation of mystics, Jantzen ties the attribution of ineffability to the mystical experience, and its feminisation — that is, its characterisation in logocentric discourse as a predominantly emotional and therefore essentially 'female' experience — with the increasing secularization of society. That is, women were allowed to have intense religious experiences when the dominance of religious institutions was decreasing in the public sphere. She writes:

Furthermore, the alleged inexpressibility of mystical experience correlates neatly with the silencing of women in the public arena of the secular world: women may be mystics, but mysticism is a private intense experience not communicable in everyday language and not of political relevance. 60

57 Jantzen, Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism 330.
58 Jantzen, Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism 323.
59 Jantzen, Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism 324.
60 Jantzen, Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism 326.
Bergson's concept of mysticism (discussed in chapter three) can be seen to incorporate elements of the modern mysticism as well as arguing for its relevance within a public sphere. That is, his idea of mysticism included many of the tenets of the modern concept, including the annihilation of the subject–object distinction, but Bergson also argued that mystical experiences had significant social consequences, and that it had a role intrinsic to the 'everyday' operations of selves and society.

Referencing the research of John Bagger, Denys Turner, Bernard McGinn and Robert Gimillo Roberts advances the argument that a "plurality of mystical phenomena" has been ignored to maintain the dominance of the modern definition, predicated upon singular intense psycho–spiritual experience. The research does not discredit the experience of such a dramatic event, but argues that mystical experience is firstly "an overall pattern of life distinguished by disciplined practices oriented to the divine or ultimate." Cultivation of relation can therefore be considered at the heart of mystical experience including — as discussed by Turner — the practices of 'emptying' self. Such a perspective enables both styles of relation discussed by Irigaray — her earlier consideration of la Mystérieue and her more recent discussion of horizontal transcendence — to be considered as aspects of the discourse of mysticism.

61 John Bagger, "The Uses of Mysticism," Religious Studies Review, vol. 25 (1999): 369-375. In this review article Bagger critiques Jantzen's book Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism. Included amongst several criticisms, he argues that the application of the term mystic to some of the figures she discusses is not appropriate. However, Bagger does not provide examples, but states "some of the figures she discusses neither use this term, nor were in their own eras classified under the term." Bagger also conveys offence at Jantzen's analysis of the role of gender in the attribution and definition of the term mystic, as he condescendingly resorts to use of the terms "girls" and "boys" — that is, non-adult subjects — when outlining Jantzen's argument. He describes it as a "narrative in which the boys construe 'mystic' in such a way as to exclude and oppress women, and when, because of the effort of 'women of spirit' the girls begin to play, the boys change the rules to exclude and oppress them again." It is indeed worrying that research into the interrelation of power and gender, its historical and social ramifications, can be so summarily and derisively dismissed (and not least because the synopsis of the research is so juvenile). Bagger, "The Uses of Mysticism" 370.


65 Roberts, "Ecstatic Philosophy" 207.

66 The concurrence of transcendence and immanence is a theme taken up later in this thesis (particularly in chapter seven). However, it is worth noting at this point, that Bagger critiques Don
The discourse is one of relation, of cultivation, of perception. Irigaray's concern about how to "remember" the mystic experience (quoted above) becomes not so much a question of recall, transcription and translation but of an immediate lived praxis in "this world" now. Of course, such a re-orientation of relation to the world and to the self that such a praxis accords does not dispel with ease the insurmountable difficulties faced when trying to elide the dominant discourse that identifies mystical experience and discourse as Other. It does however de-stabilise the dualism which sets the mystic's experience outside of 'real' reality. It should also be noted that Irigaray's call for a female subject not defined and positioned by the discourse of the Same also includes a call for a God in the feminine:

Only a God in the feminine can look after and hold for us this margin of liberty and power which would allow us to grow more, to affirm ourselves and to come to self-realisation for each of us and in community. This is our still to be realized, our beyond and above of life, power, imagination, creation, our possibility of a present and a future.67

As Elizabeth Grosz points out, Irigaray is not arguing for a binary inversion — a female gendered God to replace the masculine one — but seeks to presence outside of binary oppositions, a divinity consumate with an autonomous female subjectivity.68 In her later work, this divine takes on increasingly pneumatological characteristics, for example in an interview — "The Spirit of Women Blows" Irigaray explains her position thus:

I think that, spiritually, we're in the age of the breath. Centering spirituality on the breath goes back to the most basic element of our natural and spiritual life. The body as well as the soul rely on respiration, the breath. … All spiritual traditions can unite in a culture of the breath: the Hebrew culture, Christian culture, Islamic culture, and also the cultures from the Far East.69

Cuppitt's book *Mysticism After Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998) for the way in which his interpretation of mysticism privileges immanent experience in an effort to "collapse transcendence into immanence." Bagger argues — following Evelyn Underhill — that it is mistake to present mystical experience from this perspective, and further, as evidenced by Neoplatonic mystical writing, mystic's work "equally to lift immanence to transcendence." This is a both-and relation of concurrence: "to see them as trying to unite immanence and transcendence without entirely losing (or entirely retaining) the character of either." Further examples of this type of relation will be explored in more detail in the third section of this thesis, specifically with regard to Irigaray's "horizontal transcendence" and the Eastern ontological concept of śūnyatā.


Salient to this discussion of the reconceptualisation of mysticism as inclusive of sensory cultivation practices, is Irigaray's perspective that relations with the divine are implicitly ethical, and traverse both the personal and political.

As already traced in discussing Bergson's presentation of the mystic's social and ethical role in the previous chapter, what repositioning mystical practice as an 'everyday' practice of cultivation does, is render the mystic an active agent in the 'real' world and — as a style of relation — an active 'everyday' process where one's intimate bonds (radical proximity) with self and other are evidenced. Tyler argues that this type of relation is exemplified in Nietzsche's Dionysus:

Knowing oneself as becoming, one knows oneself as already having become 'something else.' This space of emptiness in which self is divided from self is, for Nietzsche, as it is for mystics like Eckhardt and Thoreau, life-giving and divinizing. 70

In Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche71 Irigaray is critical of Nietzsche's Dionysus, claiming that he continues the dominant masculine practice of usurpation. Dionysus seeks to absorb the feminine; as Tamsin Lorraine narrates, "Dionysus attempts to become both the feminine sea and an immortal god and gets torn apart in the process."72 Central to this annihilation is desire, for as Kelly Oliver highlights, Irigaray is also critiquing the destructive nature of Dionysus' desire:

With Dionysus the tension between divine and human is too great and he goes to pieces. Human desire is violently destructive; and the god of fertility and the desiring body destroys that very body with his desire. Even Nietzsche's favourite god, the god of sensuality, sacrifices the body; with Dionysus the body is sacrificed to desire. The body is not strong enough for desire.73

With a subtle form of subjectivity the individual could be understood as inherently torn asunder, not in a single extraordinary cleavage, but in multiple, continual, overlapping peels that form the 'basis' of its processual foundations. From such a perspective, the navigation of Dionysus' dualism — feminine sea: immortal god — is an immanent, and continuous experience of subtle mystical relation, of which desire

70 Roberts, "Ecstatic Philosophy" 222.


73 Kelly Oliver, Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy's Relation to the "Feminine" (New York and London: Routledge, 1995) 120.
can be considered a creative rather than destructive constituent. As discussed with reference to Irigaray, this mystic relation requires the cultivation of perception (without the denigration of sensation), but it also requires a style of vision that admits intermediaries and the 'active imagination' — the opening subject of the next chapter.

Entering the between or the interval predominantly requires a particular relation to the self, one which understands subjectivity as a visible–invisible between. One enters the between as an embodied between: a bridge constituted by perception–desire. The bridge, as a passage between diversity, from one to the other, is often associated as traversing the between but not as constituting it. The type of bridge required by Irigaray does not necessitate space for a physical actuality, it is a temporal bridge constitutive of self, other and the invisible Mystery that maintains alterity.

In subtle body schemes, the entire subject is inherently a series of bridges forever bridging the self, each sheath or body enabling relation with the others. Collectively they enable relation with other subjects and the wider environment (physical/metaphysical). The subject itself is a heterogeneous bridge, without static departure points to bookend its volume or duration. The recognition of the unknowable of self and other is a prerequisite for cultivating an open subjectivity: to be open is to be unable to posit limits. One enters the between as a between.
Section II

Aesthetics
Chapter Five

Inhabiting Sight — Inhabiting Desire.

This chapter is primarily concerned with explicating a modality of perception — the *mundus imaginalis* — that is understood as both enabling and constituting the apprehension of the 'between.' The concept is drawn from Esoteric discourse, therefore this discipline and its tenets will also be outlined and considered. At the chapter's close a discussion of Kantian disinterest and sublime understanding is undertaken, and conceptual correlations with the *mundus imaginalis* and Irigaray's cultivated perception are drawn. In addition, the concept of detachment as an attitude of observation will be introduced (it is more fully elaborated in chapter eight).

Placed between the examination of *mundus imaginalis* and Kantian disinterest is a short discussion of Romanticism. Although placed outside of a historical chronological order, Romanticism is a hinge for the drawing together of these considerations, as its ideology contains conceptual correlates with Esoteric perceptual schemes and Irigaray's project, as well as the intertwining of aesthetic and spiritual experience.

The close of the chapter explores the Kantian categories of aesthetic experience — the beautiful and the sublime — a theme that is continued in chapter six with regard to Deleuzian aesthetics. In brief, it introduces a consideration of the sublime as not only the instantaneous overwhelming moment described by Kant, but also, like 'everyday' mysticism, as potentially a series of 'smaller' moments of relations with alterity — of the 'quieter' type more usually associated with the aesthetic experience of the beautiful — that are made conscious through the disciplined cultivation of perception.
Mundus Imaginalis: Intermediary Vision

In *Access to Western Esotericism*, Antoine Faivre identifies what he considers the core tenets of the Western Esoteric tradition: it is a list of criteria presented as a guide to ascertain what does and does not belong within its disciplinary bounds.¹ Each of the criteria can be understood to delineate styles of relation: that is, the core tenets propose various modalities of relation between self, other, world, and divine. In a most general sense, religion is essentially about quality and attitudes of relation and, as the Western Esoteric tradition is infused with material from various religious traditions both Eastern and Western, it is a site where numerous relational theories and practices are compared, correlated and synthesised. Esotericism is essentially a discipline concerned with the study of physical and metaphysical relations and, more specifically, processural relations as a spiritual teleology — the unfolding of a universal wisdom: the progressive movement towards a spiritual subjectivity, towards 'inhabiting' divinity — is one of its foundational premises.

The tenets identified by Faivre outline the praxis of processural relations:

Esotericism is, he writes, a "frame of mind."² As such, it is an attitudinal orientation that requires a radical modification of the modern Western concept of individual agency. Its tenets presuppose a visible–invisible open subject, and a between or interval bridging self, other, divine that is occupied by multiplicitous forces and exchanges.

The first tenet of Esoteric discourse — "correspondences" — calls for an understanding that "all things" exist in relation to one another (both the visible and invisible) and, further, that every phenomenon "hides a secret." Such a perspective proposes various hermeneutic approaches to decipher the mystery in each 'thing'

¹ Faivre's criteria are critiqued by Wouter J. Hanegraaff who interprets his proposal — that the tenets of Western esotericism are established from within the already existent "referential corpus" commencing in the Renaissance — as excluding the possibility of the development of new characteristics. Hanegraaff also challenges what he interprets as a distancing from the central corpus of "Occult sciences" and Christian esotericism/theosophy: "neighbouring but distinct fields." *New Age Religion and Western Culture* 401-402. Faivre responds to the methodological criticism in *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition* and in the preface provides a revised, and markedly more open-ended guide to the corpus, that highlights the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature of its objects of study (for example New Age Religion). See, Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition* xiii-xxx.

that both situates each singularity and relates it to 'all.' A hermeneutic approach is central to reading the magia (magic) of "Living Nature," another of the tenets. Broadly summarized, the natural world is understood as animated by a life force (or light) that ceaselessly links all parts. The networks of this energy are the object of study. For example, the modern Theosophists describe phenomenal reality as an Etheric web: everything is comprised of and linked by an energetic force visible to clairvoyant sight, which is able to be manipulated through various procedures. A particular sheath of the subtle body is proposed to correspond with this energetic network: the etheric body (the subtle body most closely allied with the physical). This body is both understood to be part of the Etheric Web and to be comprised of the same type of matter-consciousness. It is then possible to understand that a change in a subject's etheric body would result in reactions along the greater 'cosmic' network, and vice-versa.

"Imagination and Mediations" is the third tenet identified by Faivre, and it is the one taken up most directly within this chapter. It signifies a type of sight, a perceptual disposition that enables a subject to read correspondences, to apprehend living nature, and to glean meaning from signs and symbols, in order to see, to enter into relations with the intermediaries between the human (including Nature) and the divine. If mysticism can be considered a practice of cultivating relations with divinity through training of perception (including sensation) then the tenet of "Imagination and Mediations" can be considered the activity of such a practice. It is not focused upon a singular experience of epiphany (although it in no way excludes them) but is primarily employed to 'see' through continuous relation to "mediating entities" the activities of divinity. This is the style of vision able to witness Mystery's elusive shimmer, its faint palpitation.

The final category (excluding two 'relative conditions' previously referenced: the idea of a transmission of a universal wisdom by various teachers and the desire to identify common ideas and approaches between divergent traditions in order to establish unifying gnosis) is 'Experiences in Transmutation." Faivre uses the term — selected from alchemical nomenclature — to signify the changes to the subject brought about

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3 Faivre, Access 10.

4 Faivre, Access 12.
by the activities previously listed in the other tenets. It represents the process of a radical reorientation towards the world and divine that reflects the alchemical intention of changing base metal into gold (a 'purification' process).\(^5\) Re-interpretations of alchemical texts and images have been popular within New Age discourse — for example, Dennis William Hauck's *The Emerald Tablet: Alchemy for Personal Transformation*\(^6\) — taking up a psychological based approach to the type of transformation afforded the subject by incorporating new attitudes and approaches to their relations with oneself and others. However the ramifications of Transmutation in the Esoteric corpus far exceeds a purely psychological change and is indicative of a more radical reorientation of subjectivity in its entirety.

Central to achieving transmutation of the self is a modality of vision that is able to view correspondences, Living Nature and intermediaries. It is termed "active imagination," and is delineated by Faivre as "the essential component of Esotericism."\(^7\) It is to be distinguished from the contemporary Western presentation of the imagination as fantasy; a daydream-like cognitive substitute employed to counter the inability to obtain fulfilment of one's desires in physical reality. It is also distinguished from the Kantian imagination, as the transcendental faculty which mediates between reason (universal) and sense experience (particular).\(^8\) The role of active imagination is described by Faivre as follows:

> It is the imagination that allows the use of these intermediaries, symbols, and images to develop a gnosis, to penetrate the hieroglyphs of Nature, to put the theory of correspondences into active

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\(^8\) Although as Jane Kneller points out Kant's approach to the potency of the imagination changed over time, and in the third *Critique* he presents what Kneller terms an "empowered imagination:" an imagination that is creative and able to construct ideas that are not otherwise expressible (but it is not ontological, it does not actually produce 'another nature'). Jane Kneller, "The Aesthetic Dimension of Kantian Autonomy," *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant*, ed. R.M. Schott (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997) 186.

Mark C. Taylor's discussion of the Kantian imagination in *Disfiguring: Art Architecture, Religion* emphasises (following Heidegger) the synthetic role of the imagination, and positions it as a third term that "enables objects as well as subjects to become present or self-present." Taylor argues this ternary is reduced to a binary in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* when Kant scales back the agency of the imagination from that of an autonomous faculty to the role of a function in the faculty of Understanding. *Disfiguring: Art Architecture and Religion* 25-26.
practice and to uncover, to see, and to know the mediating entities between Nature and the divine world.... it is in no way, as in Kant, the simple, restrained physiological faculty between perception and concept, or "the mad woman in the attic," mistress of error and delusion whose victims are those who flee the world but remain trapped in their own inner universe. But rather it is a kind of organ of the soul, thanks to which humanity can establish a cognitive and visionary relationship to an intermediary world, with a mesocosm — what Henry Corbin proposed calling a mundus imaginalis.

Understood thus, imagination (imaginatio is related to magnet, magia, imago) is a tool for knowledge of self, world, Myth. The eye of fire pierces the bark of appearances to call forth significations, "rapports" to render the invisible visible, the "mundus imaginalis" to which the eye of the flesh alone cannot provide access, and to retrieve there a treasure contributing to an enlargement of our prosaic vision.... This imagination founded a visionary philosophy. Such especially energizes theosophical discourse in which it is exercised and deployed on the basis of verses of the revealed Book, both in the Jewish Kabbalah with the Zohar or in the great Western theosophical current which takes flight in Germany at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

This quotation outlines key features of the active imagination and introduces the figure of Henry Corbin and the mundus imaginalis, as well as indicating philosophical heritages which bear its markings. Of the key features, it is the active imagination's distinction from being a purely psychological activity that is significant within this framework. In being described as an "organ of the soul" it can be interpreted as having an embodied presence — embodied by a subtle body — wherein matter–consciousness exists in a co-constitutive relation. It is not a purely mental activity. Active imagination has both the role of perceiving intermediaries and being an intermediary faculty of perception itself. It will also be seen to call into question the assumption that contemplation is a passive state. It is a modality of vision tuned to apprehend the new, the singular, the invisible. Like Irigaray's perception, its development is subject to a process of cultivation, and contra to Fauve's definition that differentiates between its practice and the experience of mystical union, the active imagination can be thought of as a 'tool' for the type of mystical subjectivity proposed in chapter four.

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10 Henry Corbin stresses the reality of the active imagination: "The active Imagination [sic] thus induced will not produce some arbitrary, even lyrical, construction standing between us and 'reality,' but will, on the contrary function directly as a faculty and organ of knowledge just as real as — if not more real than — the sense organs." Henry Corbin, Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi‘ite [1960], trans. Nancy Pearson, Bollingen Series XCI: 2 (Princeton: New Jersey, 1977) 11.

11 Faivre distinguishes between mystics who in "over simplistic terms" wish to annul any intermediary between themselves and the divine, because they are figured as obstacles and the esotericist who will "appear to take more interest in the intermediaries revealed to his [sic] inner eye through the power of his [sic] creative imagination...." Faivre, Access 12
Henry Corbin [1903-1978], formerly a Professor of Islamic Studies at the Sorbonne, has been recognised as a leading Western scholar of Iranian-Islamic religion and philosophy. It is within the context of his studies of Sufism and in particular of Ibn 'Arabi\(^\text{12}\) that he coined the term \textit{mundus imaginalis}, which is also referred to as the "creative imagination." Corbin's initial studies were in philosophy (he obtained a degree in philosophy from the University of Paris in 1927), followed by study in oriental languages and employment as the sole employee of the French Institute of Archaeology (gathering Suhrawardi manuscripts) in Istanbul for six years from 1939. During this period Corbin became an Ishraki: "illuminist philosopher of Light in the lineage of Shihabuddin ibn Habash ibn Amirak of Suhrawardi."\(^\text{13}\) Considering this, he was then both a scholar of religious (including Esoteric) texts and a practitioner of an Eastern Esoteric lineage. He is also an esotericist — in the terms developed by Faivre — by virtue of his cross-disciplinary activities, as his work attends to the consideration of both Western and Eastern thinkers including Luther, Hamann, Avicenna and Heidegger. In addition, Corbin is attributed with providing the first French translations of Heidegger's work (whom he met for the first time in 1931) published in 1938 as \textit{Qu'est ce que Metaphysique?}, as well as annotating \textit{Being and Time} in Persian and Arabic.\(^\text{14}\)

The direct examination of Corbin's presentation of \textit{mundus imaginalis} is preceded herein by a potted history of some other presentations of active imagination contained within the Western Esoteric tradition. A consideration of these correlates draws attention to the pervasive nature of the active imagination (also referenced herein as Imagination) in Western Esoteric discourse (Corbin's discussion is centred around an Eastern presentation) as well as the development of the concept within the corpus.

\(^{12}\)Ibn 'Arabi (Ibn (al-) 'Arabi, Muhyi al-Din) [1165-1240] a Sufi mystic who is reportedly to have written more than 800 works. His religious philosophy — Islamic mysticism — was strongly influenced by "Hellenic, Persian and Indian systems of thought...." Bowker ed., \textit{The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions} 456-457.


\(^{14}\)Bamford, "Esotericism Today: The Example of Henry Corbin" 135.
Faivre opens his study of the Imagination — "Vis Imaginativa (A study of Some Aspects of the Magical Imagination and Its Mythical Foundations)"\(^{15}\) — with a biblical reference (Genesis 30:31-42) that relates the ability of Jacob's sheep to generate lambs by "gazing at colored bark:"\(^{16}\) an example of generative contemplation par excellence. This article traces various descriptions of a creative, active imagination in philosophical, religious and literary texts from the Middle Ages, the seventeenth century, pre-Romantic and Romantic (Naturphilosophie) eras. Faivre defines the activity of the Imagination — "the vis imaginativa, understood as an ability to act upon Nature,"\(^{17}\) — as either intransitive: effecting the body of the subject who is 'using' it; or transitive: effecting objects exterior to the activating subject. There are also, amongst the examples he presents, occasions of involuntary intransitive action for example a story re-told by Jean Ganivet in Amicus Amicorum [1431], in which a Spanish woman argues against the charge of illicit relations claiming her baby's skin colour had been effected by the painting of a group of Ethiopians in her bedroom. That is, a claim that constant interaction, physical-psychical proximity to the painting induced an imaginative agency with direct 'material' effects. Faivre notes that belief in the extraordinary (and by negative connotation unruly) powers of pregnant women's imagination continued up until the nineteenth century.\(^{18}\) This is not a moot point, as will be shown, the gendering of senses — both in terms of individual dominance and in degrees of sensitivity — is an underlying issue in the consideration of the perceptive schemes discussed herein. Most significantly, it is the 'feminising' of particular senses that has occasioned their exclusion (and derisory treatment) within dominant discourse.

Amongst the most renowned proponents of Esoteric philosophy during the late medieval and Renaissance era are Henricus Cornelius Agrippa (author of De Occulta Philosophia [1533]) and Giordano Bruno, the latter attributed as introducing the Imagination as an tool of religious and magical practices, able to be trained to allow


\(^{16}\) Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition* 100.

\(^{17}\) Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition* 99.

\(^{18}\) Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition* 100.
for the development of "divine powers." 19 Faivre identifies Paracelsus (who was referenced in chapter one) as first proposing the Imaginary as an intermediary:

He made it an intermediary between thinking and being, saw in it the incarnation of thought in the image. The soul (Gemüth), faith and imagination represent three great faculties at the disposal of humanity. The Gemüth is the "bursting of sidereal power into us, the preeminent connection of our opening to the invisible world, which governs us from inside ourselves." 20

An understanding of a shared celestial substance between the physical body (and soul) and the wider cosmos, each being open to one another, in a relation of reciprocal effect is presented here. This is the same type of inherently open relation, built upon a shared ontological 'foundation,' that has been discussed as definitive of subtle bodies, and Paracelsus' sidereal bodies could be considered as a style of subtle body. However, Esoteric philosophy also includes another conceptualisation of the body that is distinct from the multiple interpenetrating subtle body scheme, one that attributes Esoteric and spiritual agencies to individual body organs: it is most often referred to as esoteric anatomy or physiology (in Modern Theosophy it is incorporated into the subtle body system). 21 This conceptualisation of body also presents the subject as inherently open and in relation to celestial forces.

The Esoteric tenet of correspondences and esoteric anatomy is exemplified in the work of Marsilio Ficino [1433-1499], who devoted much attention to studying the effects of Saturn and proposing cures for the melancholia (the philosopher's illness) it produced. 22 Ficino's system continued on from the medieval (Galenic) belief that an individual is primarily influenced by one of four humors (phlegmatic, melancholic,

19 Faivre, Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition 101.

20 Faivre, Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition 102.


22 An English clergyman, Robert Burton [1577-1640], writing a century later than Ficino, produced an extensive work entirely dedicated to the study of Melancholy — The Anatomy of Melancholy: What It Is, With All The Kinds, Causes, Symptomes, Prognostickes And Several Cures Of It [1621], ed. and intro. Holbrook Jackson (New York: Vintage, 1977), the last edition of the book that the author oversaw was printed in 1638. Burton outlines melancholy's central causes as love and religion. For Burton's discussion on the pneumatological causes of disease ("bad air") see pages 237-241.
sanguine, choleric) and therefore they were predisposed to particular illnesses: for example, an overly Saturnian person could alleviate their seriousness and depression by recourse to Jupiter, its energies infused into the body by taking medicines and establishing relations to objects understood to bear Jupiter's signature, including silver, amethyst, white sugar, honey, lamb, peacock, eagle, calf, and "constant," "balanced," "religious and law abiding" thoughts. Frances Yates identifies Ficino's work as popularizing a re-evaluation of melancholy, that proposed the humour to yield positive attributes in contrast to the negative ascriptions of the Galenic proposition, which she lists as "sad, poor, unsuccessful, condemned to the most servile and despised occupations." Ficino's work, Yates argues, incorporates the influence of a text, ascribed to Aristotle, but which she argues is more "safely described as pseudo-Aristotelian," the Problematas Physica, this text discussing that melancholy (combined with furor) was the humour of exemplary men:

The argument is very detailed and medical but the main point is that the heroic frenzy, or madness, or furor, which according to Plato is the source of all inspiration, when combined with the black bile of the melancholy temperment produces great men; it is the temperament of genius. All outstanding men have been melancholics, heroes like Hercules, philosophers, like Empedocles, Plato, and practically all the poets.

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23 As Frances Yates summarises: "Sanguine people were active, hopeful, successful, outward-looking, they made good rulers and men of affairs. Choleric people were irritable, inclined to fighting. Phlegmatic people were tranquil, somewhat lethargic. Melancholy people were sad, poor, unsuccessful, condemned to the most servile and despised occupations." Francis Yates, The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age [1979] (London and New York: Routledge, 2001) 59.

24 It should be noted that the scholar for Ficino is masculine as evidenced in the title of his treatise "On Caring for the Health of Men of Letters," which is included in The Book of Life.


26 Yates, The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age 59.

27 Yates, The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age 61. Following on from this re-evaluation of melancholoy, Yates proposes a reinterpretation of German artist Albrecht Dürer's [1471-1528] Melencolia 1, 1514 [fig.5]. This engraving centrally depicts a female figure with wings sitting in a despondent pose (head resting in hand) amongst various objects seeming randomly strewn: sphere, ladder, nails, a crystal-shaped geometric form. Yates commends the research of Erwin Panofsky, Raymond Klibansky and Fritz Saxl that proposes Agrippa's De Occulta Philosophie as a central influence, but she argues that they do not sufficiently take into account Ficino's work: "Dürer's Melancholy is not in a state of depressed inactivity. She is in an intense visionary trance, a state guaranteed against demonic intervention by angelic guidance. She is not only inspired by Saturn as the powerful star-demon, but also by the angel of Saturn, a spirit with wings like the wings of Time." For Yates, the development of the concept of inspired melancholy is a result of the influence of occult philosophy including Christian Cabala and its angelology.
Ficino's work argued that rather than avoid the types of activities associated with melancholy, for example, study, that melancholics undertake those activities to which their humour makes them most inclined, but to also "temper" Saturn's effects with those of Jupiter or Venus. Ficino's system was not astronomically reductive in the sense that he only attributed planetary influences as the cause of illness. He also considered "natural" and "human" causes, the soul and physical states required for the scholar's practice of study, as exemplified in the extract below:

There are three major reasons why scholars become melancholiacs. The first is heaven-caused, the second is natural, and the third is human.

It is heaven-caused because Mercury, who invites us to begin our studies, and Saturn, who works them out and has us stick to them and make discoveries, are said by the Astronomers to be cold and dry... and this dry condition doctors trace to melancholy. ...

The natural cause seems to be that because the pursuit of knowledge is so difficult it is necessary for the soul to remove itself from external things to internal things, as if moving from the circumference to the center.... To be fixed at the center is very much like being at the center of the earth itself, which resembles black bile.

Thus black bile rigorously provokes the soul so that it might gather itself into one piece, stay in one piece, and be contemplated. This drives the student to the center of each thing, like the center of the world, and moves him to understand the highest things, since it is in accord with Saturn, the highest of planets.

Contemplation itself, on the other hand, with a kind of rigorous gathering up, almost a seizing, contracts one's nature like a black bile.

Ficino's system called for an intertwining of the celestial, spiritual and physical, and the linking of these spheres of life required an understanding of an invisible sympathy existing between phenomena. The undertaking of scholarly work was understood to require a more intensive relation with the planets that 'rule' the attributes required for study; however, because this practice is an excessive relation, physical disharmony results. In the example above dry and cold Mercury and Saturn make the brain dry and cold, that then sets off a chain reaction amongst the other

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29 Astronomy during the Renaissance also included what is now identified as Astrology.

30 Ficino's system however is much more complex then a simple attribution of a single planet to a personality type. He proposed the individual to be comprised of all of the planets in various degrees. Such a perspective has been psychologised with reference to archetypes in the reading of Ficino's work by Thomas Moore, *The Planets Within: The Astrological Psychology of Marsilio Ficino* (Hudson, New York: Lindisfarne Press, [1982] 1990).

bodily organs affecting not only their physical functions but their, "natural" (soul) and spiritual ones as well. The resulting illness — melancholia — like active imagination itself, is not approached as only a psychological or emotional state, since it is not considered as distinct from the rest of the physical or spiritual body.

Fig. 5: Albrecht Dürer, Melencolia I, 1514. Engraving.
In Ficino's scheme abstract thought renders a separation between body and mind that is considered unnatural — rather than as natural as in modernist paradigms — resulting in the philosopher becoming partially disembodied:

Of all scholars, those devoted to the study of philosophy are most bothered by black bile, because their minds get separated from their bodies and from bodily things. ... Body for these people never returns except as a half-soul and a melancholy one.32

Perhaps then, the erroneous conceptualisation of a mind-body split is the result of an occupational hazard! One that is healed by a re-embodiment without losing the capacity for abstract thought or spiritual experience: such an ambition is evidenced in Irigaray's project, and it is a call to which subtle subjectivity can respond.

The tenet of correspondences that underlies Ficino's system requires a particular type of imagination that apprehends immaterial associations and effects. The presentation of corporeality that results is both physical and metaphysical: the individual is presented as being capable of manipulating the invisible agencies of which it is constituted (in particular, for Ficino, three types of force: animal, natural and vital).33

Returning from Ficino's medicinal imaginary to Paracelsus' sidereal bodies, it is these bodies of celestial substance in which the images of the Imagination are formed. These images are understood to have an agency in the 'real' world. They are considered magical:

The true image gives body to our thought, transforms it into desire; it is the very body of this thought and this desire, which incarnate themselves in it.34

Image (creations of the Imagination) precedes desire and will — understood as the 'enlivening' agencies — without which they are not directed into manifestation. That is, the ontological force of desire and will are dependent upon the Imagination for physical actualisation. The linking of desire and the Imagination is continued in


33 Spirit is allied with the vital force and understood as "some vapor of the blood." Ficino, *The Book of Life* 4.

34 Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition* 103.
Jacob Boehme's presentation of the Imagination. Desire lies at the heart of Boehme's theological interpretations, as Pierre Deghaye explicates: God is understood to have created the world because of a desire to communicate "himself," the force behind "his" manifestation is desire — but God can only be known if there is a counter force that desires to know "him," that paradoxically is also God — and, as such, all creation is desire: "As Boehme untiringly defines it, desire is energy condensed to be the substance of things. At different levels, everything is desire."

Desire in Boehme's cosmology/theology operates in a similar way to that which has previously been identified as its 'operations' within Irigaray's proposal of dual-subjectivity. It is understood as a primary ontological foundation occupying the 'between' that necessarily has a particular style of perception intertwined with its apprehension.

The mundus imaginalis is positioned at the meeting place of the two forces of desire (descending and ascending). It is not only constructed as a 'faculty' to perceive the intermediary, it is presented as an intermediary zone between God and humanity. For Boehme and for his follower Johann Georg Gichtel [1638-1710] the Imagination is a Sophianic discipline that in esoteric anatomy, corresponds to the throat (in an Eastern parallelism the throat chakra). In short it is considered a theosophy.

The term theosophy (from theos, "God" and sophia, "wisdom") is most commonly employed within Esoteric discourse (certainly since the eighteenth century) to signify hermeneutic approaches towards the divine that are founded upon the belief in a shared unifying gnosis, a wisdom that can interpreted and made known to the

35 Faivre, Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition 106.


37 Found in Gnostic religion-philosophy, Sophianic disciplines are those beliefs and practices understood to pertain to Sophia, the feminine companion to God. Nataf, The Wordsworth Dictionary of the Occult 83. For a discussion of the female forms of divinity that are understood to 'embody' wisdom found in the religious traditions of the West see Caitlin Matthews, Sophia: Goddess of Wisdom: The Divine Feminine From Black Goddess to World–Soul (Thorsons: London, 1992). See also, Susanne Schaup, Sophia: Aspects of the Divine Feminine Past and Present (York Beach: Weiser Books, 1997).

seeker. Arthur Versluis argues, in his text *Wisdom's Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition*, that theosophy as a distinct area within Western esotericism (exemplified by Jacob Boehme's oeuvre), "has nothing whatever to do with the society of Helena Blavatsky" (that is, the modern Theosophical society that was discussed with regard to Astral bodies in chapter three). However, Blavatsky's Society does share a founding belief of the theosophical 'world-view' — *philosophia perennis* (perennial wisdom) — a belief in a developing traditions of teachers of a universal gnosis. This term is attributed to Leibniz, although Faivre dates the concept to the sixteenth century with the work of Agostino Steuco. It is the adoption of the perspective of *philosophia perennis* that enables the Theosophical Society and its program of cross-cultural religious study to be considered within the parameters of the Western Esoteric tradition. The active imagination is one of the "tools" requisite in both philosophical systems for deciphering the theosophy. The distinction between the corpus of theosophical Western Esotericism and Theosophical Society is not as rigid or clear cut as Versluis proposes.

Henry Corbin draws direct parallels between the theosophy of Ibn 'Arabî and that of the Renaissance and Jacob Boehme's school:

On both sides we encounter the idea that the Godhead possesses the power of Imagination ... that there exists between the universe of pure spirit and the sensible world an intermediate world which is the idea of "Idea Images," of the subtile [sic] magical body, "the world in which spirits are materialised and bodies spiritualised;" These "Idea Images" are the subtle affective 'forces' outlined earlier in this chapter with reference to Faivre's delineation of active imagination. In Corbin's reference to Jacob Boehme the ontological Imagination inhabits a realm of subtle substance situated between heaven and earth. The *mundus imaginalis* is a "theophanic vision," that brings about a "reconciliation" of the physical and the spiritual. These visions

39 Versluis, *Wisdom's Children* xii.

40 Faivre, "Ancient and Medieval Sources" 97.


42 Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabî* 153.
are "penetrations into the world they see" a conceptualisation that echoes the consideration of contemplation as a form of vision taking place "in" the other introduced in the previous chapter: "Indeed this phenomena presupposes that the fedele d'amore has understood that the Image is not outside him [sic], but within his being; better still, it is his very being.""44

The Imagination (and its Images) are ontological and, as explicated directly above, the realm of subtle bodies. The style of relation that Corbin is articulating is analogous to that of radical proximity: "so excessive is this nearness that it acts at first as a veil."45 In further correlation to concepts presented in chapter four, the active imagination draws into relation the visible and invisible, an exchange characterised by Corbin as a "sym-pathy."46 The "science" of Imagination is a theory of vision that exists in an "intrinsic" relation to reality.47

In Ibn 'Arabi's writings there is also an interrelation of the Imaginary both with the subtle body but also with Esoteric anatomy and, in particular, creative agencies ascribed to the heart (qalb). In Sufism, the heart is an organ of perception associated most directly with gnosis (ma'rifâ) and intuition. Its creative power is himma, a term that Corbin considered impossible to translate into a single French word. The activity of the heart, himma is a concept that also attributes ontological agencies to desire and the "force" of will, terms that are given by Corbin as two equivalents of himma. 48

Christopher Bamford emphasises the ontological nature of Corbin's Imaginary when discussing the relationship between the modality of perception and its realm as

43 Corbin, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi 93.
44 Corbin, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi 156.
45 Corbin, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi 156.
46 Corbin, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi 156.
47 Corbin, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi 218.
48 Corbin, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi 220-221.
"mutually sustaining." The Imaginary realm is presented as a singularity inextricably linked to its praxis: "Not existing outside of its activity, it is subjectivity itself." 49

Creative Imagination, Irigaray and Synaesthesia

Reciprocity can be drawn between this presentation of the Imaginary and the model of mystic subjectivity outlined in the preceding chapter, as both share a perceptual praxis implicit to a style of physical-spiritual subjectivity. The Imaginary becomes a correlate to the mode of contemplation proposed by Irigaray that seeks to apprehend the visible–invisible, the physical–spiritual as well as being constitutive of subjectivity itself.

The proposition of mystic perception in the work of Ibn 'Arabi is discussed by Corbin, who notes its term, dhawq, signifies a "intimate taste" or "touch:" it is a function of himma. 50 The synaesthetic relations between the senses illustrated in this description is a characteristic of theosophy in a wider sense, and it is also characteristic of Irigaray's concept of the caress. Irigaray proposes the caress as a particular type of action which 'happens' between dual subjects that is manifest as the interrelation/apprehension of sensation-perception and of the corporeal–spiritual. It is characterised as a 'third' alternative to a range of binary divisions, including gesture and word. Its motility is considered neither active nor passive, but an admixture of both which is termed an "awakening." It represents a confounding of the senses, especially sight and touch. The concept of caress as presented in To Be Two is a continuation of a previous articulation in "The Invisible of the Flesh: A Reading of Merleau-Ponty 'The Intertwining — The Chiasm." 51 In this she critiqued Merleau-Ponty's depiction of the look as a mode of touch (a palpation); for Irigaray they are not equatable in relation. 52

49 Bamford, "Esotericism Today: The Example of Henry Corbin" 127.
50 Corbin, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi 223
52 The article also contains a critique of the reciprocal relations Merleau-Ponty proposes between the Flesh of the subject and the Flesh of the world. Flesh is a term that he proposed to designate an indefinable "generality of the Sensible" that is akin to an element like water, air etc., and is distinguished from being matter or mind. It is considered an "incarnate principle" of being. It is this
Even though Irigaray does seek to privilege touch in the intersubjective relation, the caress is a confounding of the senses that binds together the physical and the spiritual, not in an experience 'external' to the self but internal: like intimate taste (dhawq) it is a mystical relation, an instasy: "An invitation to peacefulness instead of 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."\(^53\)

It is a synaesthetic relation. As an aesthetic ideal synaesthesis directly challenges art practices dominated by optical sight. Constance Classen\(^54\) identifies the multi-sensory practices of Western artists of the late nineteenth century — in particular Symbolists — as not only concerned with evoking synaesthetic responses but with correspondences that open the 'viewing' subject to the cosmological. To exemplify her point Classen cites the influence of Boehme's cosmology on the British Symbolists (although she is careful to point out that the Symbolist ideal was focused on the potential for transcendence, their ambitions were otherworldly). Classen also identifies modern Theosophy as popular amongst the Symbolists, and more directly in France, through the sponsorship of the esoteric fraternity *Ordre de la Rose + Croix*.\(^55\) That is, correspondences (a tenet of Western Esotericism) are utilised not

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\(^53\) Irigaray, *To Be Two* 28.


\(^55\) Classen, *The Color of Angels*. 117-118. Established by Joséphin Péladin (Sar Mérodack Péladin) the *Ordre de la Rose + Croix* was a revival of the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross, an occult group that was reported to have existed in Germany 1614 and to have been founded by Christian Rosenkreuz: its existence was revealed in a text *Fama Fraternitatis, des Löblichen Ordens des Rosenkreuzes* 1614, published in Kassel. A protestant theologian, Johann Valentin Andrea is thought to have been the author, and has more concrely been attributed the authorship of later publications of the Society, in particular *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreuz* (*Die Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosenkreuz* 1616). The mythology of this (perhaps itself mythological) Order has influenced many strands of Western esotericism, including the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (of which Bergson's sister was a central member) as well as numerous artists and writers. For accounts of its history see: Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians. The History and Mythology of an Occult*
only for the type of open and interrelated relationships 'between things' it proposes as existing, but also because of the style of imaginary this perspective requires is conducive to multisensory aesthetics. Classen goes further to suggest that the New Age — a recapitulation of Western esoteric ideas in Eastern religious practices, strongly influenced by the Modern Theosophical Society — attempts to overcome the modernist mind-body split through multisensory activities, for example aromatherapy and reflexology. Classen notes that, as a movement, the New Age is primarily concerned with alternative models of perception and argues that it: "perhaps offers the closest approach in contemporary society to a multisensory aesthetics."\(^{56}\)

There is another element of the synaesthetic experience that confronts the bias of dominant Western discourse, and which is of central importance to Irigaray's oeuvre: it is the challenge it presents to the traditional gendering of the senses: the masculine senses are those considered "higher" and understood to be more involved with reasoned thought, in particular vision, whilst the "lower" senses particularly touch and smell were considered feminine, and closer to 'instinctive' or feeling nature. Classen unfurls historical examples of this bias in her consideration of the phenomena, commencing with the scathing attacks of synaesthetic experiences and, the Symbolist project of Max Nordau. Nordau designated it as a pathology and aligned it with hysteria. It was for Nordau an indicative, and none-too-pleasing signal of arts future trajectory, she writes: "Eventually, Nordau concluded, art 'will no longer be cultivated except by the most emotional portion of humanity — by women, by the young, perhaps even by children.'"\(^{57}\) As Classen illustrates, Nordau's perspective clearly enforced traditional sensory hierarchies that implicitly feminised both synaesthetic experience and art practice in general.\(^{58}\)

The challenge to the hierarchy of senses implicit in dominant discourse has not only been taken up within contemporary postmodern theory by Irigaray: she is but one of a much wider field that includes, for example, Hélène Cixous' biographically inspired  

\(^{56}\) Classen, The Color of Angels 159.  

\(^{57}\) Classen, The Color of Angels 121.  

\(^{58}\) Classen, The Color of Angels 119-121.
accounts of her blinded 'sight' (suffering severe myopia) and its restitution after surgery.\(^{59}\)

A creative incursion into the logic driven practice of writing 'philosophy' has been indicative of many of these approaches. These have (broadly speaking) included poetic expression, as the symbolists poetry also sought synaesthesia through poetic form, that not only provoke more visceral responses — to put the philosopher "back in" their body — but also require an evocation of the reader's imaginary in their apprehension. The synaesthetic experience clearly correlates with knowledges positioned as peripheral and 'other' in dominant discourse; the challenge to sense hierarchies is a challenge to perceptual hierarchies not divorced from the language that 'expresses' and creates them.

A synaesthetic experience of 'vision' takes a step closer to a mode of looking that one feels. It makes more conceivable the subjective relation of being "absorbed by vision" that Lacan (as noted in chapter four) proposes as impossible.\(^{60}\) In describing the developmental stages in the cultivation of *mundus imaginalis*, Corbin notes quite explicitly that its ambition is to bring about an experience where "the contemplant is the contemplated,"\(^{61}\) an ability to see oneself seeing. The *mundus imaginalis* depicted by Corbin positions a synaesthetic experience as an inner vision intimately related to physical embodiment (esoteric anatomy). It is a constituent of mystical subjectivity, an ontological force, the action of "ardently desiring"\(^{62}\) that creates, sustains and opens subjectivity as a processural intermediary.

The practice of active imagination is, for Corbin, the same as contemplating a flower: there is an analogous relation between Irigaray's (Buddhist inspired) sight and that of *mundus imaginalis* — it is their mystical intention.


\(^{60}\) "For, *I warm myself by warming myself* is a reference to the body as body — I feel that sensation of warmth which, from some point inside me, is diffused and locates me as body. Whereas in the *I see myself seeing myself*, there is no such sensation of being absorbed by vision." Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* 80.

\(^{61}\) Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* 232.

\(^{62}\) Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* 222.
To say that one of our thoughts, sentiments, or desires is concretized in a form specific to the intermediate plane of Idea-images of subtle [sic] matter ('ālam almithāl), is the same as to meditate before a flower, a mountain or a constellation in order to discover not what obscure and unconscious force they manifest, but what divine thought, flowering in the world of Spirits, is ephiphanized, is "at work" in them all.63

Such modes of looking intend to experience the subtle interrelations of the subject and the world, the physical and metaphysical. They enact an aim of esotericism in general: to reconcile the immanent and transcendent.64

**Romantic Undertones**

Lurking amongst the previous discussion of esotericism are several central themes of Romanticism, and this section moves away from direct discussion of mundus imaginalis to consider aspects of the conceptual heritage that supports both the idea of the imagination as visionary, its role in aesthetic relations and the interrelation between art practice and spiritual experience (theoaesthetics), especially of the modern mystical variety. In undertaking these considerations Romantic precursors, in particular the work of Kant and Hegel, will also be addressed.

In his discussion on the influence of the Western esoteric tradition on contemporary New Age discourse (there is very little 'new' about the New Age) Wouter Hanegraaff identifies Romantic ideology as centrally important in the conveyance of Renaissance esoteric thought into the present day:

An esoteric, Neoplatonist–Hermetic worldview constitutes the traditional background of Romanticism; but it is the temporalist framework — a product, not of the original Enlightenment, but of its Counter-Enlightenment reaction — which constitutes the truly innovative element.65

Hanegraaff’s specific argument focuses on the influence of temporalisation on the Platonic plenum formarum66 — Chain of Being, — in the eighteenth century as

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63 Corbin, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi 236.

64 Faivre, "Ancient and Medieval Sources" 15.

65 Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 420.

66 Plenum used as an adjective in Latin means "abundantly," while "formarum" comes from "forma" meaning "form, shape or appearance" and "idea, nature, kind." Plenum, as illustrated in the following quotation has been used to signify "all being." "We can pretend, as Aristotle does, that this world encloses all being, and that outside this world there is nothing; nec plenum nec vacuum
identified by Arthur O. Lovejoy. In turn, it is Lovejoy's proposal that this temporalisation is the origin of Romantic evolutionism and the practitioner's quest towards the infinite. The temporalisation of the Great Chain is clearly seen in modern Theosophical cosmology, and the developmental teleology towards the manifestation of spiritual perfection (or realization) is indicative of Hegel's agenda for the self-conscious subject that preceded British Romanticism. Hegel's scheme positions art as a development of Absolute Spirit. As Micheal Inwood notes, for Hegel "Art does not simply reveal God: it is one of the ways in which God reveals, and thus actualizes himself." This actualization process is figured by Hegel to unfurl — with the development of the self-conscious subject — over time, through history.

In a discussion analysing the debates regarding the central elements of Romanticism between Lovejoy, René Wellek and M.H. Abrams, Hanegraaff identifies three elements that, although not championed by all the authors, he considers as central: organicism, imagination and temporalisation. Temporalisation will be taken up with regard to Images in the next chapter, it is organicism and imagination that reverberate most closely to this chapter's discussion of the esoteric concepts of Living Nature and the mundus imaginalis. These themes also interrelate with Charlotte Dormandy's delineation of Romanticism's central aspects: sacramental symbolism, sublimity and embodied nature (virtue). The tenets of Living Nature and Correspondences have equivalence with the perspective utilised in sacramental symbolism and embodied nature, that required the faculty of imagination to "deal in symbols." The Romantic imagination according to Dormandy is visionary and affirms the subject's involvement in transcendent reality.

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68 Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture 418.


Both Dormandy and Hanegraaff concur on the centrality of experience (and interpretation of this experience) of the 'real' world as the basis for the transcendent relations apprehended by the imagination. As Dormandy states: "an enhanced respect for the realm of finitude and the flesh that is revealed as an effective sign of our inhabitancy of another order." This particular perspective (again analogous to esotericism's tenet of Living Nature), is also indicative of Irigaray's approach to subjectivity and spirituality (without Romanticism's teleological impetus).

Dormandy's additional claim that Romanticism is characterised by "a profound affirmation of the reality of mystery," allows a further ideological correlation to Irigaray's delineation of the constituents of subjectivity as inclusive of an unknowable mystery. The mystery for Irigaray however is figured as being interior and exterior to subjectivity rather than purely exterior. In contra-distinction to Irigaray, romantic ideologies embrace a spiritual focus centred on individual access to transcendent experience not an immanent embodied one. In the Romantic case, the real world was a 'vehicle' for going somewhere else, not itself the destination.

It is through creative activity that the Romantics sought relation to this mystery, and it is through a creative modality of perception (one that is not predestined by previous experience) that Irigaray proposes relations between dual subjects can be established. Both perspectives hinge on the approach towards the Other (mystery) as an aesthetic undertaking — the cultivation (creation) of relations is an aesthetic practice — that opens the subject to the spiritual.

As noted by Mark C. Taylor, the Romantic ideology carries forth the theoaesthetic ambitions (and the influence of Jacob Boehme's cosmology) of the Jena group, which included Novalis, Fichte, Hölderlin, Schelling, Schiller and Schleiermacher: the redemptive and manifesting power of art — an intertwining of art and religion — that was figured in response to Immanuel Kant's philosophy. Grace Jantzen reads the German Romantics (in particular Schleiermacher) "exaltation of feeling" as a direct

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72 Dormandy, "The Flowering of the Romantic Spirit" 159.

73 Taylor describes the Jena Group's shared project thus: "In an effort to fashion a therapy suited to the ills of the times, some of the most creative individuals of the era conceived a theoaesthetic in which art and religion join to lead individuals and society from fragmentation and opposition to integration and unification." Taylor, Disfiguring: Art Architecture and Religion 46.
reaction against Kantian rationality, which eventually led, in Jantzen's opinion, to the modern concept of the mystical experience of the divine being fundamentally an intense, inexpressible (pre-linguistic) experience of overwhelming proportions (it could be considered a sublime experience in the Kantian sense without the final stage proposed by Kant, where reason overcomes and integrates the confusion caused by the sublime phenomena). Jantzen considers Kant "a lifelong enemy of mysticism and an arch-misogynist" and notes his linking, and devaluation of mystical "schwärmerei" with women.  

It is to Kant's prescription of relations of disinterest in aesthetic judgment, and the dominance of the sublime relation in contemporary art practice that the latter part of this chapter turns.

A philosophical examination of the correlation between spiritual and artistic experience within the Western tradition far exceeds the scope and bounds of this research project. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that their intertwining is not necessarily implicit, but constructed and maintained in response to social, political and religious circumstances. This may seem a case of stating the very obvious in a very general way, yet attention must be drawn to the fact that the common Western assumption of the individual artist existing in some privileged relation to the spiritual is, in itself, a legacy of romantic ideology, of the same type that locates the mad genius, or the 'spiritualised' indigenous or Eastern 'other' as implicitly in an inherently 'closer' relation with the spiritual, because of their assumed distance from rationality or 'culture' (even if the form of divinity itself is considered as illegitimate or negatively). This concept of the artist and their numinous relations informs the very way one approaches the consideration of artwork: that is, even prior to an analysis of content, these beliefs influence viewer's attitudinal orientation towards the work. In an effort to disrupt this typecasting — without negating the idea that the artistic and the spiritual can interfold — emphasis herein is placed on the attitude with which the 'viewer' approaches the artworks, including the agency that the viewer attributes to the work (as the previous discussion on mundus imaginalis highlighted, art practices can even be attributed an ontological agency). Stated generally, this perspective supports the understanding that artworks can be designated 'spiritual' on account of the subject matter or

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intention as delineated by the artists or, alternatively, that artistic practice can be incorporated into a spiritual practice, but it also contends that works can be a source of relation to a spiritual reality — figured as radically Other — through the exchange that is created between (and by both) the work and the viewer. That is, that the process of 'looking' at an artwork contains the possibility of modifying subjectivity, and in particular, of bringing the subject into a more conscious awareness of their own subtle exchanges with alterity. The mundus imaginalis is one such perceptual attitude that shifts the process from a passive 'reading' of the assumed static content and/or intent of the artwork to an acknowledgement of the co-creation (and interpenetration) between subject–object, their mutual and reciprocal effects (this processual dynamic is taken up directly in the next chapter).

Desire and Disinterest

In contradistinction to the Romantics who sought to valorize the aesthetic experience of subjective immersion in the sensual, creative experience, Immanuel Kant considered that relations with, and particularly evaluations of, aesthetic objects — "judgements of taste" — should be undertaken with disinterest. That is, only a contemplative attitude expunged of desire (or self "interest") would identify the pure, universal aesthetic validity of the object:

Everyone must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste. One must not be in the least prepossessed in favour of the real existence of the thing, but must preserve complete indifference in this respect, in order to play the part of judge in matters of taste.⁷⁵

The intersubjective desire which animates Jacob Boehme's cosmology and the mundus imaginalis, which also constitutes a bridge between Irigaray's dual subjects, has no place in Kant's consideration of aesthetics. However, in his form of judgement that is brought to bear on aesthetic objects — reflective judgement — imagination plays a key role in the mediation between subject and object, and the harmony or disharmony arising from the imagination's meeting with the faculties of understanding or reason, as elicited by aesthetic experience, does result in feeling states. Before turning towards those states — the pleasure elicited by beauty and

the "negative" pleasure of the sublime — it is useful to consider the conceptual heritage of Kant's disinterest in more detail, because implicit in its application to art is the belief in the autonomous nature of the aesthetic object. This is a perspective that sustains the notion that art's purpose is 'internal' to itself, that it is distinct from other fields of life experience, and that its function (and evaluation) should not take these other realms into account.

Martha Woodmansee traces the application of the term 'disinterest' as a privileged mode of considering artworks to an essay by Karl Philipp Moritz [1756-1793] — "Towards a Unification of All the Fine Arts and Letters under the Concept of Self-Sufficiency"76 — and she notes it pre-dates Kant's publication of the Critique of Judgement by five years. Woodmansee argues this essay contains the "modern conception of the arts," and she provides the following synopsis of Moritz's argument:

Works of art, he argued in this and in his subsequent writings are "self-sufficient totalities" produced simply to be contemplated "for their own sake" — that is, "disinterestedly," purely for the enjoyment of their internal attributes and relationships or effects they might have.77

That is, that the value and purpose of the artwork is intrinsic, and not mediated or created by its relations to, or as Woodmansee puts it, its "interventions in" human life. In such a figuration the aesthetic realm is simultaneously removed from its impact on a broader, public sphere, as well as from particular personal subjective relations and meanings. The work's effectiveness in influencing its audience, in communicating a specific message, its ability to be comprehended in such a way that it may be understood to directly influence human activity and belief was superceded by the conviction that its purpose, its aesthetic validity and success was measurable only by recourse to its aesthetic qualities.78


78 Woodmansee, The Author, Art, and the Market 12. In Paul Guyer's tracing of Kantian disinterestedness' conceptual pre-cursors, it is noted that the straightforward linage that attributes Kant's presentation as building on those developed by Francis Hutchenson is erroneous. It does not account for both British and German theorists who critiqued the notion that art was autonomous, and that its value could not be "explained without an appeal to more general sources of value." Further, Guyer cites the work of Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten and Moses Mendelssohn as rejecting the
Paradoxically, Woodmansee's investigations into the experiences and ideas informing Mortiz's conceptualization of self-sufficient artworks uncovers a religious heritage that belies the secular nature often attributed to art's autonomy (that has dominated the twentieth century). She argues that Moritz transferred the Quietist's — a form of German Pietism — concept of God onto the assumed purpose of the artwork, thus making both self-sufficient entities:

in the religion of Moritz's youth, which posited absolute self-sufficiency, or freedom from dependence upon anything external to Himself, as a necessary condition of the pure perfection of the Deity. […] Moritz observes that the beautiful object "does not exist for the sake of the perfection of anything else, but rather for the sake of its own internal perfection".  

Even more worthy of note in this context, is the description Woodmansee provides — drawn from Moritz's autobiographical novel Anton Reiser — of the Quietist goal of achieving "total abandonment of the self and entry upon a blissful state of nothingness" in the relation with the deity. This is an immersive relation comparable to the annihilation of subjectivity considered a central characteristic of the modern idea of the mystical experience. In Moritz's account, this is a relation in which self-love is exterminated, which in turn enables a selfless love of God that is "totally disinterested [uninteressierte]" to arise. As Woodmansee recounts, for Moritz, the concept of art's autonomy in favour of interpreting it "as a special form for the representation of ontological and moral perfection which could, although not with the same kind of feeling, be represented in other forms of thoug as well." Paul Guyer, Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 95-96.

79 Alan M. Olson has also identified German Pietism as influencing Hegel's philosophy. This can be exemplified by considering Hegel's proposition that Geist "works" in the world through Action against Olson description of the privileging of action in Württemberg Pietism: "for the fundamental question in Pietism has to do with making real or wirklich what is asserted as being formally and materially true — that is, wahr — in action or in life as lived." Alan M. Olson, Hegel and the Spirit: Philosophy as Pneumatology (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992) 27.

80 Woodmansee, The Author, Art, and the Market 19. Woodmansee contends that the driving force behind proposing art as self-sufficient was the desire to subvert the rising commercial market rapidly developing through the rise of printing technology at the time. In this way, works of art could be considered as valuable if they were not popular, and indeed, the very fact that they were not consumed by the masses, attested to their validity as superior art: "In the claim that the 'true' work of art is the locus of intrinsic value — a perfectly self-sufficient totality that exists to be contemplated disinterestedly, for its own sake — Mortiz makes a triumph of defeat and 'rescues' art from determination by the market." Woodmansee, The Author, Art, and the Market 32-33.

81 Karl Philipp Moritz, Anton Reiser: Ein psychologischer Roman (Berlin: Friedrich Maurer, 1785-94).

contemplation of a beautiful artwork results in "a pleasant forgetfulness of ourselves [angenehme(s) Vergessen unsrer selbst]," the result of which is that "we seem to lose ourselves in the beautiful object." Moritz defines disinterested pleasure as this forgetting of self. 83 Thus, as Woodmansee concludes: "In its origins the theory of art's autonomy is clearly a displaced theology." 84

Therefore, following this conception, disinterestedness, as an attitude with which to approach the contemplation of aesthetic objects, is not distinguished by the negating of the effect that an artwork has on an individual subject, that is, its ability to sustain their interest. Nor is disinterest to be understood as requiring the viewing subject to suppress or restrict their apprehension of the object's appeal, but rather, an attitude of disinterestedness engages the senses to the extent that a perceptual immersion in the object causes the subject to become less conscious of the boundaries that separate subject and object, and hence of their own particularity. Disinterest then, results not so much in a limited form of relation, than from an excessive one. The lack of interest pertains to the conscious selection of an "interest" against which the entity is measured. As self-sufficient, both God and beautiful artworks are presented as measurable only against themselves, and are, therefore, not suited to be evaluated with regard to the highly subjective interests (or desires) of an individual or group agenda. This form of self-forgetting can be understood as both an unconscious 'epiphany' style experience — the pleasure of the beautiful object instantaneously erasing all recourse to self (which paradoxically could be considered a sublime experience) — or it could implicate a relation of self-knowing, in which the subject is understood as conscious of the agendas informing their own evaluative frameworks. That is, in order to negate the influence of these interests in reading the work's effectiveness — or identifying its universality in a Kantian quest — the viewer must cultivate an interest in their own interest. In which case, the subject's consideration of their particularity is brought to bear on the aesthetic relation, by the conscious decision to annul its influence and expression. Chapter eight develops these themes in more detail with regard to cultivating relations with other subjects and divinity; it is salient at this point however, to propose that the idea of self-forgetting, of putting oneself aside, so central to sustaining the idea of art's autonomy, can paradoxically


imply the need for a cultivated practice of self reflection in order to know what one's interests actually are. Secondly, this framework for judging aesthetic experience is strongly founded on the presupposition that the object of analysis is static. The analysis is focused on the viewer's response to an object (within prescribed limits), and not the subject's influence upon the object. In such a perspective the temporal dynamic and agency of both subject and object are greatly underrated.

**Simultaneously Beautiful and Sublime**

In Western discourse the parameters established by Kant between the aesthetic experience of the beautiful and the sublime is a pervasive dualism that continues to haunt the conceptualisation of aesthetic experience. In particular visual art production continues to be read within and against the bounds of theoesthetic discourse, not only for its proposed properties enabling salvation but, in the case of its disruptive (sublime) capacities, for its articulation, or signaling of a radical Other. As Stephen Happel notes in his consideration of art in the context of secular spirituality: "The wonder images evoke makes them an appropriate vehicle for the difference that counts as a spiritual encounter with an ultimate other."

Following Descartes, wonder as an attitudinal approach to difference is explored by Irigaray in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* to designate a mode of interaction free from preconception. As a term it presents a mode of approach that is not tainted with violent overtones that are characteristic of the sublime aesthetic relation, a notable aspect of Romanticism.

The legacy of romantic (and by influence esoteric) ideology on Irigaray's project is evident in the modifying role accorded to perception. There is a correlation between the sublime (as an aesthetic experience) and the type of relation with alterity that Irigaray is seeking to challenge. As that which exceeds comprehension, the sublime

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as figured by Kant threatens the individual ego, its alterity unable to enter into harmonious relations with the subject, understood as a disharmonious relation between reason and the imagination. It is, therefore, an inexpressible form of annihilation (no matter how exquisite). Kant figures it as a "negative pleasure."

For the beautiful is directly attended with a feeling of the furtherance of life, and is thus compatible with charms and a playful imagination. On the other hand, the feeling of the sublime is a pleasure that only arises indirectly, being brought about by the feeling of a momentary check to the vital forces followed at once by a discharge all the more powerful, and so it is an emotion that seems to be no sport, but dead earnest in the affairs of the imagination. Hence charms are repugnant to it; and, since the mind is not simply attracted by the object, but is also alternately repelled thereby, the delight in the sublime does not so much involve positive pleasure as admiration or respect, i.e., merits the name of a negative pleasure.88

It is a meeting with alterity that is threatening, it is a view that the inability to cognise is an inadequacy that undoes cohesive subjectivity. As such, an aesthetic apprehension is figured at the heart of relations with alterity. A formless mystery that correlates with death as distinguished from the beautiful, that is also understood to encompass a mystery, but one — as indicated in the above quotation — that is life-affirming. Further, the sublime's disharmony is caused by an antipathy between imagination and reason whilst there is no such conflict between understanding and the imagination (that is, the faculties involved in the aesthetic experience of the beautiful). Such binary frameworks are disrupted by perceptive schemes like that of mundus imaginalis as this Imagination is not presented as a 'lower' or instinctive type of mental faculty but, inversely, is considered an 'advanced' faculty of perception inclusive of ontological agency.

Kirk Pillow's reading of the operations of imagination in Kantian and Hegelian aesthetics proposes sublime understanding as an interpretive framework — "the Interpretative Sublime" — with which to approach both artworks and world. In contradistinction to Kant's reflective judgement, employed, as discussed above, to discern the universal in the experience of the beautiful, sublime understanding — as another form of reflective judgement — is employed to make sense of the indeterminate unity which a sublime experience yields, and in so doing, it accommodates the particular, subjective and contextual influences that judgements of taste (as disinterested) do not admit. For Pillow, sublime understanding's telos is "to reach for a unified meaning by relating diverse material into a sense-making network

88 Kant, The Critique of Judgement §23; 91.
of affinities." However, he also notes, that a singular, cohesive, unified meaning is never achieved, but rather sublime interpretation is "always a partial and open-ended insight...."

The type of imagination accorded to this sublime understanding is a productive imagination, and Pillow develops his argument with recourse to one form of imagination proposed by Hegel's Phantasie (as distinct from reproductive [reproduktive] and associative [Einbildungskraft] imagination outlined in Philosophy of Mind91), a concept of imagination that is attributed a creative agency, that brings forth perceivable signs and symbols from the chaotic depths of the feeling-soul: "This creative imagination produces symbols and signs that, each in quite different ways, represents the content imagination works up from intuition." As the basis for sublime understanding, this creative imagination attributes generative potentialities to the process of sublime interpretation that reach far beyond the internal autonomy of the artwork. In this sense, Pillow's construction of sublime understanding as a way of 'looking' at artworks shares similarities with mundus imaginalis; indeed Pillow terms the sublime understanding's operations and effects as "world-making:"

Sublime understanding helps invent our indeterminate worlds; it also violates the limits of current comprehension without pretending that its product is complete or that it now captures some given reality. Aesthetic reflection's production of indeterminate webs of shared meaning provides un constantly un-whole worlds, riven by irreducible heterogeneity, confused juxtapositions of incongruous interpretation, and multiple avenues for critique and transformation, but it helps articulate worlds for us nevertheless.

Implicit in this conceptualization is an ethics, for sublime understanding is a method of establishing relation with alterity which, similar to Irigaray's conceptualization of cultivated perception, meeting difference is creative whilst also always and


90 Pillow, Sublime Understanding 288.


92 Pillow, Sublime Understanding 288. See also: Hegel, Philosophy of Mind §456; 209-210.

93 Pillow, Sublime Understanding 303.
necessarily unable to be totally comprehended. Pillow writes of the sublime understanding's aim that it "reaches for an understanding not yet thought and, given the limits of sublime reflection, never to be thought completely." It is a modality of knowing that eludes complete conceptualisation whilst still being able to provide not only understandable meaning, but to propose new perspectives that result in "revision of ourselves and the worlds we inhabit." Pillow terms the type of knowledge gleaned from sublime understanding as "the Other of received and determinate understanding," and identifies its very operations as requiring an "ethics of vision."

It advocates a complicating way of seeing that pushes beyond received understanding to attempt a deeper insight. … Wrestling meaning from the sublime void beyond our habits of mind, however partial and context-specific the understanding that results, leads us to constantly question our habits, to stretch out for what has been left unthought.

It is in this sense, a modality of vision for perceiving the invisible, bringing together threads not yet woven clearly into conceptual form, that perhaps will never be and yet the import and agency of this information is not devalued because of this indeterminancy. Rather, as Pillow notes, its potential for influence and effect is substantial if one is both "willing to be overwhelmed by complexity," and if we respond "generously and attentively to their possible validity." The imperative for meeting alterity lies squarely as a subjective responsibility and includes the perceptual skills, the modes of visuality that the subject chooses to develop and employ, as well as those of the resulting experiences the subject chooses to valorize.

Considering aesthetic experience in the context of the Kantian beautiful-sublime dualism, it is the sublime which has been valorised within the dominant Western avant-garde tradition. This positioning has been investigated and critiqued by Cornelia Klinger, who aligns this binary with other dualisms implicit in dominant Western discourse, specifically the masculine-feminine binary. Klinger is highly critical of Jean François Lyotard's approach to the inherent gender bias in Kant's work noting that, although Lyotard draws attention to the bias, his project reinforces

94 Pillow, Sublime Understanding 294.
95 Pillow, Sublime Understanding 312.
96 Pillow, Sublime Understanding 317-318.
97 Pillow, Sublime Understanding 300; 318.
the inequality of the dualism by marginalising the beautiful to an extent far beyond its original positioning by Kant. This allows Lyotard to privilege art (rather than nature) as the primary location of the sublime.98

In a curious turn, Kant's delineation of the sublime moment — the "check to the vital forces," an experience also indicative of the singular 'epiphany' style of a feminised mystical experience — is associated with masculinity. They meet as site/sights of violence. The sublime experience in Kant's system signals the failure of the imagination and the reassertion of reason as a faculty "independent from and superior to the senses and to nature."99

At the heart of the beautiful–sublime dualism is a dualism of relation between immersion–detachment. The feminised beautiful is associated with the sensible and nature, a harmonious interrelation whilst the masculinised sublime is linked with inharmonious relation or division and (eventually) with a detached and superior reason. The mundus imaginalis proposes an aesthetic relation that requests both immersion in the sense of an implicit interrelation and reciprocity between subjects–objects and detachment established through an understanding and experience of the Imagination's (creative imagination's) singular agency. This is a point that will be drawn with more clarity in chapter eight. Essentially however, it is an approach to experience (aesthetic–ethical) that incorporates elements of both the beautiful and sublime. It requires an immersion in the corporeal senses and the dynamics of invisible agency that embraces the inability to know one's own and another's limits and boundaries and, that simultaneously requires a process of detachment (but not abstraction).

98 Cornelia Klinger, "The Concepts of the Sublime and the Beautiful in Kant and Lyotard," Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant, ed. R.M Schott (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997) 200-204. Klinger also notes that Kant and Lyotard evoke the sublime for entirely different ends: for Kant to reassert the unified subject of rationality for Lyotard to undermine and render asunder such a cohesive subject (205). Kirk Pillow critiques Lyotard's use and interpretation of the sublime for presenting "a purely negative construal of an aesthetics of sublimity." That is, the sublime for Lyotard is to be celebrated for its disruptive force, for the failure of conceptualization that it signals. For Pillow Lyotard's perception of the sublime as a form of resistance against totalizing discourses, does not take into account the creative, and world-making aspects of its experience. Pillow, Sublime Understanding 302-303.

This is the style of relation that Irigaray draws close to in her discussion of perception and dual subjectivity. It encompasses the unity and integration identified by Mark C. Taylor as an implicit aim in the theoaesthetics of the Jena group and a radical fragmentation and opposition that is distinctive of the first stages of the sublime experience (and, following Klinger's argument the assumption that artistic innovation must enact discordant relations with its context remains a dominant ideology in Western avant-garde art practice).  

Taylor's own attempt to bridge the opposition of unity (which he exemplifies with figurative art) and radical fragmentation (non-figurative art, exemplified by modernist abstraction) resulted in his proposal of an "a/theoaesthetics" exemplified by postmodern artists engaged in a practice Taylor terms as disfiguring. A/theoaesthetics critiques theoaesthetics from within its paradigm: it is not an outright rejection and, as such, seeks to circumnavigate the polarities of the unity–fragmentation dualism by occupying the space in between. The paradox however, is that, by 'locating' such a space, his non-dualism (no matter how sneaky) works to reinforce the polarities that bookend its positioning. Even though the disfiguring is an oscillating intervention, forever in the process of re-negotiating the presence–absence of the other, it is constrained by the absolutes that delineate its space. A more radical approach would view the polarities themselves as both volitional and permeable without reducing one-to-the-other or collapsing their singularity. In such an approach the location of the between itself is impossible.

The dynamics of the sublime aesthetic experience can be gleaned in Taylor's disfiguring when he narrates the opening of subjectivity it entails as a threatening, painful occurrence, one "suffers a disfiguring for which there is no cure."  

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101 Following the Hegelian privileging of Classical art as the "perfection" of artistic practice, because, he argued, "the spiritual was completely drawn through its external appearance," that is, Hegel considered Classical artwork to be the perfect unity of the spiritual Absolute and nature (materiality). G.W.F Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures of Fine Art*, vol. 1, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford, Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1975) 517.

In the same way as a/theoaesthetics is presented as moving ceaselessly between polarities, Taylor presents it as parallel to and intertwined with an a/theology that is positioned between the theistic and the atheistic.

If it must be described in classical terms, it might be defined as something like a nonnegative negative theology that nonetheless is not a positive. A/theology pursues or, more precisely, is pursued by an alterity that neither exists nor does not exist but is beyond both Being and non being. This unthought and unthinkable beyond is suspended between poles that constitute twentieth century theology.\footnote{Taylor, \textit{Disfiguring: Art Architecture and Religion} 316.}

The difficulty that arises in relation to this concept of alterity — beyond both being and non-being — is that it is placed in a radical beyond and it is unclear how it is even to be glimpsed, let alone entered into relations with. In chapter seven a model of subjectivity is examined that proposes the simultaneous occurrence of being and non-being. It too arises from a double negative, yet, as will be demonstrated it does not close the door to articulation, it is not considered "unthought" nor "unthinkable."

For Taylor, modern art practice has paralleled modern theology, and the contemporaneous a/theoaesthetics and a/theology share a strategy of resistance towards the polarities — figurative/non-figurative: unity/fragmentation — that have circumscribed their disciplines. At the core of these practices is an engagement with difference, and Taylor's perspective is similar to Irigaray's in that both seek to develop relations with an incomprehensible and inherently irreconcilable difference. In both projects ethics is at the heart of aesthetic and spiritual experience.

The above account of Romanticism and theoaesthetics is given not only to account for some conceptual correlates and interrelationships but also to make apparent the ground of the art–spirit relation that is assumed as implicit in the next chapter's discussion of the aesthetics of desire. A certain conceptual framework is required to enact the coupling. From the perspective of \textit{mundus imaginalis} this requires granting Images (whether internal or external) an ontological agency; from the theoaesthetic ideological lineage, the emphasis is on embodied experience leading to relations with the divine (art and nature are prime sites for this occurrence). As discussed, these two traditions of approach to creative endeavour and, its interrelation with the spiritual have shared conceptual cross-fertilisation. Further, both the Esoteric
tradition and Romanticism have been sites of exchange between diverse spiritual
disciplines.  

The *mundus imaginalis* is a style of vision that collapses binary division, between
matter and consciousness, the visible and invisible, the senses such as taste and sight,
the immanent and transcendent, the physical and metaphysical. As a practice it also
disrupts clear divisions between the states of active and passive. Subjectivity may
be active "in" a passive physical state — the mystical experience not only defined by
'hysterical' fits and uncontrollable movement (although not excluding these
phenomena — but certainly not demonising them). It has been the esotericist's role
to mark out, through a praxis, a space in which a vision could be developed that
established relations with intermediaries — the augur defining and entering
contemplative space — whilst simultaneously developing their recognition of their
own subjectivity as intermediary through the process.

Whether the physical body is still or not whilst engaged in *mundus imaginalis* it is
not a passive "watching:" it is one that requires an embodied relation to actualise the
Imaginary relation. It is an innovative process, that necessitates an open
subjectivity, requiring the individual to cultivate a mystical subjectivity, a subtle
body.

It is a style of sight in which desire and vision become more firmly embedded in one
another. The inhabiting of desire as an ontological 'force,' is the praxis of Imagination
(and of intuition in a Bergsonian sense). The inhabiting of desire in this way is
essentially an aesthetic relation to self and world. From the Greek "sensation"
(*aisthesis*) it seeks a more careful attention to the subject's entire sensate

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104 Dormandy identifies Romanticism's appeal to practitioners of many diverse faiths as its most enduring legacy: "through romantic art, an unprecedented traffic of religious experience was made possible between Christians of all kinds and all kinds of spiritual post-Christians. This, in my view, is the chief spiritual legacy of romanticism; that it transcends the divine within and between the spiritual orthodoxies and heterodoxies of Western religious culture is of its essence. Dormandy, "The Flowering of the Romantic Spirit" 181. Such traffic also took place in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, especially via the Modernists W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot. See Susan Johnston Graf, *W.B. Yeats Twentieth-Century Magus: An In-depth Study of Yeat's Esoteric Practices and Beliefs, Including Excerpts from His Diaries* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 2000); Timothy Materer, *Modernist Alchemy: Poetry and the Occult* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Leon Surette, *The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, and the Occult* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

experience. To achieve this modality of vision does however require an intention: it
must be chosen to be developed and utilised. Accepting responsibility for how one
looks, as well as acknowledging that such practices have intersubjective effects upon
oneself and others — including the invisible and unknowable — makes its
undertaking an ethical choice. It requires an openness to phenomena with no
intention of defining, knowing or mastering them.
Section II

Aesthetics
Chapter Six
Durée: The Aesthetics of Desire–Time

We are not in the world, we become with the world; we become by contemplating it. Everything is vision, becoming. We become universes.¹

Two aspects of aesthetic experience are the focus of this chapter. One examines the interpenetration of subjects and objects; the fast-slow dynamics of an aesthetics of durée that can be understood as traversing the space "between" the object and the viewer. The other — more directly continuing the concerns of the preceding chapter — considers the crystal-image² and its special position within Deleuze's system of cinematic images. It is to the consideration of this 'direct image of time' and the film medium, that the thematic of seership and mystical experience as a modality of becoming allied with particular perceptive activity will again return.

Underlying these considerations of aesthetic experience is the experience of an ontological desire-time, constitutive of the interval; what will be termed herein as dans l'intervalle the "meanwhile"³ to designate the splitting of time that is centrally characteristic of Deleuze's crystal-image. This French expression carries both the meaning of interval in a spatial and temporal sense, but also the meaning of "meanwhile:" dual occurrences, numerous contemporaneous experience, split visions, narratives, times. As a concept of time it will be discussed with reference to Wong Kar Wai's film In the Mood for Love [2000].


² In a discussion on the division of images into two systems, organic and inorganic, Deleuze cites Wilhelm Worringen's use of the term crystalline. For Worringen there were two stylistic forms of art "a 'classic' organic system and an inorganic or crystalline system with no less vitality than the first…." Deleuze, Nég' tiati' ns 1972–1990: Gilles Deleuze [1990], trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) 67.

³ Intervalle is attributed the meaning of "space" or of "interval." The expression dans l'intervalle is translated as the single English word "meanwhile." Martyn Black and Michela Clari, et al. eds., C’lin’s R’bert C’neise French Dic’ m ary [Le R’bert & C’lin’s C’mpact Plus] fourth edition (Glasgow; Paris: HarperCollins; Le Robert, 2001) 279.
Before the discussion of aesthetic experience can be entered into, it is necessary to briefly outline a limited selection of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts relating to subjectivity and desire as they are implicit in considerations of aesthetic experience. The ideas establish (in a corollary with subtle bodies), a processural foundation underlying the aesthetic experience that makes the boundaries of subject and object indistinct. As it is impossible to take up all the subtly diverse renderings of subjectivity within Deleuze's and Deleuze and Guattari's oeuvre within the bounds of this project — which would be an ample subject for a thesis devoted specifically to that purpose — the concept of the 'body without organs' (BwO), which is clearly discussed in relation to desire, has been selected as the specific focus and starting point for the consideration of an aesthetics of durée.

**Desire and the Body Without Organs**

The process of desire is called "joy," not lack or demand.4

The proposal of an onto-ethical desire that has been emerging through the consideration of subtle bodies in the previous chapters has close affinities (but is not analogous) with desire as formulated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. The presentation of desire no longer tainted by a psychoanalytic lack, or desire that is purely sexuate is a shared concern. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is comprised by a number of forces (never a singular force) of which the sexual would be but one intensity. An emotive, feeling state is identified as implicit in desire: joy.

There is, in fact, a joy that is immanent to desire as though desire was filled by itself and its contemplations, a joy that implies no lack or impossibility and is not measured by pleasure since it is what distributes intensities of pleasure and prevents them from being suffused by anxiety, shame, and guilt.5

The experience of joy is set as a counterpoint to the Lacanian experience of desire that can never be fully satiated and, no matter how pleasurable, has a painful or

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anxious underbelly. Deleuze and Guattari are careful however, to ensure that desire is not considered a "state of nature" but, rather that it arises and is presented through "assemblages."

And above all, it is objected that by releasing desire from lack and law, the only thing we have left to refer to is a state of nature, a desire that would be natural and spontaneous reality. We say quite the opposite: desire only exists when assembled or machined. You cannot grasp or conceive of a desire outside a determinate assemblage, on a plane which is not preexistent but which must itself be constructed. All that is important is that each group or individual should construct the plane of immanence on which they lead their life and carry on their business.... We don't believe in internal drives which would prompt desire. The plane of immanence has nothing to do with an interiority; it is like the outside where all desire comes from.

In their presentation, desire is mobilised through relation, that is the act of relation (a little like the way Hegel's geist is presenced in the world through action): relations which not only establish the 'plane' of its existence but also one's own subjectivity — an extensive form of becoming that exceeds the organic form termed (following Antonin Artaud) the "body without organs" or "BwO." This conceptualisation of a disembodied body has considerable conceptual resonances with subtle body schemes, and these will be unfurled in this chapter. The departure point is a consideration of the relations between desire, the body without organs and the plane of immanence.

The BwO is the field of immanence of desire, the plane of consistency specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it).  

The formation of assemblages is co-constitutive of both the subject and its plane of existence. Desire is productive. The field of immanence is the productivity of desire as manifest through its assemblages. It exits in a relation of co-constitution with these assemblages, including the body without organs, and may be thought of in

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6 Joy in the context could perhaps be understood as akin to the concept of wonder as discussed in the previous chapter, as enabling an opening to alterity that is not predetermined by violence.

7 Deleuze, "What Is Desire?" 136-137.

8 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 154.

9 There is also a correlation between Deleuze and Guattari's presentation of desire and that of Jacob Boehme's as outlined in the previous chapter: however, unlike Boehme, desire in Deleuze and Guattari's scheme is not subject to any form of transcendent ordering hierarchy. "It is the constitution of a field of immanence, where desire constructs its own plane and lacks nothing ...." Deleuze, "What Is Desire?" 139-40.
a similar manner as co-dependent arising (Pratītya-samutpāda): a core element in Buddhist philosophy/religion that conceives of everything as "mutually dependent and co-arising and co-ceasing." As clearly expressed by Philip Goodchild, the plane of immanence is proposed to avoid the Universal One and the consequent discourse of the Same:

Deleuze's plane of immanence is an attempt to think the unconditioned apart from the Whole or the One. For once being is thought in relation to the Whole or the One, the series of conditions are organised into a hierarchy on a transcendent plane — the organisation of essences transcends the existence of individuals.

The plane of immanence is exactly that — immanent — and is unable to be posited as generated from a particular foundation or causation. It has not arisen from an internal agency — although it is not excluded from one — and it is not attributed as arising from purely external forces — although again, it is not excluded from such manifestations: in short the binaries of inside-outside are not sustained within this concept. It is immanence, and its nature with regard to its constituents is interpenetration and flow. The following explication is given in A Thousand Plateaus:

The field of immanence is not internal to the self, but neither does it come from an external self or a nonself. Rather, it is like the absolute Outside that knows no Selves because interior and exterior are equally a part of the immanence in which they have fused. Everything is allowed: all that counts is for pleasure to be the flow of desire itself. Immanence, instead of a measure that interrupts it or delivers it to the three phantoms, namely, internal lack, higher transcendence, and apparent exteriority.

As the subject's boundaries are nebulous and porous, the plane of immanence cannot be delineated with reference to its boundaries. Immanence is posited by the continuous and profuse flow of desire. Directly following the above explanation of the plane of immanence, Deleuze and Guattari discuss the Ta′ as analogous to it. The Ta′ is central to the Chinese religious and philosophical system Ta′ism.

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10 Masao Abe, *Zen Comparative Studies, Part Tw′ s a tw′-v′ lume sequel t′ Zen and Western Th′ught*, ed. Steven Heine (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997) 94. Co-dependent arising will be discussed in more detail in the third section of this chapter. It is however useful to draw a conceptual comparison in passing, that will later be more fully developed.


13 Taoism or Daoism: "Chinese religious and philosophical system, taking many different forms, and influencing other religions, greatly, especially Buddhism. The two major forms of Taoism are
is most commonly translated from the Chinese to English as "way," and it is often exemplified by analogies to water. For example Lao-tzu, the (possibly mythic) author of the Ta`-te Ching or "The Book of the Way and its Power" [oldest copy c.200BCE], describes it as a producer, and, its manifestation in the world thus: "The Tao in the world is like the flow of streams through valleys into a river into the sea."15

Ta` also carries the meaning of "teaching" and in this sense relates to the "right" or moral behaviour of citizens; its meaning and 'way' prescribing laws for human conduct.16 The Ta` is manifest in the world as Te (Chinese: "power" or "virtue"), that is both the energies of Ta` in the world and the virtue that one attains by following and living in harmony with the Ta`. It is in this second sense of Ta` and the expression of Te, that implies an order, regularity and system (albeit fluid) that the concept may diverge from Deleuze and Guattari's more disordered/rhizomatic plane of immanence, and their presentation of the BwO (in A Th`usand Plateaus) that argues it is not "opposed to organs but to that organization of the organs called the organism."18 For their purposes, it is the Ta` s implicit collapsing of all binaries, its immanent articulation and production through forces or flows that elicits the clearest association with the plane of immanence.

In Deleuze and Guattari's scheme it is the nature of desire to form assemblages and desiring-machines: "assemblages are passional, they are compositions of desire,"19 that, as presented in Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,20 do not exist in a philosophical, tao-chia (daojia), and religious, tao-chiao (daojiao); but both are intertwined …" Bowker ed., "Taoism," The Oxf`rd Dicti`nary `f W`rld Religi`ns 951.

17 Bowker ed., "Te," The Oxf`rd Dicti`nary `f W`rld Religi`ns 958.
18 Deleuze and Guattari, A Th`usand Plateaus 158.
19 Deleuze and Guattari, A Th`usand Plateaus 399.
harmonious relation with the body without organs. This conceptualisation of subjectivity is generated from their argument that the schizophrenic experiences "nature as a process of production." The tension attributed to the phenomena is described as the relation of production to anti-production.

Desiring–machines make us an organism; but at the very heart of this production, within the very production of this production, the body suffers from being organized in this way, from not having some other sort of organisation, or no organisation at all .... The full body without organs is the unproductive, the sterile, the unengendered, the unconsumable.

In this context their apparently disparaging description of the body without organs centres on its portrayal as a surface on which all the desire–machines can be inscribed, a process that in turn allows for the description of the body without organs as being the originator of the desiring–machines; whereas, in fact, it is presented as a site of nonproduction, a "stasis" that interrupts this production, whilst concurrently being produced by it.

This discussion of the antipathy between desiring–machines and the body without organs (as presented in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schiz`phrenia*) is given here to emphasise that, although the plane of immanence is conceptualised as the manifestation of fluxes and flows, it is not conceived as a pure creative plenum without disharmony, and a site of tension is located between subjectivity as a body without organs and immanent productive desire (a disharmony of an affective type emerges also in Deleuze's discussion of the third type of sensation expressed by artistic practices, discussed below).

Returning to the BwO's conceptual correlates with subtle bodies, the two concepts share a proposal of the subject as inherently open and dynamically interlinked with phenomena outside of mere corporeal bounds.

Not man [sic] as the king of creation, but rather as the being who is in intimate contact with the profound life of all forms or all types of beings, who is responsible for even the stars and animal life, and who ceaselessly plugs an organ-machine into an energy-machine ....

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21 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 3.


23 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 8-16.

Further, with regard to the description in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where the BwO is presented as being constituted by a number of plateaus ("A plateau is a piece of immanence")\(^2^5\), the subject then becomes a matrix, or stratification, of planes of forces and fluxes, an idea that resonates with the Theosophical presentation of subtle bodies as being comprised of different bodies that, in turn are comprised of matter–consciousness drawn from different planes of existence. Further, the BwO is a site of communication between various plateaus: this makes subjectivity a modality of passage, just as the subtle body is conceived of as being comprised of interpenetrating sheaths that, overall, perform a processural bridge between different types or densities of matter–consciousness (different planes of existence). Significantly however, the Theosophical model is premised upon the movement towards a transcendent spirituality that is also immanent (in various degrees) to physical reality (by the various co-existent and interpenetrating planes of matter–consciousness). This aim of ultimate transcendence is not a feature of Deleuze and Guattari's cosmology or propositions of subjectivity: "Every BwO is made up of plateaus. Every BwO is itself a plateau in communication with other plateaus on the plane of consistency. The BwO is a component of passage."\(^2^6\)

The conceptual correlations with subtle bodies are borne out further when considering Deleuze's considerations of Ethology and Spinoza, in which to exist in a Spinozist manner is a praxis, a way of life. It is both to inhabit the plane of immanence but it also carries the connotation of concurrently creating or "constructing" this plane "if one is to live in a Spinozist manner."\(^2^7\) Deleuze delineates two approaches towards the body by Spinoza: the first is to view it as comprised of particles moving at different speeds; the second, to define it as an effective agent. That is, the "capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality."\(^2^8\) Deleuze argues that to live, as proposed by Spinoza, is to not define a "body (or a mind) by its form" and further, by its subject, its functions or its substance: it is rather to live defined by the affects of which one is

\(^2^5\) Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* 158.

\(^2^6\) Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 158.


\(^2^8\) Deleuze, "Ethology: Spinoza and Us" 625.
capable, by one's ethological capacity.\textsuperscript{29} It is to have no prior knowledge of one's limits, of one's capabilities. Ethology is defined by Deleuze as follows:

Ethology is first of all the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterise each thing. For each thing these relations and capacities have an amplitude, thresholds (maximum and minimum) and variations or transformations that are peculiar to them. And they select, in the world or in Nature, that which corresponds to the thing, what moves or is moved by it.\textsuperscript{30}

This presentation of a body assumes an individuality that exceeds the corporeal — as in subtle body schemes — and that each "thing" has a particular temporality (speed) and affective capacity — this is also correlative to the different sheaths of the subtle body that are defined by their perceptive capacities (and as has been previously discussed, perception is interrelated with affectivity as different modalities of perception effect the quality of apprehension and interrelation between subjects and objects) and by their dynamic rates of vibration. Resonating with a Bergsonian perception that selects from the whole of durée, the Spinozist body as presented by Deleuze selects from its 'environment' that with which it corresponds (dynamically or affectively). This type of relation is also reminiscent of the esoteric model of correspondences (discussed in the previous chapter), where "invisible" sympathies unite phenomena, and are mutually comprised and transformed in and by affective relations. In her consideration of Deleuze, Spinoza and Ethology Moira Gatens argues that it opens the way for an "ethics of the molecular — a micropolitics concerned with the 'in-between' of subjects, with that which passes between them and which manifests a range of possible becomings."\textsuperscript{31}

This interpretation is to be extended to include the range of exchanges between 'subjects' and 'objects:' especially considering that, from an ethological perspective, a body-without-organs necessarily disrupts and makes nebulous and fluid the boundaries between forms (as does the concept of subtle bodies). From this perspective it is clear that the between is considered not only as generating an ethics, but necessarily incorporating an aesthetics into its weave: the apprehension of the dynamic and kinetic exchanges understood as leading to the realisation of the

\textsuperscript{29} Deleuze, "Ethology: Spinoza and Us" 626-627.

\textsuperscript{30} Deleuze, "Ethology: Spinoza and Us" 627-628.

individual's affective capacity and responsibility. It is an aesthetics premised upon the understanding that the interaction accords transformational exchange, that it effects the temporality — the speed and slowness — of the subjects/objects: this is an aesthetics of *durée*.

**An Aesthetics of Durée**

True art aims at portraying the individuality of the model and to that end it will seek behind the lines one sees the movement the eye does not see, behind the movement itself something even more secret, the original intention, the fundamental aspiration of the person ...."32

Even when they are nonliving, or rather inorganic, things have a lived experience because they are perceptions and affections.33

In *What is Phil’s ‘phy*, Deleuze and Guattari further evince the position that there is an interrelation of flux and flow between 'subject' and 'objects' in their consideration of the artwork and its interrelation with materiality and the "void." In their discussion, an artwork is accorded a special position: it is given the status of an enduring singularity, something that "exists in itself." Delineated as "blocs of sensation," or a compound of percepts and affects, the artwork is noteworthy in its independence from both its creator and its viewer.34 This independence occurs, Deleuze and Guattari argue, as a result of its constituents — percepts and affects:

Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man [sic] because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself.35

The definition of percepts is resonant with Bergsonian perception in that it is a feature of the Image or the 'thing;' they are "in" it (and extend beyond it), rather than projected onto it by an exterior agency. Percepts are attributed a role similar to that of cultivated perception (as previously defined vis-à-vis Irigaray): that is, to make perceptible the otherwise imperceptible forces that circulate in and enliven self and


33 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Phil’s ‘phy*? 154.

34 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Phil’s ‘phy*? 164.

35 Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Phil’s ‘phy*? 164.
world. Affects — following the Spinozist ethological perspective — are forces that are further described by Deleuze and Guattari as the "n’human bec’ mings ’f man" and, as such, they are created in artworks and it is their role to "draw us into the compound." Both percepts and affects extend beyond material form (like the matter-consciousness of subtle bodies) and are understood to have an existence that is not reliant upon it, and therefore exist in direct relation to the "void" (plane of immanence in its formless state).

Although understood as being different "in principle" to materiality, sensation is also understood to be a facet of it; as well as being understood to extend into the 'space' beyond the material form. The distinctions between matter and sensation are not clear cut — "it is difficult to say where in fact the material ends and sensation begins;" and it seems that the material is the vehicle for sensation's activity in the world: "Even if the material lasts for only a few seconds it will give sensation the power to exist and be preserved in itself in the eternity that c’exists with this sh’rt durati’n."

Therefore, as a bloc of sensation, the artwork contains the possibility of creating something new (it is not simply a 'selection' or a framing of what already exists but may not have been presenced): it contains within it the quality of addition. This is a very different concept of sensation to the one first introduced in T’ Be Tw’ by Irigaray, that is presented as correlate with the discourse of the Same, and a concept of materiality limited by pre-determined form. It is closer in conceptualisation to Irigaray's presentation of cultivated perception (in which perception and sensation become contemplation through interrelation); and the image's ability to create something new, to provide addition, gives it something of the agency attributed to images of the creative imagination (mundus imaginalis).

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36 "Is this not the definition of the precept itself — to make perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world, affect us, and make us become?" Deleuze and Guattari, What is Phil’s ‘phy 182.

37 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Phil’s ‘phy? 169.

38 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Phil’s ‘phy? 175.

39 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Phil’s ‘phy? 165-166.

40 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Phil’s ‘phy? 166.
Deleuze and Guattari identify three types of sensation in *What is Phil’e Ph?”*: vibrating sensation, coupling sensation and opening or splitting, hollowing out sensation.\(^{41}\) The first, *vibrati’n* is comprised of the temporal flux of different intensities that 'simply' comprise the artwork. Intensities are described by Daniel W. Smith as "energetic materiality in continuous variation;" these therefore are qualities of materiality and sensation in both form and formless states.\(^{42}\) They are reminiscent of Bergson's "rhythms" of duration, where materiality as implicitly time (*durée*) is understood to exhibit its own unique temporal dynamic.\(^{43}\) In a further comparison, each sheath of the subtle body could be understood to express an intensity specific to its matter–consciousness, that gives it its particular energetic qualities.

The second, *the embrace ‘r the clinch* is the meeting of two sensations that results in a deep resonance "of what are no more than 'energies'" and the third type of sensation — *withdrawal, divisi’n, distensi’n* — is the example of a reverse movement, when two sensations draw apart only to be united by the 'space' or 'gap' — "by the light, the air, or the void" — that then arises between them. As they move apart in this manner, they are understood to be a "bloc that no longer needs support."\(^{44}\) Sensation is then clearly uncoupled from the material and understood as occupying (like an onto-ethical desire) the "space between,” as an independent agency.

There appears to be a conceptual affinity with this third movement of sensation and Irigaray's dual subjects of ontology: each a 'being' in its own right, yet intimately linked by a 'shared' space between them, a space that divides them as it simultaneously unites them. This third type of sensation is exemplified by Deleuze with reference to painting triptychs in *Francis Bac’n: The L’gic ‘f Sensati’n*.\(^{45}\) The space between each of the three paintings (that comprise one 'work') in the British

\(^{41}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Phil’e Ph?”* 168.


\(^{43}\) It is also closely reminiscent of Hindu cosmologies that attribute an innate quality of vibration to all material manifestations, as exemplified in the discussion of *chakras* in chapter one.

\(^{44}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Phil’e Ph?”* 168.

artist's series articulate the 'space' of sensations united by distance. In this last type of sensation there are also faint echoes of the Kantian sublime (in fact the first two types could be considered reminiscent of the harmonious relations characteristic of the experience of the beautiful), whilst in the third there is a disruptive cleavage, that does not sever or annul the relationship but creates the apprehension of an unbridgable gulf between the sensations. The sublime relation becomes embodied within the dynamics of the artwork itself: it is not an object eliciting a sublime relation 'in' the viewer, it is the sublime 'moment' in its entirety.  

The theory of sensation allows Deleuze and Guattari's consideration of art practice to reject concerns of representation and to focus on the dynamics of forces: material and immaterial; visible and invisible. As succinctly expressed by Smith, "Paul Klee's famous phrase echoes through Deleuze's writings on the arts like a kind of motif: *n't t` render the visible, but t` render visible.*" This is the aim of contemporary artist Marina Abramovic in *Crystal Cinema*, to create installations that are conducive to the viewer experiencing the invisible and energetic aspects of their subjectivity (including materiality) by establishing a contemplative space where relation to (communication with) an 'object' is privileged and encouraged. In such relations the artwork is understood to be a processual dynamic becoming that interrelates with the subject-viewer's own becomings (and all the concurrent multiple becomings that surround it). The rates of speed, of vibration, of affective intensity of sensation, become the communication between artwork and viewer. Such a communication opens the subject to alterity, as their mutual becomings intertwine (whilst remaining singular). Sensory-becoming presences a becoming-other (that is not a becoming-same). As Deleuze and Guattari write: "Sensory becoming is the action by which

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46 Daniel W. Smith argues that Deleuze's conceptualisation of sensation is the result of trying to reconcile the two types of Kantian aesthetic experience, the objective and subjective elements of sensation: "Aesthetics since Kant has been haunted by a seemingly intractable dualism. On the one hand, aesthetics designates the theory of sensibility as the form of possible experience; on the other hand, it designates the theory of art as a reflection on real experience. The first is the objective element of sensation, which is conditioned by a priori forms of space and time (the 'Transcendental Aesthetic' of the Critique *of Pure Reason*); the second is the subjective element of sensation, which is expressed in the feeling of pleasure or pain (the 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgment' in the Critique *of Judgment*). Gilles Deleuze argues that these two aspects of the theory of sensation (aesthetics) can be reunited only at the price of a radical recasting of the transcendental project as formulated by Kant …. In this case, the principles of sensation would at the same time constitute the principles of composition of the work of art, and conversely it would be the structure of the work of art that reveals these conditions." Smith, Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality" 29.

47 Smith, "Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality" 40.
something or someone is ceaselessly becoming–other (while continuing to be what they are) ....”

It is the artwork’s creative agency, its capacity to posit the new and to 'figure' the 'invisible' forces of the plane of immanence, that allows for Deleuze and Guattari’s correlation of artistic practice with mystic practice (following Bergson). They identify the precept as the artist's vehicle for mystical experience.

Through having reached the percept as "the sacred source," through having seen Life in the living or the Living in the lived, the novelist or painter returns breathless and with bloodshot eyes. In this respect artists are like philosophers ... because they have seen something in this life that is too much for anyone, too much for themselves, and that has put on them the quiet mark of death. But this something is also the source or breath that supports them through the illness of the lived (what Nietzsche called health). "Perhaps one day we will know that there wasn't any art but only medicine."49

The type of contact with the "sacred source" discussed above has close association with indigenous shamanic practices,50 the Shaman often being identified by having endured a near-death experience (hence the title "wounded healer").51 Although it is not possible to enter into a discussion of the ameliorative effects of art practice (both the creation and experience of), art as "medicine," is certainly conceivable within the bounds of Deleuze and Guattari's presentation. If human illness is understood to be caused initially by an imbalance of energies — as it is for example in Ficino's medical Imaginary, Hindu (Ayurveda) and, Traditional Chinese Medical (TCM) systems — as an affective agency, artwork could be understood, when entering into relation with a subject (through either creative or contemplative practice), to either engender a harmonising or disruption to the 'energies' of that subject (ethological relations).

48 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Phil’s ‘phy? 177.

49 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Phil’s ‘phy? 172-173.

50 Deleuze and Guattari are quoting Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio, HAI (Paris: Flammarion, 1991) 7. They provide this additional note: "(I am Indian' — although I do not know how to cultivate corn or make a dugout)." What is Phil’s ‘phy? 230, fn 11.

What unites artists, philosophers and mystics within Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualisation is the experience of seeing "too much:" the sublime encounter. As discussed in chapter four, the subtle subject is always in the process of 'seeing' "too much," of being radically open, so that life experience can be understood as a mystical praxis of continual 'peel' rather than a singular sudden jolt of excess. Seeing "too much" is a style of vision, an attitude of subjectivity towards the world, the practice of cultivated perception. It is the vision required to 'meet' alterity and is a central characteristic of a subtle subject's daily practice.

Moving from considering the more 'static' forms of artwork to cinema practices that utilise an overtly processural medium, the crystal-image (a type of cinematic image identified by Deleuze) and the type of subjectivity it presupposes is the focus of the second part of this chapter. The sensation-perception of the crystal-image is identified as another site offering an opportunity to see "too much," to experience subjectivity as an assemblage of forces, to grasp the self as a processural embodiment intimately interrelated with a singular 'between' or interval.

**The Glint: Crystal Subject — Crystal Images**

The visionary, the seer, is the one who sees in the crystal, and what he [sic] sees is the gushing of time dividing in two, as splitting.52

Seers are defined by their ability to perceive that which cannot be apprehended by everyday consciousness, and the wisdom that such perceptions bestow. In entering into relations with the crystal-image, its indiscernible composition of the actual and the virtual, by Deleuze's accounts, is necessarily also a becoming–seer. This section is concerned with the type of subjectivity and perception required to enter into such a relation. What model of subject is presupposed to enable relation with a crystal-image, and how can its virtuality be apprehended? A crystalline subject is proposed to double the crystal-image: to mirror its own doubling. This subject is enabled recourse with the direct image of time — opened by the crystal-image — because of intuitive perceptive abilities (cultivated perception) that are utilised to perceive the dual modalities of time oscillating in the image.

The cultivation of perception is proposed to not only apprehend the openings of the image, the 'whole' of the image, but also as what enables its meanings to be reconstituted within the overall context of the film, with other types of images. It has, therefore, a synthesising role. It is required to perceive the multifaceted, mutual interpenetration, the indiscernibility of the actual and the virtual, the subject and the object.

In Deleuze's image system the crystal-image occupies a privileged position through its ability to provide glints of the processual whole (durée): glancing shards of a direct image of time.

Briefly stated, Deleuze broadly categorises cinema images into two types: the movement-image and the time-image (within each type there are varieties). Building on Bergson's theory of Image, Deleuze equates the Image directly with movement, recasting the material universe as an assemblage of movement-images: "This in-itself of the image is matter: not something hidden behind the image, but on the contrary the absolute identity of the image and movement."  

Occurring with this flux are gaps, intervals, between actions and reactions, and it is within this gap (as discussed in chapter two) that the living image — a "centre of indetermination" — emerges, enabling the selective process of perception to occur. It is at this point that the different varieties of the movement-image are identified, the first being the perception-image, which is quickly followed (passing "imperceptibly" from one to the other) by the action–image. They are positioned in relation to each other as opposite sides of the gap: "In fact, perception is only one side of the gap, and action is the other." Between the perception-image and the action-image emerges the third and final avatar of the movement-image, the affection-image.

Affection is what occupies the interval, what occupies it without filling it in or filling it up. It surges in the center of indetermination, that is to say in the subject, between a perception which is troubling in certain respects and a hesitant action. It is a coincidence of the subject and object, or the way in which the subject perceives itself, or rather experiences itself or feels itself 'from the inside' (third material aspect of subjectivity).


54 Deleuze, Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 64.

55 Deleuze, Cinema 1: The Movement-Image 65.
The affection-image performs a type of suspension of movement (like a pent-up force) between the perception-action binary, and is rendered as an experience of the intersubjective, a "coincidence of subject and object." As will be shown this moment of intersubjectivity is cut loose from the perception-action binary that provide its moorings in the time-image, when the interval (like blocs of sensation) becomes independent. This splitting in two, as it has been argued with regard to Irigaray’s dual ontology, creates a third, with an autonomous agency.

Deleuze argues that classic film is never made up of a single type of image, it is always an assemblage of the three types (just like the subject or living image) that form a montage (an indirect image of time) but, however, it is usual for one type of image to dominate. For example, he identifies Dreyer's *La Passi’n de Jeanne d’Arc* as being "an almost exclusively affective film." Distinguished by the close-up shots of the anguished Jeanne's (Joan's) [Renée Falconetti's] face, it follows that it is the close-up that Deleuze identifies as the type of shot most affiliate to the affective image (whilst the perception–image is associated with the long shot and the action image the medium shot). In a sense, the positioning of the subject within the narrative (the subject's experience) — suspended between the worldly church and the transcendent divine — is doubled by the type of image identified as dominating the film: the intermediary affection-image. In the drama that plays out in the court room (itself a location of suspension) Jeanne is unable to validate her experience of God's love — the law of her heart — in resemblance to the experience of the love of God as laid down by the church law. Caught within the tension created between these two experiences of divine relation, Jeanne herself embodies the interval of mystic subjectivity. There is a glimmer in her anguish (of not being able to comprehend that her relation to the divine cannot be understood and accepted by others) in the affection-image it produces of what is to develop later in modern cinema with the time-image: the indiscernibility of the virtual and the actual presenced by an 'autonomous' interval. However, Jeanne is not given the choice to embody that autonomy (to live at the limit, inherently fractured and open), rather she must chose to either betray her own self-knowing to save her life, or, to uphold

56 Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* 70.

her personal validity of her divine experiences at the cost of her life: either way, she is not permitted to remain indefinitely suspended as affection-image.

Aspects of the crystal-image are evident in Deleuze's discussion of the role of the affection-image as the subject is discussed as "refracting" the external environment (movement-image):

There is inevitably a part of external movements that we 'absorb,' that we refract, and which does not transform itself into either objects or perception or acts of the subject; rather they mark the coincidence of the subject and object in a pure quality.\(^{58}\)

This coincidence could be thought of as a 'pure' type of intersubjective relation — it is a 'between' of subject–object (in which neither can be distinguished) that inhabits the 'internal' interval of the lived image (subject) between perception and action. The living image (subject) is a between that has at its 'heart' the between (affection-image). Both the affection-image and the crystal-image share a sense of suspension inherent in their presence.

The movement-image trinity — perception-image, action-image, affection-image — again creates a sublime relation where the struggle to comprehend (embody) the excess is 'taken up' in the middle term; in this case by the affection-image. This positioning is further evidenced by Deleuze's discussion of "affective movements (the soul)," the soul being an aspect of subjectivity understood to exceed corporeality and rational/intellectual comprehension.\(^{59}\)

It is the movement–image's inability to render what constitutes the excess — the direct image of time — that undermines its potential for presencing multifaceted becoming, for imaging the interval's autonomy. According to Deleuze, this is the achievement of the crystal-image of modern cinema.

What constitutes the crystal-image is the most fundamental operation of time: since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past, which differ from each other in nature .... Time has to split at the same time as it sets itself out or unrolls itself: .... Time consists of this split, and it is this, it is time, that we see in the crystal .... We see in the crystal the perpetual foundation of time, non-chronological time, Cronos and not Chronos. This is the powerful, non-organic Life which grips the

\(^{58}\) Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* 65.

\(^{59}\) Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 238.
world. The visionary, the seer, is the one who sees in the crystal, and what he [sic] sees is the gushing of time as dividing in two, as splitting.\(^6\)

This non-chronological time can be considered akin to the plane of immanence (inspired by Bergson's \textit{durée}) that is constituted by productive desire as defined in reference to artworks by Deleuze and Guattari. In the \textit{Cinema} books Deleuze uses the terms "void" or "whole" to represent the creative, processural, heterogeneous temporal 'foundation' from which images (including subjects) 'emerge.' The 'presencing' of this 'whole' requires the splitting of time — this is the creative event — that in the movement-image is viewed after the event (and re-constituted in the montage as linear time), whilst in the time-image it is apprehended as it splits, at the juncture of actual–virtual. It is the perception of dual time that the crystal-image is understood to 'capture,' or suspend in the interval that it opens.

The movement from the affection-image to the crystal-image is taken up directly by Deleuze, and expressed in terms of time firstly being experienced as affect, and then as time itself as the dual movement of "affector and affected" — that is, achieving its independence from action and reaction.

Subjectivity is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual. The actual is always objective, but the virtual is subjective: it was initially the affect, that which we experience in time; then time itself, pure virtuality which divides itself in two as affection and affected, 'the affection of self by self' as definition of time.\(^6\)

That is, our subjectivity does not make time its object; it does not set the clock ticking, rather it is time (of a non-chronological type) that elicits the subject, positioning it as object in relation to its 'unrealised' virtuality. The centrality of affection (and its relation to feeling) in the apprehension of generative time parallels the positioning of sensation as the expression of the plane of immanence (again generative non-chronological time) in Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of artworks. Both sensation and affection are understood to be concerned with the imaging of time (the whole) in a direct manner. In the regime of cinema images, however, affect is superseded by the crystalline, that is similarly placed between action-reaction as most capable of directly representing non-chronological time.

These are pure optical and sound situations, in which the character does not know how to respond, abandoned spaces in which he [sic] ceases to experience and to act so that he enters into flight, goes

\(^{60}\) Deleuze, \textit{Cinema 2: The Time-Image} 81.

\(^{61}\) Deleuze, \textit{Cinema 2: The Time-Image} 82-83.
on a trip, comes and goes, vaguely indifferent to what happens to him, undecided as to what must be done. But he has gained an ability to see what he has lost in action or reaction: he SEES so that the viewer's problem becomes 'What is there to see in the image?', (and not 'What are we going to see in the next image?'). The situation no longer extends into action through the intermediary of affections. It is cut off from all its extensions, it is now important only for itself, having absorbed all its affective intensities, all its active extensions.62

The positioning and role of the crystal-image again reflects a re-working of the sublime experience similar to that discussed with regard to sensation, in which the artwork — and in this instance the crystal-image — embodies the dynamics of the sublime experience itself: it is (rather than causes) the sublime 'moment' of incomprehensible (indiscernible) excess.

The subject of the above quotation is marked by an attitude of suspension, and this state will be further explored through an examination of In the Mood for Love directed by Wong Kar Wai.63 The film's central characters Mrs Chan (Maggie Chueng) and Mr Chow (Tony Leung) [fig. 6], — neighbours whose partners are lovers — exhibit both in themselves and in terms of the relation between them a state of suspension. The expression of their desire for one another is limited both by circumstance and their own longing not to "be like them" [their partners]. Their love is rendered not so much unconsummated, but as occupying a space of indiscernability, being concurrently actual and virtual. It is unable to be fully presented in the present, to be made fully actual, or to be consigned entirely to the past or memory (a virtuality); let alone to be positioned as a foundation for a hopeful future: it seems to elude all three states of linear time and, appear present and past simultaneously.

This simultaneously seductive and melancholic experience is made all the more acute by the repeated affective images in which the future is presented in the present by the rehearsal of Mrs Chan's confrontation with her adulterous husband and the rehearsed 'break up' of the Chow–Chan relationship. These are also simultaneously made the past by their execution and repetition. "I didn't expect it to hurt so much," Mrs Chan explains, after the initial rehearsal, failing to be placated by Mr Chow's

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62 Deleuze, Cinema 2: The Time-Image 272.

63 In The M’`d F’r L’ve [Fa yeung nin wa], dir. Wong Kar Wai, Block 2 Pictures, 2000. Set in Hong Kong in the early 1960’s, this film traces the relationship between neighbors — Mr Chow and Mrs Chan — whose intimacy develops further as a result of their discovery that their partners are having an affair.
observation that it was not real. Perhaps this is because the rehearsal captures time in the process of splitting; creating the crystalline juncture of absorbed affective intensities — it is the immobile 'suspended' excessive force that overwhelms Mrs Chan, it appears to be inherently crystalline: it suspends her and Mr Chow in the meanwhile.

Fig. 6: Mrs Chan (Maggie Chueng) and Mr Chow (Tony Leung) in *In The Mood for Love*, 2000.
**Dans l'intervalle: Desire–Time**

Philosophy is always meanwhile.⁶⁴

The dialectic of "no longer" and "not yet" defines the intermediate space and time of art. In theological terms, the space of art lies between the Garden and the Kingdom; its time is the meantime.⁶⁵

The relationship between Mr Chow and Mrs Chan takes place in the time of the meanwhile, *dans l'intervalle*: both in the sense of the interval as a measured, regular 'space' that suffuses the timing of the film — for example Mrs Chow's sensuous saunter rhythmically intertwined with *Yumeji's Theme*,⁶⁶ that features repeated attenuated violin refrains underscored and contrasted by the staccato plucking of the waltz timing — as well as creating intervals that disrupts its linear chronology. It is a non-chronological time that both separates and connects the two characters in a relationship of radical proximity distinguished by its intimate distance. Their's is a relationship that fails to bridge the gap between (even during their most intimate encounters). This results not entirely from an inadequacy of individual agency, but because the relationship is itself a gap and interval of desire–time.

Reflecting that which binds, separates and exceeds them, gaps and intervals feature as locations within the film, in particular unusually empty laneways open between buildings providing space for the couple to meet. Otherwise they are fated to pass one another on stairs, in halls, to sit 'side-by-side' separated by walls and corridors. The intimate separation that marks this relationship was prefigured on their mutual moving in day as their respective personal objects passing in the corridor are confused and inevitably arrive in the other's possession; occasioning their first meeting and prefacing the future intertwining of their lives (as well as the already intertwined lives of their partners).

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⁶⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 159.


The pair continually ghost one another's paths, inhabiting the same space at different times. They are imaged as concurrently experiencing the similar state of forlorn longing in different locations — a common enough love narrative — but lurking between them is always the interval that has become autonomous, as it simultaneously unites and divides them. It is this 'space' that enables the direct appearance of desire–time — it is the interval — and considering this, their entire relationship can be proposed as crystalline. In contradistinction from narratives where the gap or interval exists in relation to the couple purely to be overcome or released (at least eliciting continual action-reaction) in *In The Mood For Love* the interval becomes an 'immobile' aspect of the love. Hence Mrs Chan does not wait for Mr Chow's return to his room in Singapore; she phones but does not speak.

Neither character seems willing or able to act–react to its 'held' force, but are rather suspended by it. The internal, 'crystallised' circuit of their relationship is finally 'escaped,' most clearly when, several years after leaving Hong Kong, Mr Chow leaves the secret he "didn't want to share" to be suspended for all time ("forever") in a tree trunk at Angkor Wat (the ruins of a place set apart for contemplative practices). This ritual act allows him to relieve his subjectivity of its suspended embodied intensity, freeing himself once more for action–reaction, for consigning a past and proposing a future, a return to the living of an indirect image of time.

The relationship of Mr Chow and Mrs Chan mark the limit designated by the crystal-image, but do not exceed it. They meet in the interval it creates, but do not leave it. Like the third type of sensation identified by Deleuze and Guattari, they exist in a union presenced by "withdrawal, division, distension," by the void between. Underlying the suspended intervals and fissures is the flow of time "gushing forth," echoed by the persistent rain that soaks the film and its lovers.

Meditations on time and the ephemeral nature of contemporary relationships are well-known as features of Wong Kar Wai's films, although Ewa Mazierska and

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67 Mrs Chan leaves signs of her presence-absence: the missing slippers, lipstick on the cigarette, etc.

68 For example, *Days 'f Being Wild* [1991] examines the casual relationships of playboy figure Yuddi (Leslie Cheung) against the backdrop of his search for his true mother's identity. The opening sequence establishes his relationship with Su Lizhen (Maggie Cheung) with direct focus both on a specific instant of time, the passage of time and the future:

"Yuddi: Look at my watch
Su Lizhen: Why?
Yuddi: For one minute
[close-up shot of wall clock]"
Laura Rascaroli greatly underscore the impact of past, and memory — known or unknown — when they write in comparison to Alain Resnais', L'année dernière à Marienbad (Last Year in Marienbad) [1961]: "while for Wong Kar Wai's heros, as we will try to demonstrate, the past and memory matter very little. Instead they live in the present."  

Such a perspective is not borne out when considering characters like Yuddi (Leslie Cheung) in Days of Being Wild [1991], whose 'reckless' approach to life is occasioned by an unknown parentage and the desperation arising from the knowledge that his foster mother knows the identity of his 'natural' mother. The present is lived so 'lightly,' not because the past matters "so little," but because it matters so much: it is concurrently present with the present's passing. The sense of time and its passage is acutely presenced in In The Mood for Love, with Mr Chow and Mrs Chan repeatedly practising accepting the time of their relationship as past. They experience the 'compression' and extension of time not so much as that of dizzy infatuation but as a potent desire marked by responsibility to future memory, that is already present and passing. The present time (as an interval) is rendered but an aspect of past and future that are disrupted from a linear progression.

The production of the autonomous interval is a feature of the time-image as defined by Deleuze:

Su Lizhen: OK, Now what?
Yuddi: What day is it?
Su Lizhen: The sixteenth
Yuddi: The sixteenth ... April 16th
One minute before 3pm on April 16th 1960
You're with me
Because of you, I'll remember this one minute
From now on, we've been friends for one minute
This is a fact you can't deny
It's happened
I'll be back tomorrow."

<http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/865/158/35469992w1/purl1=rc1_EAIM_0_>

70 In an interview concerning In the Mood for Love, Wong Kar Wai identifies memory (his own, of being a child in Hong Kong in the 1960's) and food as the films central themes. Kylie Boltin, "In The Mood for Love. A Meeting with Wong Kar Wai @ the 54th Edinburgh International Film Festival, 2000," Metro 129/130 Spring (2001): 152-157.
The autonomy of the interval produced by the time-image renders every shot an autonomous shot: a segment of duration where movement is subordinate to time. If, as Deleuze asserts, the crystalline regime produces an increased sensitivity to time, this means that the interval suspends the spectator in a state of uncertainty.\(^1\)

Following on from this, it is not only Mr Chow and Mrs Chan who are acutely aware of the time of their relationship — both when together and apart — but that, this sensitivity, through engagement with a crystal-image, is also perceived by the viewer. *In The Mood for Love* is a visceral film. Its languid, rhythmic pace (established by the soundtrack, repetitive locations, design patterns and the mostly regular pan shot length) is counterpointed visually by sharp colour (in particular red) punctuating the subdued tones of dank and confined spaces: all intently set towards suspending the viewer in the unknown and tentative space of the Chow–Chan relationship, deeply alluring but inherently melancholic. The viewer is provided with affective release from the cramped living and working spaces by the corridors and laneways that open empty for the lovers to briefly inhabit. The film's affective intensity is not however, directly attributable to the close-up shot of the face (as Deleuze ascribes to Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*): in fact the close-up is often of the mid-line area, hips, waist (mildly reminiscent of Robert Bresson's *Lancelot du Lac* [1974]) or of hands and feet as a long crossing or receding pan shot moves horizontally or vertically.

If the entirety of the Chan–Chow relationship can be thought of as enacting a crystalline circuit, then its creative agency (as noted by Deleuze, the splitting of time enables the 'new') is figured in the narrative by Mrs Chan's son (and the ambiguity surrounding the child's paternity).\(^2\) There is, Deleuze argues, never a completed crystal, including during the "seed" stage (exemplified for Deleuze by Fellini): "In fact there is never a completed crystal; each crystal is infinite by right, in the process of being made, and is made with a seed which incorporates the environment and forces it to crystallize."\(^3\)

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\(^2\) A point made questionable especially by the narrative that explains days of the Chan–Chow relationship as having "passed and nothing belonging to it exits anymore" whilst presenting an image of Mrs Chan and her son.

\(^3\) Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 88.
This reading of *In The Mood For Love* has not been as concerned with identifying examples of single shots within the film as crystal-images but rather with considering the film in its entirety as belonging to the crystalline regime; as being able to provide a direct image of time, expressing something of the interval and its constituent desire-time. Desire as a form of time, as the 'meanwhile,' simultaneously present and not-present is caught in this film, as well a being the subject of its narrative. It arrests its splitting, fleetingly.

Deleuze speaks of the crystal-image as both capturing the splitting of time, but of also of being particularly conditioned by time in its dimension of "too late," a condition that is also designated as particular to the artwork. This "too late" time [*trop-tard*] is not equatable to the proposition of time as the "meanwhile" as previously discussed. Time as too-late manifests in the unity of the human and nature, a "sensual and perceptible unity" that arrives too-late dynamically.

This something that comes too-late is always the perceptual and sensual revelation of a unity of nature and man [sic]. Thus it is not a simple lack; it is the mode of being of this grandiose revelation. The 'too-late' is not an accident that takes place in time but a dimension of time itself. As a dimension of time, it is, through the crystal, the one which is opposed to the static dimension of the past as this survives and weighs in the interior of the crystal.

The "static dimension of the past" refers to the "sheets of time" that are the past (memory) as in a Bergsonian conceptualisation, and it is the crystal-image that can render immanent access to time in this form, whilst too-late time is time in its linear processural dimension caught in the crystal. Following St Augustine, Deleuze comes closest to a direct formulation of time as "meanwhile" in his discussion of the three concurrent presents: a present of the future, a present of the present and a present of the past, that all form what Deleuze terms "peaks of present." Past, present and future are then understood to exist simultaneously, a "plurality of worlds" accessible by 'peering' in the crystal. This has long been the 'traditional' knowledge–experience of seers.

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74 Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 97.


76 Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 96.

77 Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 100-102.
The Reciprocal Vision of the Crystal

The theme of the crystal-image and mystical experience has previously been taken up by Michael Goddard in "The Scattering of Time-Crystals: Deleuze, Mysticism and Cinema." Goddard is similarly concerned with the overture to mystical experience opened by Deleuze in his figuring of the role of the crystal-image and the Bergsonian influence of the role of the mystic in apprehending the whole of durée (as previously discussed in chapter three).

Arguing for an approach to mysticism that views it as "an existential practice of subjectivation, neither reducing it to its textual forms nor ascribing to it a universal essence," Goddard points to Deleuze's perspective on cinema as exemplifying this viewpoint, even though he does not discuss mysticism directly within the Cinema texts. Goddard's analysis considers aspects of Deleuze's project not contained within his work on cinema, including the work with Guattari concerning schizophrenia. He counterpoints Deleuze and Guattari's presentation of schizophrenia as a "process of perpetual metamorphosis" against interpretations that render it a "tragic separation from the world," such as that developed by Kenneth Wapnick. Goddard reiterates the latter's corollary of schizophrenic and mystical experience whilst drawing attention to its inherent problems, not least the issue of spirituality or religiosity. For Goddard the two processes are distinct at least in one clear area: the mystic is involved in a process that includes a 'reterritorialisation,' whilst the schizophrenic is unable to muster the focus that such recollection requires. This aspect of recollection enabling re-telling is a significant one for a number of reasons. First, although acknowledging that the experience involves a process metamorphosis, it re-instates a perspective that views the mystic as 'returning to' the real from which they are understood to have departed: not, as could be proposed, that the virtual is in a relation of implicit co-dependence with the real

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79 Goddard, "The Scattering of Time-Crystals" 53-54.


81 Goddard, "The Scattering of Time-Crystals" 55.
and that mystical experience requires a greater immersion in the real (rather than a movement away from it) to experience this virtuality. Second, it positions the expression of the experience as secondary too, rather than as possibly concurrent with or, as an integral aspect of it, or, as a simultaneous praxis. It is these latter possibilities of the mystical experience that the viewers of crystal-cinema could be understood as more likely to embody and enter relation with during the 'watching' of the film (while they become aware of, and create, their BwO's).

The model of the mystical experience Goddard is using however, is chiefly conditioned by the "virtual forces" underlying the singular ecstatic experience that is assumed to traverse what are considered enormous gulfs between the real and the virtual. However, as Deleuze defines it, the crystal-image is characterised by the indiscernibility between the actual and virtual. The image itself may figure as an interval amongst movement-images but, in its content of direct time, the two aspects exchange and fold upon one another: not so much a gulf as the experience of numerous elisions between actual–virtual. This would seem to portend a mystical experience of the more gentle, subtle subject kind (as developed in previous chapters) rather than the singular ecstatic event. Mystical experience and recollection as navigated in and through daily practice — an attitude towards the Other — rather than only in distinctly bounded representations. This is the style of mystical practice opened to the viewer of crystal-cinema, even if the author occupies a space more aligned with a Bergsonian concept of the mystic which Goddard centrally incorporates in his proposal. In this way, mystics both create the artwork/cinema and apprehend and enter it as viewers: in a process of contemplation (becoming-mystic).

What is significant in Goddard's discussion is his emphasis on the ecstatic mystical process as including the expression of the experience to others:

mysticism is not solely concerned with the singularity of ecstatic corporeal and affective experiences, but the virtual forces that these experiences actualise, and how these experiences might be translated into other modes of expression. The crystallising of virtual forces through a metamorphic corporeal process and their extension into some form of semiotic expression and social existence is, then, the essential component of mysticism understood in terms of this crystallisation.\(^{82}\)

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\(^{82}\) Goddard, "The Scattering of Time-Crystals" 57.
It is clear from the above quotation that Goddard does consider the social role attributed to mystical practice, a perspective that emerges out of his reading of Bergson's *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (following Bergson's dualism of static and dynamic religion outlined in chapter three), however, Goddard's prime focus is on considering the semiotic expression of the experience and, in particular, in developing the validity of Deleuze's crystalline regime of signs towards this aim. What is not central to his discussion is the role of the viewer in this process, which is given a cursory consideration at the close of his analysis:

This is not to say that going to the movies will provide an experience of enlightenment, for even in the relatively rare cases where the crystalline regime affords the potential transmission of a spiritual experience, there are many factors that can block this from being received, and, even when received, it can only form a minute part of the subject's own process of subjectivation.\(^3\)

The practice of vision opened out by crystal-images necessitates an intuitive, contemplative approach to considering the artwork/cinema that, at the same time results in a re-visioning of self (a Bergsonian ethical role of mystical experience). The type of aesthetic relation proposed by Deleuze is synaesthetic, and requires an intermixing of the senses, in particular sound and vision, to elicit the "I Feel" cinematographic response.\(^4\) The crystal-image does not just open a space for the 'figuration' or experience of the spiritual it initiates — via a concept of extensive subjectivity, including the BwO — but opens a radical transformation of the individual conceptualisation of self, one that brings to conscious awareness the processual nature of subjectivity and its inherent openness to alterity. The operations of the crystal-image are aesthetic and ethical. They are also, as Goddard similarly argues, spiritual.\(^5\)

Instead, the 'spiritual' or 'spirits', rather than Spirit can be conceived of as virtually inhering in the material world in the form of temporalities, or conversely the material world can be conceived of as existing in the spiritual or in God in the same way it exists in time. The spiritual and the material are simply two distinct yet indiscernible sides of the same fold.... This entirely immanent relation to the spiritual is also what mysticism actualises through a complete immersion in life and love as a process of metamorphic subjectivation and the elaboration of a crystalline regime of signs.\(^6\)

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\(^3\) Goddard, "The Scattering of Time-Crystals" 62.

\(^4\) Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 158.

\(^5\) Goddard draws attention to the work of Philip Goodchild, that he characterises as stringently involved in delineating Bergson's works from those of Deleuze with the aim of distancing Deleuze's project from the implicit spiritual aims central to Bergson and this is identified by Goddard as a misreading of Deleuze, an opinion that is also supported herein. Goddard, "The Scattering of Time-Crystals" 61-62.

\(^6\) Goddard, "The Scattering of Time-Crystals" 62.
This is also a link that the discussion of the Bergsonian *élan vital* in chapter three, and the discussion of the Deleuzian plane of immanence in this chapter, has sought to establish that aspects of Bergson's spiritual agenda have been incorporated into Deleuze's projects. This has not included Bergson's figurations of a transcendent God, or the evolutionary social role he ascribed to the development of religion, but rather Bergson's influence is felt in the proposal that the figuration of immanence (equatable to the *élan vital*) in lived time is accessed via mystical, philosophical and artistic experience. Bergson opened an avenue for the conceptualisation of an inherent ontological interrelation of the material and spiritual, and this is taken to its most immediate expression in Deleuze's immanence, and the autonomous cinematic image (bestowed by its ability to move itself) as providing a direct image of the 'whole.'

It is therefore not surprising that for Deleuze considerations of the spiritual, belief and faith lead directly to the body.

Our belief can have no object but 'the flesh,' we need very special reasons to make us believe in the body ('the Angels do not know, for all true knowledge is obscure...'). We must believe in the body, but as in the germ of life, the seed which splits open the paving-stones .... We need an ethic or a faith, which makes fools laugh; it is not a need to believe in something else, but a need to believe in this world, of which fools are a part.88

Such a belief stems from considering of one's immanent physical experience as divine, that commences with the body and extends into the 'material' and the 'virtual' world (it is difficult not to discern in Deleuze's use of the term 'flesh' a reference to Merleau-Ponty), that occasions 'new' knowledge. The figure of the fool, encapsulating a wise stupidity, a naïve openness and trust — and, in esoteric systems symbolising both the beginning and the end of an individual's spiritual journey — is made to laugh, not ironically, with reflection, but with a delight arising from immediate faith in this world, and part of the fool's wisdom is an appreciation and acceptance of the unthought and unknowable. It includes an acceptance of life experience as being beyond the subject's control and mastery (and in this way, the fool is king).

Deleuze's discussion of the body — a "ceremonial" as distinct from "everyday" body89 — as drawn forth from the cinematic experience of the time-image carries

87 Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 156.


89 Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 190-196.
equivalent ambitions to those of Abramovic's Crystal Cinema installation: they seek to render visible invisible forces.

But, if cinema does not give us the presence of the body and cannot give us it, this is perhaps also because it sets itself a different objective; it spreads an 'experimental night' or a white space over us; it works with 'dancing seeds' and a 'luminous dust'; it affects the visible with a fundamental disturbance, and the world with a suspension, which contradicts all natural perception. What it produces in this way is the genesis of an 'unknown body' which we have in the back of our heads, like the unthought in thought, the birth of the visible which is still hidden from view.  

Several themes from the preceding chapters appear in this quotation: the ability of art or cinema to figure an 'interval' that interrupts subjectivity and "natural perception" that creates a state of "suspension" and enables the apprehension of intersubjectivity; and, secondly, the presence of an invisible visible that is the mirror complement of the visible–invisible previously discussed vis-à-vis Irigaray's dual ontology, with both propositions concerned with the presence–absence of ontological, creative forces. As directly comprised of these creative forces, the "unknown body" can therefore be understood to be a subtle form of subjectivity, a ceaselessly becoming subtle body comprised of matter–spirit in constant vibration and flux, and further, it renders the subject as a 'bloc' of force, an interval, a crystallisation of desire–time, a state of sublime suspension.

Sensation is the contracted vibration that has become quality, variety. That is why the brain-subject is here called soul or force, since only the soul preserves by contracting that which matter dissipates, or radiates, furthers, reflects, refracts, or converts. Thus the search for sensation is fruitless if we go no farther then reactions and the excitations that they prolong, than actions and the perceptions that they reflect: this is because the soul (or rather, the force), as Leibniz said, does nothing, or does not act, but is only present; it preserves. Contraction is not an action but a pure passion, a contemplation that preserves the before in the after.

The artwork and the crystal-image are such "contemplations," embodied and suspended that in turn suspend the viewing subject, inviting ethological relations to be established 'between' them. In Cinema 2: The Time-Image, Deleuze does not speak of immanence and its direct presentation (or embodiment) as spiritual but rather as sublime, as that which goes beyond space, light and the soul.

Time as open and changing totality none the less goes beyond all the movements, even though it cannot do without them. It is thus caught in an indirect representation, because it cannot do without movement-images which express it, and yet goes beyond all relative movements forcing us to think

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90 Deleuze, Cinema 2: The Time-Image 201.

91 Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy? 211-212.
an absolute of the movement of bodies, an infinity of the movement of light, a backgroundless [*sans fond*] of the movement of souls: the sublime.92

Deleuzian immanence is thus cast as inexpressible, unapprehendable excess: a sublime that is a body-mind state — not purely a mental state of disharmony caused by the shock meeting of imagination and reason — a creative emotion (that is not disembodied). As this chapter has traced, there is a trajectory of ‘presencing’ this sublime in the movement-image (or the living image) through affective media — the art work, the affection-image, the crystal-image — and a delineation of the direct image of time as opening an interval that is itself the sublime (and not just causing a sublime experience interior to the subject). The experience of the sublime is therefore also the experience of a direct image of time, of the force of Deleuzian desire, and of a mystical form of subtle subjectivity. It is the practice of a mystical subjectivity premised upon contemplative 'looking' that turns this from an experience of onto–desire into an onto–ethical desire: and it is this that is the subject of the third and final section of this thesis.

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92 Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* 238.
Section III

Ethics
Fig. 7. Marina Abramovic, *Wounded Geode*, 1994, installation.
To reconsider Abramovic's installation *Wounded Geode* from the perspective of subtle subjectivity is to recognize that although the two viewer–participants are placed in an oppositional relationship — at either end of the table — they are engaged in a network of affective relations that simultaneously constitute and interrelate them, calling into question the bounds of their individual subjectivity. To look at the crystal placed in the centre of the table, requires each viewer–participant to also meet the presence of the Other. Even if one of the seats at the end of the table remains empty, the lack of occupation is a presence affecting the experience of the work. As each viewer–participant looks at the crystal, and each other (if only peripherally), they would also be aware of a third place from which multiple gazes may scrutinize them: the other people in the exhibition space, watching them watch (even with eyes closed).

This installation has the effect of producing an acute awareness of the perceptive and affective capacities of oneself and another, of the gulf and the intimacy between subjects and objects, and the aliveness and agency of the mediating space. To draw attention to this type of perception, Abramovic has created a work which requires its viewer–participants to perform a suspension: to take up a seat — which being unusually tall, suspends them physically from the floor — in a gallery environment that suspends them outside their usual daily spaces of occupation. Poised thus, they are like the Deleuzian crystal-image, a between (which they constitute) yet its borders are nebulous and porous. In this space the viewer–participants are presented with a large crystal that mediates and focuses their relationship. It draws them into mutual contemplative exchange whilst simultaneously, the crystal's particularity of form, its mass, enacts an interval in the space between them. Through an awareness of subtle temporal interrelations the crystal emerges simultaneously solid and fluid: formed and formless.

The cultivation of relations with aesthetic objects — the aesthetics of *durée* — is not the only kind of connection being privileged by this artwork, it also highlights the cultivation of relations with other human beings: subject–subject relations. The juxtaposition of viewer–participants opens a space for exploring a modality of perception that could enable the other to be acknowledged without erasure of their alterity. This type of viewing is a witnessing that allows for recognition that is not tied to previous experience or knowledge. It is a creative, open apprehension, comfortable (without denying vulnerability) sitting with phenomena whose entirety
forever slips 'beyond' rational knowing and concrete expression. Through this more conscious experience of the practice of looking — with all the senses — viewer–participants are potentially made more conscious of the shifts in attitude that occur as the object of their perception changes from crystal to person, from table to gallery wall. In this process the implicit interrelationship between aesthetics and ethics unfolds.
Chapter Seven
An Ethics of Emptiness

This section continues the consideration of the between and subjectivity that is not
delineated by dialectical relations: a processural interval not book-ended by fixed
terms designating its locus. In particular its focus is on transcendence–immanence
and human–divine relations and the possibility of thinking/experiencing each of the
dyadic oppositions as concurrent. This will be noted to be a feature of the
presentation of the 'space' between in various Buddhist philosophies and practices
and extended to a consideration of pneumatology in Western religion/philosophy that
includes Irigaray's adaptation of Hindu philosophy. Stemming from these
considerations, desire will be identified as constitutive of both Buddhist
interpretations of the 'between' and the interrelating embodied pneumatology
(will–spirit–desire) that has been introduced in the preceding chapters.

Accompanying these perspectives is a radical re-orientation to the experience of
phenomenal reality, that requires the cultivation of subtle sensitivities that are, from
the outset, intertwined with a praxis of responsibility towards self and Other.

It is the aim of this entire section — chapters seven to nine — to open out
considerations of responsibility and ethics arising from the modalities of vision and
aesthetic experiences discussed in the previous sections. It will be argued that
modifications to affective and aesthetic capacities and experiences result in the re-
negotiation of the thinking/experiencing of the presence–absence dualism that
underpins Western ontology. Considering presence–absence from a place of
mutuality or concurrence is glimpsed in the temporality and fluidity of the modes of
diachronic time (desire–time) previously discussed and, in the Buddhist concept of
śūnyatā that is the focus of this chapter. Alien neither to embodiment nor
disembodiment, a feature neither purely of this world nor a transcendent Other but
not excluded from either, this negotiation of presence–absence allows for a
conceptualisation of I–Other relations that maintains the mystery (as advocated by
Irigaray) and allows each to approach the other without the weight of mastery
directing the interaction. It evokes a subject that can be conceptualised in excess of its corporeality — a subtle subject — without denigrating its materiality; it renders each individual intimately related with one another without effacing individuality; it allows one to be both ephemeral and located, fluid and crystalline.

Śūnyatā

Śūnyatā¹ — most commonly attributed with meaning 'emptiness' — is a core element of Buddhist philosophy, and is understood as constitutive of both self (or more correctly self–no-self) and the universe. It will be considered here in relation to the desire–time discussed in the previous chapter. Although there are marked differences between the concepts — in particular the rejection of an ontological agency, and the reality of time as a universal category in śūnyatā — they share similarities in the figuration of subjectivity and the between, with śūnyatā containing a radical re-visioning of dialectical relations. The first part of this chapter (echoing the theme of chapter one) examines an ontology that challenges the predicate of the universal One. However, its 'foundation' of radical impermanence also challenges the dual ontology proposed by Irigaray, whilst, as will be demonstrated, concurrently figuring a radical Other.

Śūnyatā is both noun and verb, designating a characteristic of phenomena as well as a process or practice of modifying subjectivity that leads to the awareness of the 'state' the noun signifies. Herein, it will firstly be considered as a processural, multiplicitious groundless ground of being/becoming as presented by Nāgārjuna and elaborated in commentaries by Masao Abe, David J. Kalupahana, Robert Magliola, Harold Coward and David Loy. This presentation on Buddhist philosophy will be referenced in relation to aspects of Deleuze's plane of immanence and Bergson's

¹ Śūnyatā (Sanskrit) or Suññattå (Pāli) is most commonly translated as "emptiness." In Chinese it is k'ung; Japanese kü and in Korean kong. David Loy notes its derivative from the root term śū, which emphasises its generative aspect: "which means "to swell" in two senses: hollow or empty, and also full, like the womb of a pregnant woman." Bowker ed., "Śūnyatā or Suññattå," The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions 929; David Loy, Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988) 50.
durée, and with Newman Robert Glass' interpretation of the same. In this comparison it will become clear that the teachings of śūnyatā are to be distinguished from Western negative theology (a popular place from which much cross-disciplinary Christian–Buddhist scholarship commences), as it subverts the very positive–negative binary that positions these discourses. Emerging from this consideration will be an articulation of desire as ontological and ethical, that in turn (in chapter eight) will be considered as being correlate to a pneumatology that enables the reading of human–divine relationships as concurrently transcendent and immanent. Both this chapter and the next are concerned with the realisation of śūnyatā (its practice) as an aesthetic and ethical re-visioning of subjectivity.

The understanding of śūnyatā is considered a veritable vipers nest within the practice of Buddhism, with various schools proposing diverse interpretations of its definition, range of applicability and practice.² Several of the more common "poisons" of shunyatā ³ will be referenced in this discussion, but the core focus is on its articulation as presented by Nāgārjuna (c. 150-250 CE) in the Mūla–Mādhyamaka–Kārikā and the commentaries on this text by Masao Abe, David J. Kalupahana and Richard King. Amongst Nāgārjuna 's writings the Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras (sutraś of the Perfection of Wisdom) are believed to have been a gift given to Nāgārjuna by the Nāgas —"a mythical race of serpents with magical powers."⁴ It would seem the serpentine nature of the concept of śūnyatā was pre-figured in both the name and nature of its authorship.

² For example, in Mahāyāna Buddhism: "Emptiness is never a generalised vacuity, like an empty room, but always relates to a specific entity whose emptiness is being asserted. In this way up to twenty kinds of emptiness are recognised, including the emptiness of emptiness." Bowker ed., The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions 929-930.


⁴ Bowker ed., The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions 675.
The term is most commonly translated into English as "emptiness," or "nothing," although as Masao Abe implores, "emptiness" must be disassociated from the negative connotations (for example of lack, little worth, or vacant space) that are present within the English usage of the term.\(^5\) Nāgārjuna developed his doctrine in contradistinction to the interpretations of anātman (no-abiding-self) of the Abhidharma traditions. These traditions argued there was no such entity as a self, but that the self was constituted by dharmas — "causally connected qualities."\(^6\) Nāgārjuna disputed the intrinsic, substantial existence attributed to the dharmas, claiming that like anātman they are also dependent on other dharmas for their existence, and therefore also exist and are thereby constituted in a relation of causal dependence or "inter–dependent–origination" which is a state synonymous with śūnyatā, as the following quote taken by King from the Mūla–Mādhyamaka–Kārikā clearly articulates.

Inter–dependent–origination is what we call emptiness

It is a dependent designation and is itself the Middle Path.\(^7\)

Emptiness, rather than designating a lack of substance, signifies a type of relationship, that of inter–dependent–origination or codependent–origination, that will be shown to problematise not only the ascription of discrete existence to particular form, but also the presence–absence dualism: "If then, there is nothing with its own (substantial) nature, there is nothing with 'other–nature' (para-bhāva); and if there is no persistent reality, there cannot be non–existent reality either."\(^8\)

The doctrine of Emptiness, that simultaneously denies and affirms both existence and non-existence is central to the Mādhyamaka or "Middle School" of Buddhism that Nāgārjuna founded in the second century CE (and was a central and direct

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\(^6\) King, *Indian Philosophy* 82.

\(^7\) Nāgārjuna, *Mūla-Mādhyamaka-Kārikā* 24.18 quoted in King, *Indian Philosophy* 120.

\(^8\) Bowker ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* 675.
influence upon Mahāyāna Buddhism). Its core ideology relies on the refutation that anything exists on its own (svabhāva), and it is for this reason that the relation of inter-dependence (or co-dependence) is closely intertwined with it. Therefore as Abe describes: "In terms of a self-existing thing, the phenomenal thing is empty." Emptiness is not a lack of substance per se, but the 'state' or relation that a thing has to self-existence (svabhāva). This is not however, to propose that the thing exists in relation to another (not in the Levinasian sense of the Other calling the I into existence), because this then would ascribe an independent existence (svabhāva) to the Other:

In the absence of 'independent-existence' (svabhāva) how can there be such a thing as 'existence–dependent upon–other' (parabhāva) for 'existence–dependent–upon–another' simply means the 'independent existence' of that other.

Therefore everything is conceptualised as existing in relations of mutual co-dependence having an inter–dependent–origination and as such, nothing can be ascribed independent existence, hence Nāgārjuna concluded that phenomena was empty of essences of any kind — śūnyatā. As David J. Kalupahana stresses in his commentary that seeks to establish Nāgārjuna as an empiricist, śūnyatā is a response to, and rejection of, metaphysical theory which posits an eternal substantial self-nature that cannot be verified by recourse to sense apprehension.

However, it must be stressed that Nāgārjuna 's doctrine of śūnyatā is not a type of nihilism — this is one of the "poisons" — it is not a case of nothing existing, for if it

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9 Bowker ed., "Śūnyatā or Suññattā" and "Mādhyamaka," The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions 929; 595.

10 Abe, Zen Comparative Studies 43.

11 Nāgārjuna, Mūla-Mādhyamaka-Kārikā 15.3 quoted in King, Indian Philosophy 121.


was considered thus, then nothing would be attributed with an independent (non)existence as nothing. Further, it is not a negative substance founding a negative theology in which God is equated with Emptiness, which as Rita Gross notes, is often the point of departure for comparative Christian and Buddhist (Mahāyāna) studies: "But Mahāyānists are careful to point out that emptiness should not be reified. *Everything* lacks own-being, including emptiness... It is important to realize not just emptiness, but the emptiness of emptiness."\(^{14}\)

Indeed, Abe offers a more considered outline of the differences between the two types of spiritual traditions, with particular attention to immanent and transcendent relations. Noting that through the figure of Christ, God is manifest in an immanent relation ultimately, the Christian faith is founded on the concept of a transcendent divine that is depicted as the "supreme Good," hence, while immanence may be contained within a transcendent framework the ultimate reality for Buddhism — *Nirvāṇa* — is beyond all such dualisms, (including that of good–evil), it does not depict their possible interrelations, or negate either term, rather it includes the double negation that is characteristic of the doctrine of śūnyatā, the realization of neither good nor bad: "*neither* immanent *nor* transcendent, *neither* human *nor* divine."\(^{15}\)

The distinction drawn between *samsāra* (the cycle of birth and death) and *nirvāṇa* (enlightenment) in Nāgārjuna 's view is the result of misapprehension, and they are not distinguished as ontologically distinct realms:

> There exists no feature which distinguishes *samsāra* from *nirvāṇa* and no feature of *nirvāṇa* which distinguishes it from *samsāra*. The boundary (*koti*) of *nirvāṇa* is also the boundary of *samsāra*, there is not even a subtle difference between them.\(^{16}\)

Therefore, whilst Buddhism of the Middle Way does not deny the co-dependent existence of secular and sacred realms, it does not advocate any inherent difference

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\(^{14}\) Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 176.

\(^{15}\) Abe, *Zen Comparative Studies* 47.

between them (which, as will be explicated with reference to forms below, does not annul their particularity).

In the realization of emptiness through complete detachment from both secular and the sacred worlds one can freely move back and forth between the two worlds without hindrance.

This means that the realization of 'emptiness' is 'both secular and sacred' as well as 'neither secular nor sacred.'\(^{17}\)

Considering such discussion it becomes obvious that 'Emptiness' or śūnyatā expresses dynamism. This processural feature is made even more obvious, when the verb sense of śūnyatā is highlighted. The way in which śūnyatā escapes being reified as a concept or a self-existing thing (svabhāva) is by the fact that Emptiness itself must be in the continual process of emptiness — it itself is devoid of 'thingness.' As Abe writes: "To be true emptiness, emptiness should not attach itself and must empty itself. Only when emptiness empties itself and takes forms of being and non-being freely can it be called true emptiness."\(^{18}\)

In this way, śūnyatā can be considered as a form of concurrent presence–absence. The critique of presence central to Derrida's oeuvre was discussed in chapter two and his proposal of the "trace" as a strategy in effacing the presence–absence binary critiqued for the singularity of movements trajectory that it expressed. It has previously been proposed — by Robert Magliola\(^{19}\) and David Loy\(^{20}\) — that the perceived failings of Derrida's endeavour to unhinge the presence–absence dualism is completed successfully by Nāgārjuna.

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\(^{17}\) Abe, *Zen Comparative Studies* 103.

\(^{18}\) Abe, *Zen Comparative Studies* 108.

\(^{19}\) Robert Magliola, *Derrida on the Mend* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1984) 87-129.

In *Derrida and Indian Philosophy* Harold Coward further explores Derrida's concept of *différance* and the trace in dialogue with Loy and Magliola. For Coward the relation is governed by how Nāgārjuna's approach to language is perceived. Loy's argument proposes that Nāgārjuna's double negation of identity and difference goes further than Derrida's critique of identity, leaving the latter "stuck in language" and "attached to difference." Loy attributes to Nāgārjuna the realisation of an "experience beyond language." However, the interpretation of language attributed to Nāgārjuna — "for him the subject–object separation that language necessarily seems to create prevents one from reaching the spiritual goal" — does not adequately take into account the perspective arising from the experience of śūnyatā in which *samsāra* is *nirvāṇa* and vice-versa. From such a perspective language (as an integral aspect of *samsāra*) is not necessarily alien to, or restrictive of, spiritual realisation. To present Nāgārjuna as proposing an inherent distinction separating language entirely from the phenomena it 'represents,' is counter to the interdependence that the perspective of śūnyatā characterises.

Loy's position is revised in later correspondence with Coward, and the sharp distinction between language and "reality" previously drawn is not maintained, rather, their interrelation is exemplified with reference to Zen (Chan) Buddhist practice:

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22 Coward, *Derrida and Indian Philosophy* 127-128.

23 Coward, *Derrida and Indian Philosophy* 145.

24 Morny Joy (with reference to the work of Leslie Kawamura) stresses that central to the Buddhist realisation of co-dependent origination is a change in perceptive habits, and that this new perspective is not "achieved by will-power (in the Western sense), nor by a change in intellectual ideology," but by "going against the grain of accustomed physical and mental comportment to discern something that is complex, subtle and above all elusive." Hence the emphasis is not that a radical dualism exists between language and phenomenal reality, but rather, that in order to attain the perspective of co-dependent origination, that the experience of phenomenal reality should not be limited by linguistic conceptualisation. Morny Joy, "Mindfulness of the Selves," *Healing Deconstruction: Postmodern Thought in Buddhism and Christianity*, ed. David Loy (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996) 78-79.
If there is no separation between language and object, between signifier and signified, then all phenomena, including words, are tathata, "thusness." This is why, as we see clearly in the Zen tradition, language too participates in the reality it manifests ... [otherwise] how could so many Zen dialogues have led to the realization on the part of the student?25

The perspective of Nāgārjuna as proposing a rejection of language, or a quest to seek an experience 'beyond' it does not find favour in Kalupahan'a interpretation and translation of the Mūlamadhyamakārikā either. In the commentary he argues that both the Buddha and Nāgārjuna were not concerned with trying to communicate experiences that could not be communicated with language, but rather, were concerned with establishing "freedom from ideological constraints,"26 and that the "middle-way" they advocated was not conceived of as transcending language.

Considering the manner in which he [Buddha] explained the middle position between these extremes, no one could maintain that this middle position is beyond linguistic description or transcends any form of verbal expression .... For the Buddha, whatever is empirically given is also describable or definable without having to assume metaphysical standpoints. Thus in the Buddha's view language is not, in itself, an inadequate means of expressing what is empirically given. Yet modern interpreters of Buddhism seem to assume that the Buddha considered language inadequate to express the truth about existence that he discovered. The evidence for such an interpretation is rather dubious.27

Kalupahana's position is to maintain that both the Buddha and Nāgārjuna declare some problems — such as "the identity of or the difference between soul and body" — as "undeclared" or "unexplained" (avyākata) but they do not propose the problems as being "indescribable" (avācya) or "indefinable" (anirvacanīya), the implication being that they are not beyond the reach or scope of language, but rather, they are considerations not suited to its purpose.28 The desire to present Nāgārjuna as an empiricist also leads Kalupahana to emphasise sense experience as the foundation of human knowledge rather than any extra-sensory, or intuitive experience.


Indeed, the theme that is emphasised is not the perception of a non-arising and non-ceasing ultimate truth, but rather the non-perception of a metaphysical entity that is non-arising and non-ceasing. Thus, for Nāgārjuna, sense experience, explained as a process of dependence, serves as the foundation of human knowledge. Concentrating his attention on this foundation of human knowledge and understanding, Nāgārjuna not only leaves out any discussion of special intuitions not related to sense experience, but also avoids any reference to the so-called "extraordinary perceptions" (abhiñā), probably because such perceptions had by this time come to be considered absolutely independent of sensory experience, even though it was not the way in which the Buddha perceived them. Nāgārjuna may have been aware that, even according to the Buddha, human beings whose six sensory faculties are not functioning properly could not develop such perceptions.  

Cultivation of perception remains firmly grounded in the sensory experience, even if its practice eventually leads to what could be termed 'extra-sensory' or intuitive experience. This distinction between the sensible and the perceptible, in which the latter is valorised and aligned with the intellect — as have been previously discussed in relation to Western philosophical perspectives — are not a feature of Nāgārjuna's presentation of śūnyatā.

Robert Magliola's consideration of Derrida and śūnyatā, presented in Derrida on the Mend, specifically propose śūnyatā as a correlate to Derrida's différance.  
Magliola's interpretation hinges on his definition of the term śūnyatā as "devoidness," that carries the desired inference of movement central to the concept of différance:

"Devoidness" as a translation evokes negation (the Latin prefix de meaning "completely," so we have "devoid" or "completely void"); and "deviousness" also evokes constitution (the Latin prefix de meaning "away from," so we have "devoid," or "away from voidness"). śūnyatā is not 'indifference' as we have already defined it, nor is śūnyatā a random kind of drift. As we shall also determine, to live authentic deviousness is to recognise the phenomenological can be bliss, the "quenching (samsāra is nirvāṇa).  

At the same time that Magliola is stressing practice or 'working' as a feature of śūnyatā he is keen to emphasise its inherent ethics, that its practice does not remove the practitioners from effective agency in the world. While Loy has discussed Nāgārjuna's proposal's as "beyond language" Magliola expresses it as "beyond-

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29 Kalupahana, Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way 82-83.

30 Magliola, Derrida on the Mend 89.

31 Magliola, Derrida on the Mend 89.
knowing" and as such allows for language within its scope, whilst not categorising it (śūnyatā) as logocentric: a characteristic, Magliola argues distinguishes it from the dominant forms of Eastern religion, including Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism that are logocentric.  

"Beyond-knowing" is a term used to signal knowing that is not bound to language, as Magliola explains:

As we shall discover, for Nāgārjuna the 'beyond-knowing' allows for logocentric i.e., language-bound knowing (in a way which frees him from Derrida's quandary concerning entrapment in language); and still Nāgārjuna 's 'beyond-knowing' is not itself logocentric.

However, to take into account the 'working' of śūnyatā would also require not thinking logocentric—not logocentric as dialectical oppositions. Magliola quotes Mervyn Sprung on what the practice of the Middle Way entails:

The middle way is not [logocentric] knowledge but it is not a practical [i.e. instrumental] undertaking either. It renders the dichotomy of theory and practice inapposite. There is no inner or outer here. There are no subjects, no doers, set against a world of objects to be manipulated in the doing. The 'way' invalidates such opposition .... There are no things on the middle way; they disappear into the way itself.

As the previous discussion by Abe illustrated, śūnyatā in its self-emptying dynamism is both form and formlessness, it is mutually co-dependence and particularity in the same way as it is both secular and sacred and neither secular nor sacred.

This means that, emptying itself, emptiness can take 'this' form or 'that' form or every form freely in their distinctive manner and yet every form is emptied and thereby interpenetrates others without hindrance.

Since emptiness as the pure activity of emptying incessantly empties everything including itself, there is nothing outside of this pure activity and at each time, is absolutely negated as well as absolutely affirmed.

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32 Magliola, Derrida on the Mend 88-89.

33 Magliola, Derrida on the Mend 88-89.

34 Mervyn Sprung, Questions of Being, 136 quoted in Magliola, Derrida on the Mend 94.

35 Abe, Zen Comparative Studies 109.
Therefore, the doctrine of śūnyatā is not anti-form, it does not propose a hierarchy in which the apprehension or experience of formlessness is раified, that is, it is not considered as being more able to express or 'reveal' Emptiness (in contradistinction to prevalent interpretations of Western non-objective painting practices that equate the 'escape' from the representation of form with the rendering of spirit/sacred). It follows that in such a perspective the material world of discrete entities is not positioned in a less-than relation to a spiritual world or ultimate reality. There exists for Buddhists two levels of truth, the conventional and the ultimate, that from an unenlightened perspective could be positioned in a hierarchy that privileges the ultimate reality, but as the discussion on samsāra–nirvāṇa has shown, an enlightened perspective leads to the rejection of such value judgements (the source of suffering) and the experience of both as mutually co-dependent and self-emptying.

Both the material world (samsāra) and the ultimate reality (nirvāṇa) are processual, in the constant flux of double negation, an emptying that is presence–absence, concurrently negating and affirming. Although not directly equateable to Deleuze’s plane of immanence, reality–ultimate reality as śūnyatā does share certain features, and in particular its inherent processual nature and the interpenetration of, in Deleuzian terms, the virtual and the actual.

In Buddhist understanding the sensual and the supra-sensual realms are mutually participating in one another. It is not the supra-sensual realm itself which is real, but rather this dynamic relationality of mutual participation between the sensual and the supra-sensual.\(^{37}\)

Realised from an enlightened perspective, reality is the relation, the "mutual participation," between. In addition, with regard to their dynamism both the practice of Emptiness and the plane of immanence are proposed as exceeding, in a non-determinate fashion, individual being and consciousness: "Movement, as we shall see, is to be thought in terms of a plane of immanence which cannot be made reducible to the positing and positioning of a phenomenological or psychological consciousness."\(^{38}\)

The realisation of co-dependent origination — *pratītya-samutpāda* — also referred to by Abe as dependent origination, enables the recognition of this processural dynamism. According to Abe, it makes evident two types of causality — sequential and simultaneous — that can also be understood to reflect the two types of time found within Bergson–Deleuze's discourse: linear and *durée* (or as discussed in the preceding chapter desire–time as *dans l'intervalle*). In further analogy to Deleuze's delineation of the crystal-image (direct image of time) this second type of causality includes a "condition" or an interval between cause and effect which is the 'location' of simultaneity. At this third mediating 'between,' things are not only understood to be co-dependent but to take place "at the same time."\(^{39}\) *Pratītya-samutpāda* is also translated as "relational origination" which gives a clearer indication of the creative co-arising and co-ceasing dynamics the term embodies. As simultaneous causality, its mediating reciprocal between, like the interval/crystal-image it is endowed with an originating (creative) capacity. Its realisation — that is the realisation of *pratītya-samutpāda* — results in an enlightenment that modifies the subjects understanding of

\(^{37}\) Abe, *Zen Comparative Studies* 144.


\(^{39}\) Abe, *Zen Comparative Studies* 95-96.
self, other and world: creating a 'new reality' that is not based on any apriori knowledge or experience.

Comparisons between Buddhist propositions of the between (reality–ultimate reality) and Deleuze's oeuvre have been taken up directly by Newman Robert Glass. His book *Working Emptiness: Towards a Third Reading of Emptiness in Buddhism and Postmodern Thought* focuses specifically on interpretations of śūnyatā while his essay, "The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Deleuze and the Positivity of the Second Light" examines the role of the between (or *Bardo*) in Tibetan Buddhism. Central to both these works is a focus on developing corollaries between Deleuzian desire and Buddhist concepts of the between.

In *Working Emptiness*, Glass presents several interpretations of śūnyatā explicated through reference to Heidegger, Mark C. Taylor, Dōgen Kigen and Deleuze. The readings are presented as staged developments of interpretation, with the inference that the final reading, vis-à-vis Deleuze, is the most correct, and it is certainly the most valorised by Glass. In the unfurling of these understandings he identifies three levels of interpreting śūnyatā: co-dependent arising; dependent arising and Buddha essence. However, these interpretations do not reflect Nāgārjuna's understanding of śūnyatā as previously discussed.

The first interpretation Glass proposes presents co-dependent arising as negating particularity and individual identity: "In the understanding of emptiness as co-dependent arising, there is no individual existence, or individual identity, but there is mutual existence or mutual identity." 

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As previous discussion has sought to articulate, the practice and perspective of śūnyatā does not support binary divisions of this type. Although everything is considered to be in a continual process of self-emptying and therefore considered as mutually co-arising and co-ceasing, this does not exterminate the particular or negate form as the two truth perspective seeks to express. Glass' second interpretation focuses on "dependent origination," which he argues excludes mutuality, and takes place in space and time (he assumes that mutuality in co-dependent arising excludes space and time and is akin to a suspended moment): again, in comparison to the previous presentation of Nāgārjuna's doctrine, this interpretation appears erroneous. Co-dependent arising is understood to include both linear causality and simultaneous causality but neither are necessarily excluded from space and time. Considered thus, the delineation of dependent arising in contra-distinction to this point (understanding of co-dependent origination) cannot be maintained or validated, because its central proposition — as defined by Glass in the quotation below — is based on an inaccurate understanding of śūnyatā against which it defines itself: "Dependent arising asks: how can 'now' have an independent existence apart from the moment before or moment after?"43

The core of the proposition of dependent origination lay in its critique of presenting the individual moment as having its own self-existence. This reading assumes that the only mode of time is a linear one and, further, that suspension from an experience of linear time equals no-time, rather than the possibility of experiencing time differently (or a different time).

Glass is critical of both perspectives of śūnyatā as co-dependent arising or dependent arising, on the first count, because co-dependent arising "makes enlightenment synonymous with meditation."44 This is considered the case because it is the

43 Glass, Working Emptiness 103.

44 Glass, Working Emptiness 103.
cultivation of perceptive capacities in mediation practice that enables the
apprehension of the working of Emptiness, the mutual co-arising and co-ceasing of
everything. The second criticism pertaining to dependent origination is that,
although it places enlightenment back in the stream of events (i.e. not only a
meditation practice understood to suspend space and time) and therefore returns it to
the realm of ethics, it offers no new interpretation of the practice. This leads Glass
to propose a third alternative, one that relies on interpreting śūnyatā as pertaining to
the modulation and transformation of affective experience, and in particular of desire.

My claim is that Buddhist practice is best presented not as a move from one form of thinking to
another (from thinking to without thinking) but as a move from one nature of desire to another (from
 craving to compassion). 46

In terms of the doctrine of śūnyatā this means thinking Emptiness as a "state of
desire," that expresses Buddha-nature (what Glass refers to as essence). The
selection of the term 'essence' to convey an enlightened state is confusing with regard
to its English meanings. As Emptiness is predicated on the critique of all ascription
of absolute self-existence (svabhāva) the singularity and intrinsic nature implied in
the term essence does not sit easily with this prescription. The argument should not
be for an essential self, or the identification of a particular characteristic of the self
(or world) as its/an essence, but rather for the understanding of impermanence as the
processural 'ground' of all existence-in-relation. Glass' interpretation oscillates
between these two perspectives, as he privileges sense and affective relations at the
same time as positioning desire as an essence-like phenomenon that provides the
ground of the subject in Buddhist practice. 47 This interpretation of desire, although
strongly influenced by the work of Deleuze, remains univocal — there seems no
'trace' of the multiplicitous. Glass proposes a singular type of desire that manifests
itself in two ways (it has two natures): either as evil lust or enlightened compassion. This perspective again maps a dualism onto a 'perspective' — śūnyatā — that inherent in its conception, through the practice of double negation, seeks to avoid (as well as incorporating the good-evil dualism and its inherent moralism). There is a simplification of the complexity of Emptiness' articulation of presence–absence within Glass' reading that the following discussion will further elaborate; in short however, it seems to be plagued by dualistic thinking: the either/or; the choice between two is its most marked feature. Glass' perspective lacks the thinking–sensing of concurrence (simultaneity) that can be interpreted outside of a framework of intrinsic (Western) value judgements.

Glass' discussion commences with reference to a Japanese term 'ai' that includes amongst its meanings 'desire.' This selection is driven by Glass' examination of Japanese Zen Buddhist Dōgen's work.48 Ai includes amongst its definitions, lust, craving, carnal pleasure, wealth, selfless compassion and love. It is interesting to note that, in Glass' valorisation of what he considers to be its "undefiled" meanings (selfless compassion and love) the focus is largely on compassion: love does not receive direct discussion as his choice is to focus on the interpretation of the Japanese term only in its definition as desire(s).49 Chapters eight and nine consider more directly the connection between concepts of love and desire; it is however worth noting which term most suits Glass' purpose of cross-reading Buddhism with Deleuze's philosophy, as well as drawing attention to equally valid definitions of the term that are not privileged within his discussion and the implications of such a


49 Glass, Working Emptiness 85.
selection: "Buddhist emptiness might then be that state achieved when the field of
defiled love or desire gives way to the field of selfless compassion." 50

It is clear that Glass considers the expression of desire as lust, wealth, carnal desire,
or pleasure as "defilements:" states that need to be superseded and transformed into
selfless compassion to achieve enlightenment, to realise Emptiness. This 'classic'
interpretation of desire as impure and oppositional to spiritual practice carries the
denigration of the body for which it has been previously critiqued (and discussed in
chapter three). In addition to this bias underlying Glass' dualism, it is also difficult
to maintain the dualism he proposes in its own terms; for could not wealth, pleasure
and carnal desire include selfless compassion in their expression? Is there anything
inherent in the practice of selfless compassion that necessarily excludes the
practitioner (enlightened person) from enjoying physical/sense pleasure, prosperity
and sexual expression? The state of selfless compassion does incorporate an ethics,
but in so doing it does not necessarily divorce the practitioner from living "fully" in
the world: if anything its practice and realisation calls for a more conscious
immersion in the sensual joys of 'material' embodied expression (this is the subject
of chapter eight). It is an attitudinal orientation not a denial of phenomenal reality.
As Kalupahana notes "The Buddha never claimed that all phenomena (dharmāḥ) lead
to suffering (duhkha)." 51

Glass maps onto his desire dualism types of kinetic and intensive activity:
employing a lesser used Sanskrit term for defilement — āsṛava — he presents
defilements as leakages or flows, whilst non-defilements have a quality of "non-
streaming" or being contained in place without release. Desire as pleasure in this
system is correlated with Deleuze's climax–being, whilst desire as "positive" desire is

50 Glass, Working Emptiness 85.

51 Kalupahana, Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way 46.
paired with plateau–being.\textsuperscript{52} In brief, the becoming of climax–being maintains and builds upon the already present state of being, whilst becoming as plateau–being opens to the new, it incorporates the possibility of becoming something 'else' that one is not already.\textsuperscript{53} It is difficult to ignore the overture to sexual experience these terms evoke, with climax–being inferencing an orgasmic based sexual experience stereotypically (and therefore reductively) identified as the masculine sexual experience, whilst plateau–being with its increasing but never discharging desire is evocative of Tantric sexual practices, and as referenced by Deleuze and Guattari in \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, Chinese Taoist sexual practices that advocate a denial of (male) orgasm as part of the process of achieving union with the divine within an erotic embrace.\textsuperscript{54}

Following Deleuze's nomenclature, Glass figures pleasure and positive desire as "lines," that intersect in the human body: "in the present moment in that space between stimulus and response."\textsuperscript{55} This view of the body reflects the Bergsonian concept of the body as a hyphen (chapter one/three), and the Deleuzian ascription of the body as the locus of the mediating exchange between action–response: the living image as affection-image. Further, this reading evokes the state of suspension central to the crystal-image regime and opens the subject itself to being interpreted as the between (as has been presented in previous chapters). Glass however does not

\textsuperscript{52} Glass' use of the terms "climax-being" and "plateau-being" to distinguish two different processes of becoming are drawn from Deleuze and Guattari's chapter "November 28, 1947: How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs" in \textit{A Thousand Plateaus} and in particular their reference to Gregory Bateson's \textit{Steps to an Ecology of Mind} (New York: Ballantine, 1972): "Gregory Bateson uses the term plateau for continuous regions of intensity constituted in such a way that they do not allow themselves to be interrupted by any external termination, any more than they allow themselves to build toward a climax ...." \textit{A Thousand Plateaus} 158.

\textsuperscript{53} Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 85.

\textsuperscript{54} "A great Japanese compilation of Chinese Taoist treatises was made in A.D. 982-984. We see in it the formation of a circuit of intensities between female and male energy, with the women playing the role of innate or instinctive force (Yin) stolen or transmitted to the man in such a way that the transmitted force of the man (Yang) in turn becomes innate, all the more innate: an augmentation of powers. The condition for this circulation and multiplication of the man is that the man not ejaculate." Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus} 157.

\textsuperscript{55} Glass, \textit{Working Emptiness} 86.
propose the subject as the between, but as an agency that can 'work' with the between (and in particular the space between thoughts) and change the nature of the between via meditation practice.

To make the link to Buddhism explicit: the move from the realm of the possible to the realm of the potential is understood as a shift from the first aspect of practice to the second; from sensitivity to forms and pleasure to sensitivity to essence and positive desire (from sense to essence).

The space between stimulus and response (where the line of pleasure and the line of desire intersect) is the location of Buddhist meditation practice. If we wish to change the direction of becoming, then we must work with all the possibilities which arise in that gap.56

It is through meditation practice, Glass argues, that different modalities of sensitivity can be developed that enable the subject to "withstand increased intensities of desire." Glass further proposes that it is through the intensification of desire that desire is transmuted, its "nature and experience" is changed from pleasure to positive desire. Central to this experience is the shift from perceptive schemes that privilege the optic to those that focus on the haptic. The movement is from form to affect, and it is the affective 'realm' that is comprised of the intensities of desire, and is also the locus of their transformation.57

Glass is clearly taken with the state of the 'held' or suspended as the creative aspect of the plateau–being, whilst the flows and leaks of the climax–being activate the action–response movement, that in this reading is equated with repetition. Although the notes accompanying this essay include reference to the BwO as presented in *A Thousand Plateaus* this modality of subjectivity, inherently open and comprised of fluxes and flows, is not referenced directly and, conceptually does not map easily onto the leaking–non-leaking dualism that Glass is proposing. The BwO, as discussed in the previous chapter, seems to be inherently permeable, leaky being its very 'nature,' open to the plateau from which it is formed, and essentially comprised of a processural becoming Other, that is becoming something other is inherent to its very nature.

56 Glass, Working Emptiness 87.

57 Glass, Working Emptiness 91.
The previous quotation illustrates an attitude towards sense experience that valorises as the superior perceptive modality a sensitivity to essence or positive desire, rather than a sensitivity to form as implicit in Glass' approach to the practice of Emptiness as being a choice between the leaking and the non-leaking. In aesthetic terms, this can be read as a privileging of the 'inmaterial' sublime moment (the clash of imagination and reason) over the experience of beauty so inextricably tied to form. Glass maps a further dualism onto the two types of desire, with pleasure aligned with form sensitivity whilst positive desire is presented as akin to field sensitivity (and his bias is strongly against form). Such an argument does not include Nāgārjuna's proposition as discussed by Abe, that Emptiness moves freely between form and formlessness, and that neither is to be privileged, as both are understood as ceaselessly self-emptying.

It is the between state, which is predominantly discussed by Glass as the moment between thoughts (this opens a corollary with the space between breaths as understood as the focus of mediation practice, this is discussed in the next chapter with regard to pneumatology and yoga practice) that is brought to conscious awareness by meditation practice. Glass designates this space between thoughts as difference, difference is the gap, or as he terms it, the "nothing." At the same time, Glass renders the gap/thing as "the location of desires, drives, instinct to karma."58 Hence it is not really no-thing. The between is a location (between stimulus and response) and interpreted by Glass as follows:

This is the place(s) where the line of pleasure and the line of desire intersect, the habitus of the ghosts. It is by developing a sensitivity to this "between" in meditation practice that the "between" begins to relax and open.59

It seems however, not so much a case of considering the between as a distinct bounded state relaxing and opening but, rather, that an individual becomes

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increasingly aware of their ability to perceive and alter their affective and instinctual capacities, especially as they express/manifest beyond the corporeal. Glass writes in terms that present this as a change in the nature of the between, without making explicit that this between exists in an intimate relationship with the subject. The opening of the between is simultaneously an opening of the subject (or more correctly a realisation of openess as inherent to the subject). Similar to a Bergsonian ordering of cognitive abilities, in which instinct is cast in the base position against which abstract and intuitive thought are understood as developments, Glass (following many Buddhist interpretations) also denigrates the instinctual and argues that its codes need to be burnt away, that one needs to work against ones 'nature' to cultivate compassion. These instinctual codes are correlated by Glass with *karma* — the "law of consequence" — in Buddhism the emphasis is placed on the intention underlying action rather than as in Hinduism, the action itself. Although on the one hand *karma* in both its good and bad aspects is considered a hindrance to enlightenment, because it signals/causes repetition and it itself needs to be ceaselessly emptied, on the other hand, "good" *karma* could be considered the working, expression and foundation of selfless compassion, and therefore not in need of being burnt away. Glass' focus is on *karma* as negative and limiting, rather than as potentially instructive, productive and generous.

The ghosts of the between are aligned with this instinctual 'bad' *karma*, the 'negative' emotions, "fear, desire-as-lack, anger:" all of which may be entirely appropriate emotional responses depending upon the circumstances that have elicited them. From one perspective, the emotions themselves should not be considered inherently "bad" but rather, the applicability and range of their expression needs to be considered in terms of what is or is not deemed 'appropriate.' For example, the expression of fear does not necessarily have to be hostile or repressive but if known

60 Glass, *Working Emptiness* 87; 97.


(in the way that practices like meditation enable an expansion of the recognition and understanding of emotional states) can provide an acknowledgement of vulnerability in oneself that allows a greater compassion and understanding for the vulnerability of others.

Underlying Glass' interpretation is a dualism between thinking and what he terms "force" or affect, that he positions as inhabiting the space between thoughts (between forms). Yet, this does not take into account cognitive states in which they are inherently interrelated and work in tandem and, in harmony, for example intuitive or psychic states. In fact the understanding of ghosts can be approached in this manner, as thought–affect. Further, the dualism of thought and affect proposed by Glass does not sit comfortably with regard to emotion. On the one side pleasure — which is correlated with instinctual emotional response — is set in contradistinction to positive desire that is correlated with the perception of affect, a positioning that seems to divorce emotion from being considered as a characteristic of, or expressive of affect.

Predominant in Glass' analysis of Emptiness is the battle between figure (form) and field (force): they are from the outset pitched as alternatives, antithetical to one another. That is not to say that cultivating perception through meditation practice is not a difficult process, fraught with struggle that requires profound shifts in thought–emotion–experience. But Glass' presentation seems to operate from the basis of assuming that the opening of subjectivity that this entails will absolutely incur an experience of hostility. Hostility, is of course, a response to vulnerability, but it is not the only response to openness available, nor is it the only attitude to adopt to enable maintaining field rather that form sensitivity. Rather than think in dualisms, what the perspective of śūnyatā that Nāgārjuna and Abe present is the thinking–experiencing of concurrence: of holding open to difference without defining its expression, of being both field and form savvy. This requires considering one's own and all other positions as mobile, acknowledging an interdependence whilst maintaining a mode of detachment — central to the practice of compassion (both
detachment and compassion are examined with more care in the following chapters). It also calls for a realisation of a codependent–origination existing between all things, that disrupts the immanence–transcendence dualism, allowing differing realms (however conceived) to mutually coexist simultaneously, allowing 'ghosts' to inhabit and have agency in this world (and vice versa). There is a glimmer in this reckoning of Irigaray's relations of horizontal transcendence, a position established on a pneumatological foundation of air and energy as conceived in Yoga philosophy (this relation will be examined further in the next chapter). The discussion of Glass' examination of the relations between Deleuzian desire and Buddhism will now be taken up with specific regard to Tibetan Buddhism and ghosts, the latter able to be understood as an 'embodiment' of concurrent presence–absence.

Choice, Desire and the Living–Dead.

In Glass' work on interpreting Emptiness in light of Deleuzian philosophy, a clear ethics of desire is articulated, one in which the choice of 'pleasure' is defined as unethical, and the apprehension of the ethical relies on the cultivation of perception and sensation.

In an "ethics of desire," pleasure is always the unethical choice. Pleasure is cised and vectored (defiled and outflowing) … If one wishes to pursue the line of becoming, then one must choose against cised and vectored responses.\(^{63}\)

We must, then, distinguish between intensities of desire and intensities of pleasure, know that one can flip to the other in the blink of an eye.\(^{64}\)

The choice that suspends the twitching eyelid is made in the between, and Glass further extends his analysis of this 'place' in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Deleuze and the Positivity of the Second Light,* in which he notes the title is translated by renowned Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman as the Book of Liberation Through


\(^{64}\) Glass, *Working Emptiness* 88.
Another translation of the title — Bardo Thötröl — is The Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo. It is a book from the Nyingma tradition that is used as a guide for navigating the after death bardo states (of which there are six). Traditionally it is read aloud to the dying (and for several days after the 'physical' death) to guide them through the 'between' realms, enabling the attainment of liberation. Rinpoche Chögyam Trungpa provides the following definition and description of bardo:

'bar' means in between, and 'do' means island or mark; a sort of landmark which stands between two things. It is rather like an island in the midst of a lake. ... The past situation has just occurred and the future situation has not yet manifested itself so there is a gap between the two. This is basically the bardo experience.

While it is unclear from this definition whether the 'gap' could be understood to 'comprise' the simultaneity implicit in relation of co-dependent arising/ceasing and śūnyatā (and the ascription of the between as desire–time), it certainly seems to designate a state of suspension between two 'moments' of linear time. It is clear however, that this 'gap' is the location of choice. For Glass the bardo is, in a corollary with his work on the space between thoughts in meditation, a location

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68 Rinpoche Chögyam Trungpa (1939-1987) the eleventh Trungpa Tulka (in the lineage of Kagyü and Nyingma schools) was enormously influential in bringing Tibetan Buddhism to a Western audience. He fled to India (from Tibet) after the Chinese invasion, studied at Oxford University during the 1960's, then moved to North America in 1970 where he founded the first accredited Buddhist university — Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado — and the Vajradhātu Association of Buddhist Churches. Bowker ed., "Trungpa, Rinpoche Vidyadhara Chögyam," The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions 993.

comprised of divergent forces: "The gap is not neutral, but marks the intersection of multiple lines of thought and multiple dimensions of force."\(^70\)

What is in the choice between two lights the *Bardo Thötröl* is read by Glass as the choice between two types of desire and two types of Deleuzian becoming (as previously described). However, in this essay, the leaking–non-leaking dualism he proposes is rendered as desire with and desire without a centre. The focus of his analysis is the third realm "the Mild Deity Reality Between," that presents the 'person' as confused with "habitual tendencies or past karma (forces with a centre),"\(^71\) which, to be successfully navigated, requires the person to cultivate the ability to discern forces or energy rather than form:

while, in the 'life between,' forms are primary and light or energy is secondary, in the Mild Deity between this situation reverses and light and energy become primary. While in life one makes decisions on the basis of distinctions between forms, one is now asked to make decisions on the basis of distinctions between energies or desires. Cultivating sensitivity to and awareness of this alternate dimension is one of the goals of Buddhist practice.\(^72\)

To maintain the form–force dualism, Glass' analysis is implicitly reductive (not to mention eurocentric) and can be understood to pertain to decisions made consciously following dominant Western conceptualisations of materiality and subjectivity. Equally however, one can be aware of decisions that are made on the basis of how one 'feels,' in which case the impulse directing choice is more force than form. It is probably more usual that decisions in this reality are a result of both force–form with the latter occupying a position of privilege and recognition denied the former. Glass' prime concern with regard to desire is to uncouple it from being perceived simply as a sensory response centred on an object, and this is also what is understood to be required by the person in the Mild Deity Realm.

The move from a 'conditional bliss dependant on the senses' to a more vital state requires going 'beyond desires dependant on sense objects'… From this perspective, the second world is then not without desire, just without the negative desire of the first world — a desire with a centre or a desire

\(^70\) Glass, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Deleuze and the Positivity of the Second Light* 65.


focused on objects. The goal of Buddhist practice is then not the absence of desire, but the absence of negative desire and the presence of positive desire. The energy of desire has been transformed in its shift from one state to another.\(^3\)

The salient issue regarding non-leaking/leaking and centred/decentred desires is control. Desire, as energy, is presented as either positive or negative: negative desire is object bound and moves (leaks) beyond the subject whilst positive desire constantly circulates and builds in intensity 'in' the plateau. It is however unclear where the energy of negative desire leaks out to, other than 'into' the between and beyond the subjects control (it is 'discharged').

The quality of desire or energy changes much as ice changes to water and again water changes to gas. It is then both correct and misleading to use the term 'desire' to refer to the energy of all three states. The move is from gross to subtle and refined. In Taoist practice one moves through three passes as the quality of desire is increasingly refined. One refines vitality into energy, energy into spirit, and spirit into openness. In a similar way, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* lists three levels of the body–mind: gross, subtle and extremely subtle.\(^4\)

The above quote emphasises a fluidity of form, illustrating the same substance in different states, however, Glass never discusses desire — in any form — as directly constitutive of the subject, or as an ontological force, although this is implied in the analogy drawn to Taoist practice. His preference is to speak of forces, of desire, as comprising the field that sustains the subject.\(^5\) But, sharp boundaries are difficult to establish, as it is clear, following the analogies Glass presents, that the transformation of desire equates with the cultivation of subtle forms of subjectivity (body–mind), and that such forms of the subject necessitate thinking form and field (self and environment) as inherently interpenetrating.\(^6\) The issue of how the subject is figured in the *bardo* realms and within the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is of central

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\(^3\) Glass, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Deleuze and the Positivity of the Second Light* 69.


\(^6\) The cultivation of body–mind unity and, of a subject that 'extends' into the environment is central to many Eastern conceptualisations of the human. Yuasa Yasuo presents an extensive consideration of Eastern mind–body theory in relation to Western perspectives (particularly those of process philosophy, phenomenology and depth psychology) in *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind–Body Theory*. 
concern when considering Glass' analysis, as it is in this location that the subtle aspects of subjectivity are recognised and consciously utilised.

In his commentary on the text Rinpoche Chögyam Trungpa provides an insight into how the individual is perceived, in terms of body–mind, and the initial experience of the bardo realms.

It says in this book that having woken up, after four days of unconsciousness, into the luminosity there is a sudden understanding that this is the bardo state, and at that very moment the reverse of samsāric experience occurs. This is the perception of light and images, which are the reverse of body or form; instead of being a tangible situation of form it is an intangible state of quality.

Then you get the dazzling light, which is a link of communication between body and intelligence. Although one is absorbed into the state of luminosity, there is still some intelligence operating, sharp and precise, with a dazzling quality. So the psycho–physical body and also the intelligence, the intellectual mind, are transformed into space.

The first paragraph presents light and images as the reverse of body and form: they are not necessarily placed in opposition. The explanation seems to carry more the sense contained in the type of relationship discussed in chapter six with regard to the crystal-image and the composition and relation of the virtual–actual. There is a reversibility (and significantly 'places' where the distinctions are not clear-cut) but not an implicit dualism or binary. The term 'space' as employed by Rinpoche Chögyam Trungpa in the above quote should also not be considered in contrast to time; it is considered that which "creates the environment in which to behave, breathe and act," and it contains "birth and death." Rinpoche Chögyam Trungpa considers the Tibetan Book of the Dead as a "Book of Space," and uses this description to indicate the existence of psychic (and affective) agency, including "the psychic force left behind by a dead person." Considering the self in the bardo states is to apprehend oneself as extensive, as space: as the inbetween space of the bardo realms. This interpretation is evidenced at the close of the "Inspiration–Prayer for Deliverance from the Dangerous Pathway of the Bardo."

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may I know all lights as my own light,
may I know all the rays as my own ray.
May I spontaneously know the bardo as myself,
may I attain the realms of the three kāyas. 79

This prayer or "wish–path," is one of several texts that accompany the Tibetan Book of the Dead that are used for devotional exercise by the living, and also some verses are read as guidance to the dead. 80 Kāyas refers to the three forms of enlightened "body," or body–mind. The first is the body of truth or dharma ( dharmakāya ); the second is the body of "enjoyment" ( sambhogakāya ) and is understood to appear in the bardo realm of peaceful and wrathful deities; the third is the "body of creation, in which Buddha–nature manifests itself on earth" ( nirmānakāya ). All three bodies are encompassed and transcended by svabhāvikakāya, "the essential body of intrinsic nature." 81 In obtaining realisation of these luminous, subtle states of body–mind, the 'person' also attains realisation of the bardo — the between, gap, interval, and following Glass' interpretation, desire — "as myself."

The experience of luminosity, of an "inner glow" arrives at the end of the death process, after the final feelings of "contact with the physical world" have ceased and prior to entering the six bardo realms and is also experienced between each bardo realm: the point were a self becomes concurrently living–dead. The experience of luminosity, is the between within the between, "a gap when intensity slackens." 82


Luminosity is also discussed as a feature of the plane of immanence by Deleuze in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, where it is presented as a feature of materiality:

Things are luminous by themselves without anything illuminating them: all consciousness is something, it is indistinguishable from the thing, that is from the image of light... In short, it is not consciousness which is light, it is the set of images, or the light, which is consciousness, immanent to matter.83

In Deleuze's description, the Western 'light' of consciousness is not an external beam brought to bear on matter in order to illuminate it, rather matter has its own 'internal' luminosity. To momentarily return to the discussion of Bergson's Images and *durée*, these images of which Deleuze writes are the matter–consciousness of *durée*, further, these Images are considered as light and such intimately interrelate a diachronic form of time, matter and consciousness.

From these considerations of the *bardo* realms, it can be understood that the move from perception focused on form (negative desire) to perception of field (positive desire) is akin to the recognition of the self in various states of extensive subtle body–mind. In the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* this apprehension is intertwined with the successful navigation of the *bardo* realms. The cultivation of subtle bodies in this presentation is linked to making the correct choice in relationship to the images and affects encountered in the different realms. The responsibility to attain enlightenment is both aesthetic and ethical, pertaining to sense and relation.

In Glass' interpretation this choice is also an aesthetic and ethical decision but one premised on what are presented as oppositional binaries — between figure and field/ground — rather than in keeping with *śūnyatā* which seeks 'liberation' from binaries of all kinds and the simultaneous recognition of interdependence and detachment. Such a perspective would not negate the predominance of affect or 'field' in the *bardo* realms, it would however make the boundaries of form nebulous and emphasise a subtlety pertaining to it that more clearly recognises an

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interconnection between form-field; considering them in a relation of an actual-virtual circuit rather than as distinct alternatives.

Śūnyatā as ceaseless relations of emptying is manifest in the inter-dependent arising of all phenomena and considered as such is presence-absence.

Conclusion

From a radical perspective Buddhist practice involves the cultivation of an entirely new set of sensitivities — moving outside the present notion of what is possible into something entirely new.64

Amidst the preoccupation with proposing dualisms and denigrating pleasure within Glass' discussion of Buddhism and Deleuze there are several beneficial propositions and perspectives. The first is the forgrounding of the cultivation of different sensitivities as enabling the recognition and expression of different modalities of desire (of which there are only two in Glass' scheme). His call for an extension to an individual's sensitivity 'literacy' echoes Irigaray's position vis-à-vis cultivated perception and the type of perceptive skills required in the practice of mundus imaginalus. Secondly, the introduction to considering the between as the realm of spectres — both friendly and foe — brings the metaphysical into the physical in a relation that is neither purely transcendent nor entirely immanent, in the same way that "ghosts" are neither purely absent nor present but both simultaneously.85 This confounding opens out the conceptualising of agency as not strictly tied to form or formlessness: modalities of embodiment both with and without corporeal bodies that will be further examined in the conclusion with reference to the Tantric Goddesses, the Dākini's.

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64 Glass, "The Tibetan Book of the Dead: Deleuze and the Positivity of the Second Light" 73.

85 As both subjectivity and the between have previously been discussed as constituted by pneumatological forces inclusive of desire, it is also salient to mention — with regard to ghosts as inhabiting this 'space' — that Paul Coates attributes three meanings to Hegel's Geist, one of which is ghost: 'Hegel's Geist, meanwhile, has the triple abstraction of 'ghost,' 'spirit' and 'mind.' Paul Coates, Cinema, Religion and the Romantic Legacy (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) 145.
The apparition of this presence–absence occurs in the space between action–reaction (the meanwhile): the sublime moment in a less aggressive expression, tinctured with some of the harmonious relation accorded to the Kantian experience of the beautiful (previously discussed in chapter five).

In the processural 'way' of śūnyatā, is a quality of perception that is accurately embodied in Kelly Oliver's proposition (following Levinas) of "response–ability:" an ethical practice tied to perceptive sensitivities, that is the subject of the next chapter. Buddhist practice can be considered as a way of training that ability, in order to re-negotiate binary oppositions and escape substantialist metaphysics. Like the process philosophers of the Western tradition, they put the logocentric dualisms into flux, temporalising positions and expressions, and as such concurrence, and simultaneity are features of their core dynamic of co-dependent origination. The between again rendered not a static fixed 'place' but a quality of relation, a modality of subjectivity that both is, and is not, the individual.

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Section III

Ethics
Chapter Eight
Witnessing: Detached Immersion

There is no greater sin than dispassion, no greater virtue than pleasure.¹

In *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen: Buddhists, Feminists and the Art of Self*, feminist religious studies theorist and practising Buddhist Anne Klein argues that the Buddhist concepts of selflessness and śūnyatā are "fully compatible with dynamic personal agency, as well as with material cause and effect."² This chapter seeks to examine this claim by considering the dynamic and embodied aspects of śūnyatā (including its energetic ontology): the practice of witnessing and the resulting detachment that the accompanying modification of subjectivity entails. It will be shown — in contradistinction to Glass' denigration of the more physical forms of pleasure — that the realisation of śūnyatā does not require the suppression of emotion (in particular passion) or the denial of pleasure. Indeed these psycho–physical energetic states are the 'foundation' of an interpersonal (intersubjective) ethics without which the cultivation and expression of compassion — an integral goal of Buddhist practice — would not be possible.

As previous chapters (particularly chapters one and seven) have articulated, there are resonances between the type of self-cultivation process required in Irigaray's dual subjectivity and śūnyatā practice; with both incorporating models of subtle subjectivity.³ In this chapter further resonances will be drawn between Irigaray's proposal of a horizontal transcendence — a reappraisal of Western Christian relations with the spiritual that emphasises embodied participation in establishing relations with alterity — and the experience of emptiness–bliss in Tantric Buddhism. The recognition and cultivation of self required by horizontal transcendence and Tantric practice requires a form of contemplative looking — witnessing — that has previously been proposed and examined (in particular addressing the proposal of

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³ Albeit, Irigaray's dual subjectivity embraces an essentialist energetic dualism (influenced by Hindu metaphysics) that is not embraced within the Buddhist practice of śūnyatā.
detachment as a form of relation referenced in the examination of Kantian disinterest in chapter five) and this chapter will consider its intersubjective and ethical role in more depth with reference to Esoteric philosophy and the work of contemporary feminist philosopher Kelly Oliver.

Emerging out of these considerations, and in a continuation of the themes of diachronic time and simultaneous experience, the dualism of the 'emotional'/psychical states of immersion and detachment will be presented as mutually concurrent states correlated to an experience of radical proximity that embraces a simultaneously embodied–disembodied subjectivity.

Cultivating Selves of Emptiness and Bliss

In an early chapter of *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community* Irigaray makes a curious statement regarding the potential intersubjective dimensions of her Yoga practice. She claims to have been left to "invent" and explore the dynamics of breath and energy between individuals of sexual difference without guides or precedents.

If I have learned from my yoga teachers the importance of breathing in order to survive, to cure certain ills, and to attain detachment and autonomy, I have not received from them, neither male nor female, any information about a sexuation of breathing or of energy, about its usefulness in the respect and love of self and other. I had to invent and pursue this course alone ....

This claim reads as if she is unaware of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantric traditions; traditions that specifically focus on the mutual co-cultivation of a couple's yoga practice through relationship. These practices are implicitly grounded in the mutual respect and love of the practitioners — exhibited through the commitment made to jointly assist one another's spiritual development. However, it becomes apparent later in the text (via direct reference) that Irigaray was not unaware of these traditions and their practices:

Thanks to the presence of feminine traditions, India has retained traces of pre-patriarchal cultures. It has also developed certain cultural dimensions we have nearly forgotten. In India women and men are gods together, and they create the world, including its cosmic dimension. The divine couples, whether or not it is Vishnu or Shiva, along with their lovers, are microcosms in constant economic relations with the macrocosm; the same goes for Tantrism. These couples are generally represented without children. They are lovers, and lovers of the universe.

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5 Irigaray's critique of children is addressed in chapter nine.
Therefore, despite Irigaray's initial claims regarding her personal experience, the philosophers and religious practitioners of Hindu and Buddhist religion have not ignored the intersubjective implications of yoga self cultivation practices between subjects of different gender. Cultivation of energetic dynamics, of emptiness and bliss, is the locus of Tantric practice. In further consideration of Irigaray's comment, there does not appear to be an account in Hindu or Buddhist philosophy/religion in which the breath or the energy of either male or female practitioner is understood at its most fundamental level to be radically (or ontologically) different from one another; in fact the definitions of prāṇa—"life;" "breathing forth"—and its most usual signification as "universal life force" would seem to preclude such a reading and proposition.

This is not to claim that the energies cannot exhibit in/as particularity or difference—if all breaths/energies were absolutely identical there would be no reason for conscious cultivation and interrelation—but, that at an ontological level presented in the world, there are not two fundamentally different types being proposed that equate with a gender dualism. This understanding is also presented by Rita M. Gross, who identifies energy as both "powerful" and "neutral" (emphasising its ability to be used both constructively and destructively) in her discussion of Tantric Buddhism.

Ironically, Irigaray's proposal of gendered breath/energy dualism does not sit comfortably in relation to her formulation of dual subjectivity either, as she establishes air in the same intersubjective 'medium' role she previously allotted desire

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6 Irigaray, *Between East and West* 29. This quote also includes a critique of the Hegelian family that will be discussed in more detail in chapter nine.


8 Although chapter one outlined gendered sources of the creation of the universe in the Hindu Sāṃkhya tradition—prakṛti and puruṣa—in their conceptualisation they are not understood to manifest as distinct substances in 'reality,' rather, it is prakṛti that manifests the world, but 'it' cannot do so without the 'force' of puruṣa. Although the former is aligned with matter and the latter with consciousness, this, as David Loy notes, is not a Cartesian dualism: "prakṛti includes all mental as well as physical phenomena." Richard King describes puruṣa's role as that of a "witnessing–consciousness" rather than an "agent" in the world's creation. Loy, *Nonduality*, 190; King, *Indian Philosophy* 63-64.

in *To Be Two* — that, as was previously proposed, (in chapter four) takes on an ontological agency distinct from (but interrelated with) the two subjects (hence the creation of a to be three). As a shared medium, air is similarly positioned as both internal and external to dual subjects of sexual difference, and, as being a primary shared ontological constituent: it is correlate with desire.

Sexual difference is, in fact, the difference that can open a transcendental horizon between humans, in particular between man and woman.... It is in sexual difference that the split between human and divine identities can be overcome, thanks to cultivation of energy, in particular a cultivation of breathing.10

Irigaray's initial proposal of gender specific types of breath is tempered during its development in *Between East and West* to become an argument for the existence of a fundamentally different relation to the breath: "In fact, what attracts man to woman to each other, beyond a simple corporeal difference, is a difference of subjectivity, and notably a difference of relation to the breath."11

Thus it is not so much an argument that two distinct types of breath exist (formed from different substances), but rather, that the male and the female inherently relate differently to breath/energy. Irigaray attributes to each gender a utilisation of breath that is essentially (and in an essentialist manner) based on the nature/culture dualism: the female equated with the internal (the 'keeping') and 'nature,' the male with the external (the 'spending') and 'culture.'

I have attempted to say how the practice of respiration, of breathing, is not neuter, and how women and men breathe in a specific manner: the one keeping it more inside, notably to share it, the other employing it almost exclusively to make, to construct outside of self.12

Such a proposal is problematic on several counts, not least figuring how the maintaining of breath 'inside' enables sharing, and, how once external to the body the air remains in the conscious control of the masculine subject; the control that enables this subject to put it to work as Irigaray proposes. It is also unclear how these divergent modes of relation to the breath interrelate with what is understood to be the more unified "cosmic" breath.

10 Irigaray, *Between East and West* 90.

11 Irigaray, *Between East and West* 84.

12 Irigaray, *Between East and West* 11.
The quest for the Buddha seems to me to correspond to the search for a continuous communion with the respiration of the macrocosm. In order to attain such fluidity, the Buddha renounces the punctuality, the discontinuity, of objects, and, moreover, of discourses. He tries to become pure subject but on a model forgotten by us: pure subject means here breathing in tune with the breathing of the entire living universe.¹³

What is actually being prefigured in this discussion of breath by Irigaray is her concept of dual spirituality and this will be further discussed later in this chapter. However, despite this spirituality's intimate relation to air, the phenomenal reality of a breathing subject is respiration, a continually changing flow — able to be cultivated in terms of its duration — but the type of 'permanent' stasis required to for air to be kept "more inside;" or to 'construct' sits uneasily with its inherent processual activity.

As discussed in chapter two, Irigaray seeks to give presence to a subjectivity outside of the bounds of the discourse of the Same. She incorporates a masculine–feminine dualism at the level of a generating ontology, but does not seem to carry them into her conceptualisation of the 'lived body' and its articulations in the 'real.' Irigaray's position maintains that there is difference between the masculine and feminine, but she does not ascribe these differences static, essentialist, wholly knowable categories and qualities. The duality of dual subjects is, as previously noted, an ironic critique of the dualisms that are implicit to the discourse of the Same. However, as the previous discussion has sought to note, this critique does not easily map onto Hindu metaphysics, because it proposes a different type of relation. The energies — puruṣa and prakṛti — which, through relation bring about the universe — are not drawn in discrete clear-cut relations from one another. They are understood at a metaphysical level to work together to manifest the world, but it is the feminine energy that comprises all things of the world (including consciousness). The ontological schism that Irigaray is proposing to exist between male and female energy does not seem fitting to this form of relation, as it is only one of the generating forces that is understood to comprise the world. That is, there is one energy 'type'

¹³ Irigaray, *Between East and West* 36. This proposition of a "pure" subject seems anomalous within the bounds of Irigaray's oeuvre, as it is presented as neuter. The proposal of "purity" — of an essential modality of being — also ties her interpretation into a Western substance based metaphysical tradition (tinctured by the need to 'achieve' purity and abstract ideals) rather than taking up the Buddha's position vis-à-vis the inherent emptiness of subjectivity.
comprising masculine and feminine subjectivity (although two different types of generating energy were needed for their creation).\textsuperscript{14}

In contrast to Irigaray's presentation, Rita Gross' understanding of Tantra stresses an aspect of the Buddhist tradition greatly concerned with issues of gender that does not position the masculine and feminine as "dualistic opposites" but rather as "distinctive complements within a non-dual matrix."\textsuperscript{15} A central aspect of Tantric practice is that women and men 'work' to develop both feminine and masculine "principles." In contradistinction to Irigaray's presentation of the way in which energy is expressed and used differently by each gender, Gross writes:

Women and men both equally strive to develop both wisdom and compassion, accommodation and activity. An enlightened being will manifest both qualities and enlightenment is not different in a man or a woman. Therefore, it would be ludicrous to claim that women will be more spacious, men more active, in their enlightened manifestation. On the path, men and women both are given practices including visualisations, in which they identify with both the feminine and the masculine principles, and with both simultaneously.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} Significantly, Morny Joy considers the relations of sexual difference in Irigaray's readings of Eastern religion–philosophy as reflecting relations between the God Shiva and the Goddess Shakti, as they manifest in the world. Drawn from the Tantric tradition, the embodied relations between these deities, (cultivated through Yoga practice) "represent the fact that dualities of existence which operate at the level of conditioned reality are thereby overcome." Considered from this perspective, Irigaray's insistence on distinctly 'male' and 'female' energies is more easily understood, and it draws closer to what Rita M. Gross describes as feminine and masculine "principles." Prakṛti and puruṣa have been considered in their aspect as 'abstract' ontological substance, however, in Indian mythology they are also personified as the Goddess Shakti and in the Vṛtya tradition as Rudra (a Vedic storm God). See Bowker ed., The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions 760; 780; 1029. Joy's interpretation also places Irigaray's use of Eastern philosophy–religion as an extension of her earlier re-interpretation of personages from the Christian tradition.

In her reading, which takes into account contemporary post-colonial theory, Joy critiques Irigaray's use of Indian mythology and spirituality, not only for its potential to reinforce traditional gender bias against women but also because "her adaptation of Indian mythology and spiritual practices … does not subject them to the same type of critical analysis that she applied to the Christian and Western myths and values. There is also a lack of investigation of original source material, as well as the work of contemporary Indian women scholars, particularly post-colonial ones. In addition, the unquestioning promotion of one specific mode of the Hindu tradition at the expense of its multi-faceted and multi-layered mosaic of movements — both orthodox and heterodox — is also problematic." However, Joy also contends that Irigaray's approach to this material is not purely founded in the genre of academic research, but is inclusive of a personal spiritual project. Joy contends, with reference to J.J. Clarke's exposition of Orientalism, that Irigaray's work is a site where two orientations of religious studies — "scholarly discipline and the practice of religion as a spiritual discipline" — can be found simultaneously. Joy further argues that this perspective calls for a reconsideration of the label "Orientalism," when considering the "multivalent interweavings and mutually implicated aspects of inter- and intra-cultural exchanges…." These are important concerns which I am unable to adequately address within the confines of this project. Joy, "Irigaray's Eastern Explorations" 56-57, 61-62; 65.

\textsuperscript{15} Gross, Buddhism After Patriarchy 199.

\textsuperscript{16} Gross, Buddhism After Patriarchy 202.
Although the identification of "principles" can be interpreted as not only representing gender difference but as also perpetuating gender stereotypes, Gross' central point regarding Tantric perspectives is that subjects of both genders are inherently open to learning about, recognising and respecting each other's difference without locking the individual identity into one specific expression of that difference; or as having only one particular way of relating to the breath/energy. Gross takes the Buddhist perspective (emerging from the 'doctrine' of śūnyatā) regarding particularity and monism — and applies this viewpoint to an understanding of the relations of sexual difference:

Phenomena are both vivid in their specificity and integrated within the Whole Space. In non-duality, specificity does not entail dualistic reified existence, nor is it lost beneath the alleged real monistic unifying principle. Non-duality is thus the middle path between the extremes of dualisms and monism.

In a position that refutes essentialism Gross further elaborates a feminist Buddhist perspective of gender relations with reference to the Mahayana Buddhist tradition:

The goddess of the Vimalakirtinirdesa Sutra says it best, in words that could be echoed by many a contemporary liberal or equal-rights feminist. After being taunted to change her sex, as genuine proof of the depth of her understanding of emptiness (as if having a penis helped one understand abstract concepts), she says: "I have been here for twelve years and have looked for the innate characteristics of the female sex and haven't been able to find them."

Such a perspective is possible because from the Two Truth perspective: one truth is the reality of gender roles and distinctions (thus enabling particularity); whilst the second 'truth' undermines any fixed category or ontological substance, and whilst not a monism in the Western sense, nonetheless all phenomena are considered void of any self-sufficient cause and therefore have emptiness in common. As stated above, women and men are not considered to be tied into a relation of dualistic opposites, but neither are their differences collapsed into a monist perspective; rather, their distinctions exit within a "non-dual" framework (śūnyatā). As identified by Gross, distinct to the Tantric tradition is the presentation of sexual intercourse as "the most

17 Gross stresses that in the Buddhist tradition "space" especially as equated with the feminine in the Western tradition, is not understood to be passive, but rather, is a "vibrant matrix of everything that is." Part of the cultivation process is actually to recognise the activity of space. Gross, Buddhism After Patriarchy 203.

18 Gross, Buddhism After Patriarchy 196-197.

19 Gross, Buddhism After Patriarchy 177.
powerful" symbol of non-duality, "of the subtle state beyond either duality or unity." Similarly, Miranda Shaw interprets the symbol of sexual intercourse and specifically the Buddha couple (for example see fig.8) as refuting relations of dualistic opposition and as powerfully demonstrating the "integration of aspects of life that are normally sundered: body and spirit, eros and transcendence, passion and beatitude."\footnote{20}{Gross, Buddhism After Patriarchy 195.}

Even though this understanding of non-duality refutes the attribution of ontologically essentialist characteristics to gender, it does not diminish, ignore or neuter gender differences: on the contrary it celebrates and respects the very real existence of sexual difference in the world, and its implicit potential for establishing relations with enlightenment and variously conceived numenous realms.\footnote{22}{For Anne Carolyn Klein, the Buddhist meditation practice of mindfulness incorporates both an essentialist and a 'constructivist' perspective of subjectivity: "Mindfulness facilitates a centredness and internal coherence akin to 'essentialist' forms of strength and at the same time is compatible with constructionist or postmodern sensibilities because of its intense awareness of the flow that constitutes mind and body, including itself .... In this way, mindfulness and its associated states can ameliorate the tension between essentialist and postmodern perspectives in feminist contexts. Buddhist theories and practices envision a subject for whom groundedness and a sense of the constructed nature of self can be simultaneous, so that there is never a necessity to "choose" strategically between them. There is a place and possibility for both." Klein, Meeting the Great Bliss Queen 68-69.}

Sahajayoginīcintā\footnote{23}{Sahajayoginīcintā (name meaning "Spontaneous Jewellite Yogini) was a female (Yogini) Tantric practitioner, who in the eighth century authored a text — Realization of Reality Through Its Bodily Expressions (Vyaktabhāvāmugata–tattva–siddhi) — in which, as Miranda Shaw describes, she "elaborates a theory of how passion, or sexual desire, as a source of bodily bliss and pleasure, can provide a means to enlightenment by creating a bridge between ordinary experience and the higher octave of spiritual ecstasy." Shaw, Passionate Enlightenment 181-182.} opens her text with an affirmation of gendered embodiment, both male and female. She immediately establishes that gender is an integral part of the path to enlightenment, since ecstasy is inseparable from embodiment and embodiment is inseparable from gender .... This makes gender an expressive gesture of the blissful Buddha-nature within. Therefore, gender possesses a sufficient link with ultimacy to provide a bridge back to the ultimate.\footnote{24}{Shaw, Passionate Enlightenment 183-184.}

This is reflective of Irigaray's figuration of the horizontal relations between dual subjects as enabling a bridge between self and other, self and divine. The co-cultivation of relations between subjects of different genders is implicitly understood...
to be the mutual cultivation of subtle subjectivity — subtle bodies — that is in no way removed or divorced from the corporeal experience of living, including sexual pleasure. These cultivation practices include techniques of breath control. It is the breath also, that Irigaray locates as the nexus for the interrelation of the spiritual and the corporeal in her proposal of horizontal transcendence:

But the union of two lovers, man and woman, free with respect to genealogy, can realize something other in the incarnation of human love. Each lover, woman or man, can contribute to the rebirth of the other as both human and divine incarnation. In this case, the carnal union becomes a privileged place of individuation and not only of fusion, of regression, or of the abolition of polarities and differences.25

A proposal that is a re-articulation of Tantric relational paradigms:

The male and female founders of the movement [Buddhist Tantra] developed cooperative yogic methods that men and women can perform together in order to transform the ardor of their intimacy and passion into blissful, enlightened states of awareness.26

The yoga techniques practiced within this tradition are predicated upon an understanding of one another as being constituted by a subtle body, and of utilizing, modifying and becoming increasingly conscious of the chakra network as outlined in chapter one. They consciously absorb one another's energy and then deliberately direct that energy through their yogic anatomy, into the subtle nerve-centres (cakras) along the central pathway (avadhû): This energy carries the quality of the partner's emotions, consciousness, and karmic traces. Therefore, at this level the partners permeate one another's being and literally merge their karma and blend their spiritual destinies.27

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25 Irigaray, Between East and West 63.

26 Shaw, Passionate Enlightenment 140.

27 Shaw, Passionate Enlightenment 171.
Figure 8: "Divine Couple." Twentieth-century Newari sculpture.
Although a form of Buddhism, Tantric Buddhism (Vajrayāna: Sanskrit for "thunderbolt" or "diamond-vehicle") strongly incorporates Vedic and yoga practices, as the above description of practice illustrates with regard to yogic anatomy. Such influences reflect the tradition's emergence in India during the Pāla period (eighth to twelfth centuries) although it is generally recognised that the Buddhist Tantras emerged prior to the Hindu Tantra's (300-600 CE). Miranda Shaw, in her re-examination of women's roles and participation in the tradition *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism* identifies several influences on its central theories and practices, positioning Tantra not only as a "branch" of Mahāyāna Buddhism, but also stressing the tradition's incorporation of the following: "Vedic ritual and mantra, Upanisadic mythical theory, *hatha*-yoga, *kundalini*-yoga, Saivite iconography, and Sākta beliefs ….”

Shaw's identification of Tantra as adopting *hatha*-yoga breathing techniques and the goddess centred pan-Indian religion Sāktism has particular relevance to this consideration of Irigaray's own focus on women's spirituality and experience. Shaw’s text is written with the intent to counter the dominant interpretation of women's role in Tantric ritual as one of subjugation, as it has been common to figure their role as a mere "tool" for the development of male adepts' spiritual practice. To this end, she investigates the influence of Sāktism through an analysis of Tantric devotional texts, and provides a reading that moves women's spiritual practices from being subservient and peripheral to a position of centrality within the religion, both in its discourse and practice:

Tantric texts articulate a profound and appreciative metaphysical understanding of female embodiment. Tantric texts depict spiritually independent and powerful women who inspired awe and dependence and demanded respect and obeisance.

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31 Shaw, *Passionate Enlightenment* 35. For Shaw, the marginalisation of women in Tantric traditions cannot be accounted for due to a lack of positive representation within the doctrines texts. Rather, she considers it as resulting from the fact that the representations "defy the expectations of most Western interpreters regarding gender relations …." Interpretations, she argues, that assume that women cannot be both subject and author: "this must be a sign of male authorship and evidence that women function only as the objects and ancillaries of men." Shaw, *Passionate Enlightenment* 36.
The repositioning of women's spiritual experience and the validity of female presence, activity and experience in spiritual development is also of central importance to Irigaray.32

The point is, however, that the ideal "spiritual person," for both Buddhism and Christianity is not androgy nous or neutral, and certainly is not feminine; it is male, and the qualities that make a person spiritual are conflated with the qualities that make a person male while the qualities that make a person overtly female are shunned as spiritual ideals by both traditions.33

The concept of horizontal transcendence is developed in response to a consideration of the interrelationship of dual subjects of sexual difference that necessitates an intertwining of the physical–spiritual, a relation that requires a respect for both a feminine divine and women's spiritual practices that is founded upon the cultivation of perceptive sensitivity: "This implies passing beyond predominantly genealogical traditions, be they matriarchal or patriarchal, that are today in opposition, toward the constitution of horizontal relations between the sexes."34

As in Tantric practice, this "passing beyond" necessitates a cultivation — through perceptive awareness — of embodiment. Irigaray writes: "The body itself, including the carnal act, can be deified. That does not mean that it overcomes itself but that it blossoms, becomes more subtly and totally sensible."35

The becoming more subtle and sensible is the cultivation of a subtle body through greater sense immersion in the physical body. It is a subtle subject that develops and emerges through and out of horizontal relations. For if it is not, then Irigaray's pneumatological proposition — the equation of breath/air with spirit — would become but another articulation of a matter–spirit binary (unless breath itself were clearly identified as matter, or matter as a form of spirit: these are the ontological propositions which support the concept of subtle bodies). Irigaray's horizontal relations require a subtle subject and, it is also exactly this type of subject that is assumed in Tantric religion:

32 See in particular "The Female Divine" ["Femmes Divines," 1987].
33 Gross, Buddhism After Patriarchy 178.
34 Irigaray, Between East and West 15.
35 Irigaray, Between East and West 62.
Exponents of the tradition [yogini-tantra] also write in depth and with precision about embodiment, which is understood to be not a "soul" in a "body" but rather a multilayered mind-body continuum of corporeality, affectivity, cognivity, and spirituality whose layers are subtly interwoven and mutually interactive. This nonessentialist self is seen not as a boundaried or static entity but as the site of a host of energies, inner winds and flames, dissolutions, meltings, and flowings that can bring about dramatic transformations in embodied experience and provide a bridge between humanity and divinity.  

The cultivation of this nonessentialist self, of the physical–spiritual is through entertaining, enjoying and cultivating desire which simultaneously cultivates emptiness. The model of subjectivity embraced in the Tantric Buddhist tradition and discussed in contemporary feminist interpretations is more radical than Irigaray's presentation of dual subjects. In essence, Irigaray's dual subjectivity articulates (when considered from a Buddhist perspective) the first truth: the reality and respect of difference, but does not directly incorporate the position proposed by the second truth; that of a 'wholly' nonessentialist self always in a process of 'emptying.' In common with the Tantric tradition, Irigaray does propose dual subjects as cultivating each another's subjectivity through relation (premised upon the refinement of perception-sensation) whilst simultaneously maintaining and developing their own particularity. However, this reading can only be attributed to Irigaray if there is acknowledgment of an assumed shared ontological substance — desire/air — that is both and is not either of the dual subjects. Considering such a perspective tempers the absolute radical difference at the heart of Irigaray's essentialism. Her dual ontology is seen to be simultaneously conceived with a shared ontological substance understood to manifest differently in relations of mutual cultivation. This is not to ignore, nor diminish, Irigaray’s strong recognition of subtle intersubjective dynamic between subjects and its ethical import. It remains however, that Nāgārjuna's refusal to posit essences (as outlined in the previous chapter) introduces a more radical ontological proposition: where all particularity is simultaneously ontologically similar and ontologically distinct from all others. Such a perspective is clearly illustrated in Tantric understanding of subjectivity and subjective interrelations:

However, in Vajrayana Buddhism, both men and women who do the more esoteric practices work to develop both principles [masculinity and femininity], precisely because they are not dualistic opposites, but distinctive complements within a non-dual matrix.

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37 Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 199.
According to Gross, it is the distinctive attributes of the embracing sexual couple — "neither two nor one" — that most clearly illustrated and communicates this state of nonduality that maintains particularity. Hence, the sexual union, and its visceral pleasures are not anathema to the cultivation of the awareness of emptiness, and neither are its generative emotive 'forces:' "Tantra affirms the passions, desire, and sense experience as intrinsically pure. Indeed, Tantra prides itself on being a path for intense, passionate people."

The individual is acknowledged as being simultaneously passionate and intelligent, and encouraged to cultivate both aspects of their subjectivity as a means of spiritual development. Emptiness and bliss are complements understood (like gender difference) to exist in a non-oppositional relation: "The Tantric goal is to maintain a clear realization of emptiness in the midst of passion, for this makes it possible to turn passion into supreme bliss."

In distinction from a stereotypical Western perspective, this tradition presents people of emotional intensity expressing desire as both knowledgeable in a spiritual and rational sense: intellect is not precisely divorced from the emotions, but is essential to the cultivation of discriminating wisdom; that ability to apprehend śūnyatā. Emotions are aligned with (being aspects of) the psycho–physical state of detachment cultivated through meditation practice. This conceptualisation disrupts the Western assumption of detachment as implying the creation of a distance between, of a reduction of intimacy, a reduction of intensity, a lack of feeling or connection. From a Tantric Buddhist perspective detachment requires immersion, intimacy, interrelation with self and other, and a celebration/cultivation of the sensible, of feelings, aimed at achieving "right view:" enlightened awareness. It is only through a 'conscious' engagement with the body, emotions, feelings, sensations, perceptions that respectful recognition of self and other is possible. One must get closer to oneself in order to approach an other, and this process requires the simultaneous experience of intimacy–detachment. It is from within such a concurrent framework of these two modes of relation, that desire — as a processural ontological principle — reveals its ethical mantle.

38 Gross, *Buddhism After Patriarchy* 199.


Critical Emotion

The achievement of the realization of emptiness whilst immersed in the sensual delights of bodily experience is not presented within Tantric literature as a task for the faint hearted. Rather, it is understood to emerge from a rigorous and disciplined spiritual practice that commences with an acknowledgment — not a repression, denial, or demonisation — of emotion.

Emotions are more basic than either the body or sexuality, and more difficult to integrate into realization. Because they are so powerful and can lead to such destructive results, many traditions, including some elements within Buddhism, regard emotions as primary as something to be tamed and transcended. Vajrayana Buddhism has a much more sophisticated position regarding emotions. Emotions are or arise from energy, which itself is powerful and neutral; it can manifest in either destructive or enlightened ways, depending on the degree of insight with which the energy is experienced. But emotion itself always contains tremendous wisdom, even if that wisdom is clouded and obscured by its deluded counterpart.

Although emotion is not presented in the above quotation as having the same type of inherent 'clarity' assumed to be an attribute of abstract thought, emotions are credited — through a correlation with energy — with containing wisdom, albeit of a type that needs to be actively gleaned through contemplative practices that require one to view their thoughts, emotions, self, from a perspective that admits the

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41 Specific schools and practices within the Tantric tradition are considered as exceptionally difficult undertakings because of the assumed impurity and risk considered as implicit to sources and activities they use, for example alcohol and sex, these practices are known as Vamācāra (Sanskrit for "left-handed conduct"). Georg Feuerstein draws attention to Tantras composed as warnings to practitioners — for example the Kula–Arnava–Tantra — which note the danger of undertaking these activities for ego-based satiation rather then for spiritual development. Indra Sinha notes (in an exposition of Tantra that relegates female participation as subservient to the male practice) that women can be known as vamacari ("left-handed"): "In circles where maithuna, or ritual sex is to be performed, the women present are skilled in sexual arts. According to tradition, the former [young girl's and matriarch's that are considered embodiments of the goddess] sit on a man's right and the latter on his left, earning the name 'vamacari' or 'left-handed,' for those who practice sexual rites." Similarly in Western Christian traditions the left-hand side carries sinister connotations for example "in crucifixion scenes the good thief is depicted on the right hand of Christ and the bad thief to the left." Bowker ed., "Vamācāra," The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions 1014-1015; Feuerstein, Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy 231-232; Indra Sinha, Tantra: The Cult of Ecstasy (London: Hamlyn, 2000) 134; J.C. Cooper, An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978) 96.

42 Gross, Buddhism After Patriarchy 195.

43 There is also an issue here regarding the privileging of clarity and the type of knowledge and relation this prescribes. To be unclear is most often rendered an undesirable state of knowing for its lack of certainty and definition (and mastery), rather than being accepted more gently as a state of exploration, consideration and creativity.
impermanence of all that is — in this way, one cultivates detachment. In chapter three, it was argued that in the Bailey Esoteric tradition, the 'emotional' is masculinised by being co-opted into evolutionary schemes of consciousness and refigured as the 'intuitive' (positioned as a 'higher' aspect of the intellect) in an effort to annul its correlation with the 'unruly,' 'irrational' feminine without neglecting it as a source of valuable knowledge. The Tantric tradition — although arguing for a cultivated interrelation with the emotional — does not denigrate the physical body in the same way as the Bailey/Theosophical Esoteric traditions. Tantra reflects a more inclusive understanding of a lived mind–body continuum that is achieved by choosing to become more deeply involved with one's physical sense perception. As Shaw notes: "One of the keynotes of Sahajayoginisintå’s teaching is that one taps this level of bliss not by avoiding sensual pleasure but by cultivating and channeling it."\textsuperscript{44}

The approach taken towards garnering the immense wisdom of emotion incorporates mind–body practices (including sexual intercourse) that specifically focus on developing and training perception; on cultivating specific modes of sight referred to within the Buddhist tradition as "witnessing," "mindfulness," and the cultivation of "awareness."\textsuperscript{45} Through developing such perspectives the practitioners are encouraged to understand their relation to the world — the visible and invisible — as an aesthetic one. Their subjectivity emerges, as with forms of artistry, from the disciplined cultivation of technique that enables sensitive and innovative expression.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} Shaw, \textit{Passionate Enlightenment} 188.

\textsuperscript{45} For example, the Tantric practice of deity yoga requires that each practitioner undertake visualization exercises in which they construct themselves as a deity located at the centre of a \textit{mandala}, to take on such a form of subjectivity (which is really subject-less) the meditator is required to realise emptiness and thus doing 'overcome' dualistic thinking. Judith Simmer-Brown, \textit{Dakini's Warm Breath: The Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism} (Boston and London: Shambhala, 2001) 151-152.

\textsuperscript{46} Shaw identifies the emergence of Tantra as a response to the monastic Buddhist traditions that privilege the intellect to the detriment of the recognition of the body as implicit or even useful for the achievement of enlightenment. Tantra she argues arose as a corrective to this imbalance and as a witness to the fact that the mind alone does not provide sole access to knowledge. Passion and pleasure also represent primary sources of knowledge and power. Shaw, \textit{Passionate Enlightenment} 205. The cultivation of self through artistic and ritual practices is a core of Esoteric Buddhism (Japanese Shingon Buddhism), in which the founder Kūkai considered the whole world as a mandala, and advocated for the possibility of attaining enlightenment in "this very existence," as embodied in the world. See Yoshito S. Hakeda, trans., "Attaining Enlightenment in This Very Existence," \textit{Kūkai: Major Works} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972) 225-234; and Abbot Yusei Arai, \textit{Shingon Esoteric Buddhism: A Handbook for Followers}, ed. and adapted by Rev. Eijun (Bill) Edison, trans. Rev. Seicho Asahi, Rev. Shoken (Ana) Harada and George Tanabe (Ito-Gun, Japan: Rt. Rev. Iwatsubo Shinko, Koyasan Shingon Mission, 1997) 34-35.
Shaw also highlights the spontaneous quality of cultivation practices by drawing attention to the term used to designate a Tantric couple's love-making — "play" — which she considers "apt" for a “contemplative yet amorous” form of "religious discipline." The aesthetic and the ethical are here clearly interrelated through the sensual and emotive, indeed, it is the latter that enable the interrelation: thus making the cultivation of intimate, pleasurable, emotional experiences an ethical imperative.

There is a degree of detachment insofar as the relationship is intended to dissolve the ego, but there is an ineluctable element of intimacy as well, since subtle unifications of perception and interusions of fluids and breaths are and integral part of the practice. The self (or nonself, as it were) that enters into this practice is an unbounded, nonessentialist (i.e. selfless, according to Buddhist metaphysics), dynamically fluidic one that can be permeated by the energy, breath, and mind of another person. The yoga of union is predicated precisely on this ability to be infused by the energy and mental states of another person.

Similarly, in Buddhist meditation practices that do not focus on the sensations of physical pleasure — for example those that require elongated visual concentration on an image or mandala — the practitioner is also required to develop an aesthetic-ethical relation to the world. A relation founded on the development of perceptive awareness that is conscious of subtle energetic exchanges: a relation that is simultaneously intimate and detached, that allows them to perceive the visible and the invisible. The apprehension, recognition and expression of emotion is critical

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47 Shaw, Passionate Enlightenment 185.
48 Shaw, Passionate Enlightenment 168.
49 The apprehension and representation of subtle interrelations is taken up by Norman Bryson in "The Gaze in the Expanded Field," in which he considers the ramifications of śūnyatā (as proposed by Japanese scholars Kitaro Nishida and Keiji Nishitani) in relation to Sartre and Lacan's concept of the gaze: "The viewer who looks out at the object sees only one angle of the global field where the object resides, one single tangent of the 360 degrees of the circle, and of the 360 degrees in all directions of the radiating sphere of light spreading out from the object into the global envelopment." Bryson identifies the perception of śūnyatā as taking into account the 'invisible' that exceeds the limited scope of vision as understood by Lacan, even if its representation is signaled by absence, for example 'empty' spaces in an art work (he selects Chan (Zen) flung ink paintings to illustrate his point).

However, the subtle interconnections signified by relations of śūnyatā cannot be prescribed to a 360 degree radius as he proposes, as Nishitani writes: "Since there is no circumference on the field of śūnyatā, "All are One" cannot be symbolized by a circle (or sphere) … It is, as it were, a circumference-less center, a center that is only a center and nothing else, a center on a field of emptiness. That is to say, on the field of śūnyatā, the center is everywhere." Norman Bryson, "The Gaze in the Expanded Field," Vision and Visuality: Discussion in Contemporary Culture, no. 2, ed. Hal Foster, DIA Art Foundation (Seattle: Bay Press, 1986) 100; Keiji Nishitani, Religion and Nothingness, trans Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983) 146.

In briefly considering the influence of the concept of śūnyatā in Western analysis of vision and representation, it is worth noting that Roland Barthes references the concept of sunya and tathata
to the development of this type of subtle relation. Further, the emphasis on emotion does not call for an exclusion of 'thought' (as figured in a Western sense) with the cultivation practices envisaged as enabling a greater insight and apprehension of one's intellectual and logical processes; and significantly, as discussed by Klein below, their interrelation with the body and environment: "A variety of sensations indicate other kinds of feelings; it is also possible to recognise kinesthetically the presence of a new idea, even before one knows exactly what it is."50

Such an understanding of the influence and quality of relationship and exchange between subject-object and subject-subject and the capacity of these relations for the alteration and creation of subjectivity resonates with mundus imaginalis, the esoteric style of creative vision discussed in chapter five (further corollaries to esoteric concepts will be explored later in this chapter with regard to the simultaneity of duality within nonduality); as well as propositions developed within the Western philosophical tradition by Kelly Oliver. Akin to the perceptive schemes expressed by all three (Tantra, mundus imaginalis and Oliver) is a call for a concept of vision that is inclusive of other senses as well as one that strongly advocates an acknowledgment of an individual's psychic and sensate responsibility.

Response-ability51: Oliver’s Expansive Vision

Vision is the result of responsiveness to difference and relationships of 'invisible' energy.52

In her book, Witnessing. Beyond Recognition Kelly Oliver critiques the dominant Western concept of vision, discerning an emphasis on recognition that inherently ties subjects into unequal relations of subjugation and domination. Oliver contends that

("suchness" or "that is it") in developing his idea of the "that-has-been:" specificity as the essence of photography: "In order to designate reality Buddhism says sunya, the void; but better still: tathata, as Alan Watts has it, the fact of being this, of being thus, of being so ...." Barthes argues that photographs — unlike other modes of representation — are entirely unable to be uncoupled or "distinguished" from their referent object (existing in an immanent interrelation). Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography [1980], trans. Richard Howard (New York, Hill & Wang, The Noonday Press, 1993) 4-5.

50 Klein, Meeting the Great Bliss Queen 71.

51 Oliver uses this term following Levinas: "Beyond recognition there is responsibility. And for Levinas responsibility is for the Other’s response; it is response-ability." Kelly Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 206.

52 Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 222.
the dominance of recognition in the apprehension and signification of phenomena is founded upon an assumption that space is empty, an attitude that calls for vision to leap across an abyss in order to form relationships. Further, Oliver argues that, if vision is predicated upon recognition, the perception of subjectivity and of identity can only be formed through the rubric of what is already known, and as such is implicitly limited; closed to the perception of a radical alterity that elides the pre-figured (difference that is not ‘filtered’ within/by the discourse of the same). Oliver provides an alternate model of vision and relationship that remains inherently open to difference, the new and that which eludes conscious control and mastery: "I want to embrace the invisible, uncontrollable, foundation of vision and our relations with the world and other people in it. This relation, I argue is based on witnessing, not recognition." Implicit to this concept of vision, of perception is energy: "Energy, then, is the medium through which we perceive the world." Oliver defines subjectivity as "a response to energy that connects us to our environment," however, as the previous discussion of subtle bodies has sought to illustrate, subjectivity is not only a response to energy, it is energy in perpetual dynamic process. Tracing a consideration of perception, sensation, emotion and affect in the work of psychologists J.J. Gibson, Andrew Meltzoff and Keith Moore, Oliver develops a conceptualization of space as 'full' of energy and establishes a relationship between this energy and perception, in particular noting the interrelationship of the senses. Like other senses, vision is the result of pressures, vibrations, particles and waves affecting the nerves. And visual images are surrounded and informed by tastes and smells, sounds and palpitations. Indeed, the senses necessarily work together and cannot be separated.

53 Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 169-171.
54 Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 173. Oliver acknowledges within a Western framework, what is implicit in the esoteric perspective of mundus imaginalis and in Eastern visualization practices: that vision is a process, an unfolding: "Vision itself becomes a process, a becoming, rather than the sovereign of recognition. Vision becomes a circulation of energy between and among rather than an artificial and inadequate bridge between a subject and an alien world." Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 221.
55 Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 193.
56 Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 222.
57 Such a perspective has strong correlations with the Theosohical proposition explored in chapter three.
58 Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 191.
The concept of vision and energy (vision–energy) proposed by Oliver has clear correlations with the goal of Buddhist cultivation techniques illustrated in this chapter with reference to Tantra. She outlines her position as follows:

My argument is that we need to become consciously aware of affective energy not only to continue to try to understand ourselves and enable a process of interpretation that opens up rather than closes off the proximity of relationship, but also to fulfill our ethical obligations to do so. The possibility of subjectivity is founded upon responsiveness to psychic and affective energy.\footnote{Oliver, \textit{Witnessing: Beyond Recognition} 196.}

Included in Oliver's understanding of psychic and affective energy is emotion. Like Tantric Buddhists, Oliver is keenly aware of emotion's intersubjective power and an individual's responsibility to the understanding and 'use' of that power. As enabling the "possibility" of subjectivity, emotions are also presented as ontological. Further, emotion is positioned as traversing, inhabiting and constituting space and is central to the practice of witnessing (establishing ethical relationships).

Emotions migrate between people. Our moods and feelings are not just a response to what is said or what happens. They are also a response to the currents of emotional energy that flow between people. Emotional energy is transferred between people. This psychic or affective energy has profound effects on our moods and behaviour. Just as we respond, most times unaware, to forces in our environment, so too we respond, unaware to affective energy. In order to begin to understand human relationship and responsibility, we need to begin to understand how affective or psychic energy works.\footnote{Oliver, \textit{Witnessing: Beyond Recognition} 195.}

As with Buddhist accounts of the operation of witnessing (and the practice of mindfulness\footnote{"Practices of mindfulness (\textit{smrti}, \textit{dran pa}) are used to develop new subjective states and to discover hitherto unnoticed aspects of oneself. Buddhist definitions of mindfulness call it a remembering, defined as nonforgetting. In some contexts, this means a remembering of one's past, such as the Buddha's recollection of past lives on the eve of his enlightenment. Sometimes mindfulness simply suggests a continued focus on what is now present before one's mental or physical senses. This is its primary meaning in meditation practice .... The most salient characteristic of such mindfulness is its capacity to maintain clear and stable observation of a chosen object, whether a visualised image or some aspect of one's own body or mind." Further, Klein contends that the practice of mindfulness enables one to feel 'grounded' and 'stable' as a self whilst simultaneously understanding the impermanence of all that is: "The powerful steadiness associated with focused mindfulness is also accompanied by a powerful experience of unalterable flux." Klein, \textit{Meeting the Great Bliss Queen} 62; 66.}, cultivation of detachment), Oliver contends that this modality of vision is a process, a mode of multi-sensory apprehension that enables the "seeing of what cannot be seen." This can be understood as both, the process of reflecting upon one's self-reflection (the double mirror) — that of cultivating detachment,
which Oliver discusses as the work of the "critical eye" that is simultaneously a "loving eye" (here again the emotional is situated in a non-oppositional relationship to an analytical, evaluative process) — and also in the exchanges that cannot be 'seen' using ocularcentric modes of visuality: energetic and affective interrelations.

Love is the responsibility to become attuned to our responses to the world and other people, and to the energies that sustain us. Loving eyes are responsive to the circulation of various forms of energy, especially psychic and affective energy, that enables subjectivity and life itself.

As proposed by Oliver, witnessing is a mode of perception informed by both the religious and juridical connotations of the term's use in a Western context. As such, it incorporates both the meaning of to bear witness: "testifying to that which cannot be seen" and that of reporting what has been seen by "one's own eyes." This double meaning holds the visible and the invisible together, and thus for Oliver, provides an alternative to concepts of vision based on recognition.

Although Oliver does not directly reference subtle body schemes, they are implicit in the model of witnessing and intersubjectivity she is proposing (and become increasingly evident in her analysis of Irigaray's work). Considering her emphasis on affective energy and its constitution of space, the phrase "to bear witness" could also be understood quite literally: that is, "witnessing" as contained within one's "bearing": one's flesh, emotion, body, energy, activity. Considered thus, to bear witness is not only 'hold' and recount an event (in narrative form) and to understand subjectivity as "testimony" to the invisible, but one also bears witness in the way one incorporates experience into the very 'fabric' of their being/subjectivity as well as in the way they use their subjectivity for considering and entering into phenomenal-energetic relations: knowledge of self and Other. The latter perspective appends to Oliver's proposition the process of cultivation required to perceive

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62 There is a danger in Oliver's choice to use the word "critical" as it is assumed to carry the meaning of seeking to find fault/ make judgment and thereby to create an unequal relation that results from the analysis, where those doing the judging take up a position of domination: it is difficult to separate the term critical from the power its use implies. The use of the term 'detachment' is possibly less problematic in this context.

63 Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* 220.

64 Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* 20.

65 Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* 196.
psychic and affective relationships as well as the temporal dynamic — the "elongation" of concentration required to "work" a vision that seeps through the skin.

Interestingly, in relation to the previous discussion of Tantra, Oliver also addresses the attitude of playfulness. In a critique of Maria Lugone's proposition of "loving perception" she highlights the presentation on playfulness as a methodology: "She defines playfulness as an openness to surprise and creativity. Playfulness (like loving perception) is an attitude towards one's activities."66

Oliver is critical of the proposition of an attitudinal change "as if changing one’s attitude could be enough."67 But, following Oliver's definition of subjectivity as energy, would not changing one's attitude also cause a corresponding energetic and affective change in subjectivity? Not enough perhaps to address gross oppression and violence in a miraculous instant, but perhaps enough to begin to change an individual's capacity for subtle relations, for meeting alterity with openness rather than suspicion or hostility. This can be considered so, if consciousness and matter are considered as ontologically similar — the change in attitude modifying affect and subjectivity.

Oliver considers the ability to adopt playfulness as a privilege — the term's levity perhaps underscoring the very real and violent results of oppression and intolerance. Perhaps Oliver's reservation is tinctured by a deeply (culturally) ingrained suspicion that relations that are pleasurable cannot also offer significant conduits for extremely crucial, serious, ethical issues (the same attitude evidenced in Glass' approach to desire in the previous chapter). The concept of playfulness does incorporate a sense of 'lived' undetermined expression, and is often linked with physical enjoyment and the exploration of the environment in an attitude of openness.

However, Kelly Oliver is particularly interested in the way in which Irigaray employs the element of air to figure and "fill" the space between, as well as her presentation of the limits of difference as enabling relation (previously discussed in chapter two) and Irigaray's reconceptualisation of love. It is the relationship between love and witnessing; a modality of vision that simultaneously incorporates

66 Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 52.

67 Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 53.
emotion and detachment as does Tantric methods of perceptive cultivation that Oliver identifies as illustrating a relationship dynamic not founded on recognition.

The love imagined by Irigaray is itself beyond recognition. Her discourse of love would challenge many, if not most, of our contemporary cultural representations of love....

Love beyond domination is necessarily a critical love that recognizes its own limitations. On Irigaray's analysis it is only through coming to terms with our own limitations that we can love as other without domination or assimilation .... This love within limits is clearly not traditional romantic love through which one or both of lover and beloved is assimilated. Irigaray imagines moving beyond the subject-object dualism without simply assimilating difference to the same. Rather, she imagines love by virtue of difference, love that has become ethical and political.  

In the Buddhist religion, this "critical love" is termed compassion. In the Tantric tradition as discussed, it is primarily understood to be cultivated through interpersonal affective and 'physical' relationships, however, in the majority of Buddhist traditions it is a state of subjectivity understood to emerge through individual practice: "Indeed, compassion is often understood as radiating out from oneself, regardless of how others behave. This suggests that compassion results less from interpersonal dynamics than from intentional cultivation."  

That compassion is depicted as radiating — like heat or light — draws attention to its affective qualities that extend beyond the corporeal body as well as its temporal dynamic. Klein's focus is on the individual's responsibility to cultivate compassion — of course it will greatly effect and constitute one's relations with others — but an individual's capacity to be compassionate is not predicated on how another person greets the individual. It is a choice, an attitudinal orientation (in the most extensive sense of the word), one in which the individual decides to practice compassion in all circumstances. What the Buddhist model proposes is an initial step into establishing relations of horizontal transcendence or the dynamics of Witnessing, and that step necessarily commences with the use of one's own volition. That is, relations with respect for difference are built with intention, with conscious self reflection, on a self that is conceived as simultaneously subtle and powerful. Each individual has to take

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68 Kelly Oliver, "The Look of Love," Hypatia 16.3 (2001): 72. In Witnessing: Beyond Recognition, Oliver discusses the ethical aspects of Frantz Fanon's concept of love: "a matter of ethics and ethics is a matter of love — the values of human reality and wishing for the others what you wish for yourself." Oliver, Witnessing: Beyond Recognition 42. However, an ethical love must necessarily be more than this, it must allow for others to reject that which you wish for yourself as inappropriate for them, it must allow for another to wish for things that you don’t understand, that you would not wish for yourself; and such experiences to be met with acceptance.  

69 Klien, Meeting the Great Bliss Queen 118.
account of their own affective and psychic responsibility to enable ethical responsibility to another — even if the modality of 'vision' required for horizontal relations is not reciprocated (used) by the other. Thus a primary concern with one's own cultivation of self paradoxically enables a relation with an Other free of expectations of and about the Other, enabling an open encounter. The cultivation of compassion enables one to negotiate a relation with a subject not conscious of their own, or another's, affective and psychic forms of subjectivity.

Of course, the Tantric example offers the clearest illustration of a couple consciously mutually and simultaneously cultivating subtle relations, with the acknowledgment of passion as the beginning point of compassion. The significance of the continual process of self-reflection, as the foundation required for approaching others, is also highlighted by Oliver (following bell hooks):

We can choose to close ourselves off to others or we can choose to try to open ourselves towards others, to love them enough to love their freedom as our own. But only through vigilant reinterpretation and elaboration of our own performance of that opening can we maintain this loving attitude. Love is not something we choose once and for all. Rather, it is a decision that must be constantly reaffirmed through the vigilance of "self-reflection.

On the cover of Oliver's text Witnessing: Beyond Recognition is reproduced an image by Spanish Surrealist painter Remedios Varo The Lovers (n.d) [fig. 9]. Depicted

70 Morny Joy, in discussing bell hooks' positive attitude towards the postmodern decentred subject, draws attention to hooks' own lifestyle as an example of a creative meeting between theories and practices (that more traditionally would be considered oppositional) as a possible influence: "Perhaps this approach is possible because hooks, who does not repudiate her Christian roots in a southern black community, has also been deeply influenced by Buddhism." Joy notes hooks' central focus on black women and their healing from numerous forms of oppression (social and political, and inclusive of racism in white women's feminism), and the influence of Vietnamese Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh on her approach, central to which — and in concord with Oliver's concept of love and self-reflection discussed above — hooks stresses the "interdependent" formation of identity and the need for each subject to be aware and responsible for their own attitudes and experiences: "In her analysis, hooks strives to articulate the intertwined nature of humanity and community. She affirms that any formulation of identity is always interdependent with the complex ties that bind a community's self perception. This nonetheless involves being able to name, by mindful observation, not just instances of racism and sexism in the wider community, but the responsibility of each person to pay attention to his/her own failings." Morny Joy, "Mindfulness of the Selves: Therapeutic Interventions in a Time of Dis-Solution," Healing Deconstruction: Postmodern Thought in Buddhism and Christianity, ed. David Loy (Atlanta: Scholars Press, The American Academy of Religion, 1996) 91-93.

71 Oliver, "The Look of Love" 74.

are two figures, assumed male and female as one wears a dress, the other a suit, of the same deep teal blue. They sit, turned towards one another hands clasped amid pouring rain, feet immersed in a ground of choppy water (the water–emotion metaphor is a hard to ignore in this image) as white static (affective relations) spread out like steam between each lover. Emerging from their collars, as one would expect, are their heads: each a looking glass that mirrors back to the other the same face. To whom does the "original" face belong? Simultaneously to both and neither.\(^{73}\)

\(^{73}\) It is difficult to resist considering this work in relation to the more well know Surrealist René Magritte's *The Lovers*, 1928 [fig.10] (in the National Gallery of Australia's Collection) in which the bust of a couple is figured with both faces cloaked by a white cloth. Literally, a blind love depicted, an erasure of both identities as constituted by the face, they become a couple by way of a shared shroud. The painting takes on an even more poignant note if the biography of Magritte is brought to bear on its interpretation. It is reported that, as a twelve year old child, he saw his drowned mother's body (she had suicided) dragged from the Sambre, with her nightdress covering her head. Dawn Ades, "René Magritte, *The Lovers* 1928: Man Ray, *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse* 1920," referencing David Sylvester, *Magritte* (London: Thames and Hudson: 1992) 12, *Surrealism: Revolution by Night*, exhibition catalogue (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 1993) 50.
Figure 9: Remedios Varo, *The Lovers* n.d. as reproduced on the cover image of Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
Figure 10: René Magritte, *The Lovers* 1928.
The Esoteric Couple: Another Subtle Ternary of Two

In Esoteric philosophy the notion that love is a look, a particular style of perception that necessarily includes all other physical senses in an affective and ethical attitude that extends subjective agency into the space beyond corporeal boundaries is not uncommon. The emergence of subjectivity and creative agency via cultivating perceptive awareness has previously been discussed with reference to *mundus imaginialis* in chapter five. To close this chapter, a discussion of an esoteric concept of love (and duality) and its intersubjective implications will be undertaken through an analysis of interpretations of the Tarot card “L’Amoureux,” The Lover/The Lovers [fig. 11]. The discussion aims to draw attention to conceptual correlations with the previous discussion of Tantra and Oliver's Witnessing: in particular, non-oppositional dualities and the role of pleasure and emotion in establishing ethical relations with alterity (Oliver and Irigaray's concept of love).

Specifically, the discussion will focus on an analysis of an interpretation of The Lovers Tarot card74 undertaken by "anonymous" who has been identified by Antoine Faivre as Russian born esotericist Valentin Tomberg,75 hereafter referenced as [Tomberg].


Faivre identifies the Tarot of Marseilles as those that [Tomberg] meditated upon. In this design there are four figures on the card, a couple mediated by a third man, and a cupid style Angel who flies above them (replete with aimed arrow). The imagery is evocative of a marriage ceremony, as the male and female figures are positioned with their back mostly to the viewer, whilst the figure between them faces directly forward. Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition* 194.

The Esoteric renderings of duality encapsulated in this card resonates with interpretations presented herein of Irigaray's work — the understanding of the "To Be Two" as a To Be Three — an analysis that contends that Irigaray's dual subjects are mediated by a third ontological 'agency' which is both of and not of both subjectivities, but is necessary for constituting them via relation. This shared "medium" is commonly figured as Spirit in Esoteric philosophy and is understood to mediate or arise out of relation between different modes of consciousness (intellect and imagination) as well as the female–male relation: "With regard to the third principle, the Spirit, it is neither intellect nor imagination, but Love–Wisdom. In principle it ought to be androgynous, but in practice it is not always so."\(^{76}\)

\(^{76}\) Anonymous [Tomberg], *Meditations on the Tarot* 39-40. [Tomberg] is aware that esoteric discourse often claims an equal value of masculine and feminine 'principles' without actually
In the esoteric system of the Tarot, this third is often depicted as an Angel. This figure is sometimes positioned mediating between two lovers of male and female gender on card XI The Lovers, especially if the imagery has been derived from the Rider Waite designs [fig.12]. The Angel is also the central subject of the Temperance Card (taken up for discussion in the next chapter), and the appearance is not arbitrary, as duality, a central theme of the Lovers card is presented from an alternate perspective by the Temperance card which includes amongst its concerns synthesis. The esoteric rendering of the relations between the masculine and the feminine (particularly if they are considered as 'principles') also includes aspects of the Buddhist perspective of non-oppositional duality, in as much as some renderings — as will be demonstrated by discussion of [Tomberg’s] analysis — position them not as dyadic opposites, but in a non-oppositional relationship marked by creativity: an intersubjective relation without erasure or subsumation of one to the other. [Tomberg] takes up a discussion of difference and the principle of two by questioning Louis Claude de Saint-Martin’s interpretation of two as "the origin of evil," a perspective founded upon his belief that they form "two centres of contemplation, two separate and rival principles, two bases which are not linked." Saint-Martin's analysis is derived from the esoteric system of numerology (the systems of tarot, numerology, astrology and anatomy within Esoteric discourse are demonstrating such a perspective within its practice or ideology; often (as previously referenced) reinforcing a valorization of masculine principles (even if these principles in the Western tradition are figured as feminine). For example, the presentation of man is masculine from a physical perspective and feminine from a "psychic point of view": therefore, the male is the valorized gender because it is aligned with the more respected feminised faculty of imagination, whilst paradoxically from a Western perspective, the intellect, understood as masculine, is attributed to the female psyche, with its use and qualities considered "sterile" without the masculine imagination. [Tomberg] Meditations on the Tarot 39-40.

77 These cards were conceived by Arthur Edward Waite — a member of the Golden Dawn fraternity — and first published in 1909. The images were produced by Pamela Colman Smith, although there has also been suggestion that either William Butler Yeats or Florence Farr also contributed to their development. Mary K. Greer, "Appendix F: Pamela Coleman Smith and the Tarot," Women of the Golden Dawn 405-409.

78 Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (died 1803) was a follower of eighteenth century French esotericist Martines de Pasqually. His writings, "under the name of 'Le Philosophe Inconnu"' were greatly influenced by Jacob Boehme. He is part of the French occult revival that was a central precursor to the emergence of The Golden Dawn and the Theosophical Society in the nineteenth century. See: Christopher McIntosh, Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival (Rider and Company: London, 1972) 20; 25-26.

interwoven with one another creating symbolic and imaginative resonances shared by all three systems; it is immensely difficult to reference one system in isolation from the others) which conceptualizes the number two as a splitting of a 'primal' one or unity. Rather, than viewed as a splitting apart (and therefore reduction) of a whole, [Tomberg] asks: "Does there not exist a legitimate twofoldness? … a twofoldness which does not signify the diminution of unity, but rather its qualitative enrichment."80

This question and comment foregrounds an important point regarding 'wholeness' that has been haunting the discussion of plural and extensive subjectivities and the relationship between subjects of difference throughout this thesis. It is the conceptualization of wholeness — of self, other, world — and the way in which duality is generally understood as needing to be 'mastered' to generate wholeness, otherwise it is viewed as undermining unity (and the harmony its state is accorded). In moving towards the re-negotiation of dual relations, and the establishment of horizontal transcendence, a re-figuration of wholeness — as metaphor and ideal — is necessary, and this is the subject of the conclusion. However, it is necessary to reference the argument here also, as [Tomberg] reflects an accompanying position in his challenge to the assumption that two must be figured in oppositional relations.

If we return to the conception of Saint-Martin of "two centres of contemplation" which are “two separate and rival principles,” we can ask ourselves if they must necessarily be separate and rival? Does not the expression "contemplation" itself, chosen by Saint-Martin, suggest the idea of two centres which contemplate simultaneously — as would two eyes if they were placed vertically one above the other — the two aspects of reality, the phenomenal and noumenal? And that it is by virtue of the two centres or "eyes" that we are — or are able to be — conscious of "that which is above and that which is below."81

[Tomberg] interprets Saint-Martin as proposing that subjectivity emerges through simultaneous contemplation — a claim akin to both Irigaray's schemes and those of Buddhist religion/philosophy discussed herein. Irigaray chooses to stress the horizontal aspects of this relation-through-contemplation, whilst [Tomberg] focuses on 'vertical' relations (his prime concern is about a relationship to God, he is a Christian Hermeticist), with the rather odd reference to two eyes placed vertically upon one another (as if each eye placed horizontally sees only in isolation of the

80 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 32.
81 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 32-33.
other). Eye in this context is understood as referencing both the optical unit and the "I."

In a further resonance with Irigaray and Tantric Buddhism [Tomberg] discusses the relation between two as that of the process of a divine breath: "two is the divine Breath and its Reflections." That is, the inhalation and the exhalation, thus stressing the relation as processural, cyclic and active, rather than as a static, fixed dyad.

In a manner similar to Gross's discussion of feminine and masculine principles (with regard to essentialism) in Tantric Buddhism, [Tomberg] works out the ontological problems associated with proposing a dualism that relates in a non-oppositional manner by proposing a distinction between substances and principles.

Thus the outer characteristic of those who choose the other mystical way, that of the God of love, is that they have the "gift of tears." This is in keeping with the very essence of their mystical experience. Their union with the Divine is not the absorption of their being by Divine Being, but rather the experience of the breath of Divine Love, the illumination by Divine Love, and the warmth of Divine Love . . . . This is the experience of "legitimate twofoldness" or the union of two separate substances in one sole essence. The substances remain separate as long as they are bereft of that which is most precious in all existence: free alliance in love.

[Tomberg's] concern is obviously the relation between human and divine; salient to this chapter's focus is the 'play' between substance and essence enabling simultaneously particularity and unity and [Tomberg's] proposition that this form of relation constitutes a type of mysticism identified by its incorporation of, significantly, emotion.

With regard to the ontological/metaphysical proposition, [Tomberg] is using a substance-based system: "Thus the term essentia properly belongs only to God alone; everything else enters into the category of substantiae." However, paradoxically, his concept of substance is a processural one, founded on the dynamics of divine breath, as is also, his concept of essentia (God) "the positive act itself by means of which being is." [Tomberg] does not advocate a parallelism, of

82 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 33.
83 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 36.
84 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 37.
"two separate co-eternal substances," but rather, that the dynamic between *essentia* and *substantiae* is creative rather than oppositional: requiring relation between two rather than absorption or submission to the one. Akin to Tantra, Irigaray and Oliver, the interpenetrative 'tissue' is love.

Two ... is the number of love or the fundamental condition of love which it necessarily presupposes and postulates ... because love is inconceivable without the Lover and the Loved, with ME [sic] and You, without One and the Other. 

This is the relation with which the tarot card *L'Amoureux* is concerned. It stresses love, not as an inert emotion, or as romantic longing, but as an active process of contemplation that cultivates subjectivity: it is an activity that opens subjectivity. For [Tomberg] it is requisite for the experience of "reality:"

Now, to feel something as real in the measure of its full reality is to love. It is love which awakens us to the reality of ourselves, to the reality of others, to the reality of the world and to the reality of God. In so far as we love ourselves, we feel real. And we do not love — or we do not love as much as ourselves — other beings, who seem to us to be less real.

In order to counter this inability to apprehend the reality of the Other, [Tomberg] advocates "extending love" that, in his interpretation, has both ontological and energetic properties.

For love is not an abstract programme but, rather, it is *substance* and *intensity*. It is necessary therefore that one radiates the substance and intensity of love with regard to one individual being in order that one can begin to ray it out in all directions.

That is, it is not an ideal, but a "substance" and an "intensity," love is a considered a phenomenal 'reality.' It is also worthy of note, that the word "radiates" is also selected by [Tomberg] to describe the 'movement' of love, the same term selected by Klein to describe the expression of compassion. Both are figured as forms of energy-emotion that are interrelated matter and feeling, synonymous with the presentation of the matter-consciousness that constitutes Subtle Bodies.

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85 Anonymous [Tomberg], *Meditations on the Tarot* 36.

86 Anonymous [Tomberg], *Meditations on the Tarot* 33.

87 Anonymous [Tomberg], *Meditations on the Tarot* 126.

88 Anonymous [Tomberg], *Meditations on the Tarot* 126.
"Love" is the obvious theme of the *L'Amoureux* tarot card. Each individual Tarot card is understood to incorporate many layers of meaning that emerge in relation to the reader's ability/spiritual development. The cards are used for both prophecy and to train perceptive capacities, often as images of focus for meditation exercises. As an unbound book of loose leaves, a learned interpreter must be knowledgeable about the individual card's multiple meanings (and accepting of the continual emergence of its meanings in relation to the reader), as well as having the ability to interpret the meanings of the cards relations to one another — both in their standard order as given by the numerical attribution as well as the relations that form through the various layouts used for reading. The cards form an 'open' symbolic system (of esoteric correspondences) predicated upon processural interrelationships through the creation of multiple and simultaneous narratives (diachronic narratives that interfold past–present–future).

Therefore, as the title would lead one to suspect, "The Lovers" on a "mundane" level is concerned with 'romantic' love relationships or a significant decision to be made with regard to something that has intense emotional affect. However, other layers of interpretation highlight the card as a study of relations of duality (it is attributed astrologically to Gemini — the sign of the Twins — that is ruled by Mercury) and of the ethical negotiation of difference. Esotericist and religious studies academic Lee Irwin proposes it as symbolic of: "harmonized coexistence in which female and male voices have equally powerful and persuasive impact." Irwin calls attention to the card as symbolic of Buddhist Tantric practices, although in general the 'spiritual' aspects of the subject and their experience is

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89 Similarly, in her discussion of Tantric texts, Shaw notes that each passage does not have one single given meaning, but rather, that there is a range or a "spectrum" of meanings that emerge in response to the practitioner's stage of development. The diverse meanings are not assumed to be understood in a random fashion, but rather, as the program of cultivation in Tantric disciplines is regimented and clearly understood in terms of developmental stages, the many layered meanings of the text are understood to accompany this progression. They may be quixotic, but in a qualified way. Shaw, *Passionate Enlightenment* 149.


92 "Lovers can serve as a mating ground for the birth of spiritual power and vitality, through the sexual alchemy of Tantric disciplines or through the more spontaneous sensitivities acquired through long years of experience and playful exploration." Irwin, *Gnostic Tarot* 245.
valorized by Irwin over and above the experience of the physical body, with Irwin setting up a dualism between physical-emotional and intellect-spirit. However, in harmony with Irigaray's call for the recognition and respect of spiritual difference attributed to each gender,93 and for this difference's ability to engender self-cultivation, Irwin presents the Gnostic interpretation of the Lover's card as "the realization of the spiritual values of the other gender as resources for transformation."94 This illustrates that Irwin perceives spiritual experience as interrelated with gender (the physical body). Significantly, he argues that the cultivation of respect for and perception of the spirituality of the other gender manifests as "co-gendered seeing."95 Differing from [Tomberg's] proposition, Irwin conceives of duality as necessarily inadequate unless tied to the service of creating a unity (that is considered singular), a wholeness that requires "co-gendered seeing" for realization and apprehension. There are obvious similarities with Irwin's proposition of "co-gendered seeing" — the interrelation of spirituality and 'vision' — and with theories and practices from Tantra, Irigaray and Oliver previously discussed. Significantly, Irwin's discussion of the mundus imaginalis as a mediating "knowledge," that can perceive the invisible, gives it the same aesthetic and ethical significance as Oliver does Witnessing (the development of "critical" love), as its conceptualization presupposes space as "full," and the ability to apprehend an unknowable alterity. For, Irwin, the Tarot is an expression of the mundus imaginalis and, considering this, the Angel that mediates between the male-female figures on the Lover's Card could be understood as symbolic of it.

The Imagery of the Tarot, for example, is not merely arbitrary or "fantastic," but a concretion of the mundus imaginalis into a storehouse of images reflective of the Anglo-European psyche as played out in esoteric traditions. Further, this storehouse of images connects, or corresponds to other images 'not found' within the tarot itself, but existing within the vaster world of Anglo-European archetypes and symbolic, religious history.96

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93 "Mais cette refondation de la famille ne peut se réaliser sans reconnaissance de la valeur, naturelle et spirituelle, de l'identité sexuée. Cel-l'ce ne doit pas demeurer simplement fonctionnelle mais être considérée comme faisant partie de l'être humain dans sa dimension corporelle et subjective." [But this refoundation of the family is not realized without recognition of the value, natural and spiritual, of sexual identity. This [sexual identity] must not remain simply functional but must be considered as being part of the human being in their corporeal and subjective dimension.] Irigaray, "Tâches spirituelles pour notre temps," Religiologiques: Sciences humaines et religion. Luce Irigaray: le feminin et la religion. Luce Irigaray: le feminin et la religion. 21 (2000), 1 Aug. 2002: <http://www.unites.uqam.ca/reliabilogie/21/irigaray.htm>

94 Irwin, Gnostic Tarot 249.

95 Irwin, Gnostic Tarot 247.

96 Irwin, Gnostic Tarot 25.
Irigaray also proposes the Angel as a figure that traverses the 'between.'

These swift angelic messengers, who transgress all enclosures in their speed, tell of the passage between the envelope of God and that of the world as micro- or macrocosm. They proclaim that such a journey can be made by the body of man, and above all the body of woman. They represent and tell of another incarnation, another parousia of the body.97

It is argued herein that this "other" incarnation of which Irigaray writes is the development of the subtle body, and further, that the interpretation of the Angel in the esoteric context of the Tarot card *L'Amoureux* as corresponding with the perceptive practice of *mundus imaginalis* not only presents subtle subjectivity as a way of conceptualizing self as open and capable of ethical relations with alterity, but also provides information on the way in which that mode of subjectivity can become a reality (through the perceptive cultivation practices). Love is a mode of extensive, cultivated vision. It is the apprehension of the visible-invisible, it is the taking up of an angelic vision through which one becomes more acutely aware of their physical and gossamer bodies.

**Conclusion**

[Tomberg's] analysis of L'Amoureux's meaning both reflects the previous discussion of the development of compassion or "critical emotion" through the conscious cultivation of a vision that incorporates affect and intellect: "Here in the Sixth portal we are reminded that the heart of our advancement is desire. We need to formulate desires that are clear and loving."98

His interpretation of the Card also pre-empts the next chapter's concerns, which return to a focus on onto–ethical desire and the diachronic 'third' in non-oppositional relations. It is such a desire that underpins the "look of love" examined in this chapter. This conceptualization of desires as knowledgeable, as a process of simultaneous immersion and detachment engenders an understanding of difference in non-oppositional relations. Antoine Faivre notes that, although [Tomberg] conceives

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non-oppositional difference, he does not extend this concept to his understanding of Hegelian relations:

with respect to Hegel, when he [Tomberg] says that thesis, antithesis, and synthesis reaffirm the method of the "neutralization of binaries" found again throughout the hermetic tradition (p.168), he fails to make the essential point: the Hegelian synthesis eliminates the first two terms, makes them quite simply vanish, while hermeticism conserves them.99

This conservation of difference in relation that occurs whilst simultaneously a 'third' is created — this is both of and not of the dualism — is the core issue of Irigaray's horizontal relationships, Tantric union and Oliver's "critical" love. It is a conceptual link between Western, Eastern and Esoteric philosophy: a shared call for subtle 'vision', subtle 'selves', expanded self-responsibility. The Esoteric (including hermetic) tradition is a blind spot in Irigaray's reckoning of dual relation and energy cultivation. As chapter four explores, Irigaray's presentation of the Western mystical tradition utilises an ecstatic form of mysticism, rather than expanding the term's application to embrace less violent form of 'everyday' mystical practice, of which the types of 'vision' this chapter explored would be a core element (as well as Irigaray's "sensible perception").

Western mysticism has cultivated perceptions that are secondary. It speaks of a touch, of a taste of the "spirit," for example. But these spiritual discoveries, often acquired at the expense of great suffering, do not seem to me to be able to substitute themselves for the cultivation of sensible perceptions.100

Irigaray commits a forgetting of air in the Western tradition in her exclusion of a consideration of the Esoteric as 'between East and West' (and this is accompanied with a general romanticisation of the 'East' that flows through Between East and West). Whereas [Tomberg's] work draws attention to the cross-fertilization of Eastern and Western spiritual traditions — significantly in the process illustrating that these religions/spiritual practices are 'living,' continuously developing — that is a feature of Esoteric discourse (albeit his focus is on vertical relations): "Conscious breathing in of [sic] the reality of grace is Christian Hatha–yoga. Christian Hatha–yoga is the vertical breathing of prayer and benediction — or, in other words, one opens oneself to grace and one receives it."101

99 Faivre, Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition 225.

100 Irigaray, Between East and West, 57.

101 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 134.
Grace — a protection not sought but humbly accepted — is the type of relation to an Other that emerges out of relations between subtle subjects: it is the ethics of subtle subjectivity, and is a feature of the next chapter's discussion. A relation of grace is implied in Irigaray's discussion of the cultivation of energy and the power dynamics that accompany such practices. Grace encapsulates the sense of acceptance and tolerance Irigaray expresses:

Each, faithful to him or herself, would bring to the other his or her own energy and his or her manner of cultivating it. This practice would not be able to be appropriated by the other. Energy must be received without asserting dominion over its production.  

This chapter has sought to illustrate the idea that relations of non-oppositional difference are inherently built on the understanding of subtle phenomena, on the perception and 'control' of one's energy. Further, it has stressed that the self-cultivation required to practice this aesthetic–ethical vision need not be divorced from the emotional or pleasurable aspects of physical existence. One does not need to 'leave' the body behind in order to enter into numinous, aesthetic and ethical relations. What emerges from this consideration of Tantra, Esoteric couples and Oliver's theories is that a particular relation to the body is required if one is to undertake the cultivation practices — whether they be ritual, self-reflection (or reflection on self-reflection) or creative visualization — the body must be figured as a subtle body, as comprising extensive energetic sheaths of matter-consciousness.

To cultivate a subtle subjectivity requires entering a state of simultaneous immersion and detachment. Taking up a mode of becoming that acknowledges one's intimate interrelationships whilst acknowledging that a certain style of perceptive detachment (from self and other) is required to enable response-able relations. The look of love is not a passive enamored gaze, it is an active practice that embraces the discomfort of not knowing, not recognising and not being able to master or control.

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102 Irigaray, To Be Two 55. Such a proposition of relation to an Other's energy cultivation would support the concept of multiplicitous difference that has been explored herein, specifically in relation to Deleuze.

103 As this chapter has tried to illustrate, from the perspective of witnessing, it is possible — despite Lacan's claim to the contrary (discussed in chapter four) — that seeing oneself seeing oneself can be accompanied with a sensation of absorption — of affective energetic interrelations, and that it is not only possible to apprehend the act of seeing but such perception it is essential for developing ethical relations.
the Other. Looking is an artistry and it is work. The way one looks is an ethical choice: one does just not perceive, one chooses how to perceive.

Mieke Bal's approach to considering contemporary artist Louise Bourgeois' sculptural installation Spider 1997, and the practice of art writing reflects an awareness of the process of vision and, the perception arising from the close considerations of a work's affectivity, inclusive of self awareness. She writes:

My goal is to present not so much a method as an attitude. Looking at art from this attitude does not entail "applying" art-historical theory to the work, which puts the act of looking itself under erasure, but rather looking at art in the sense of looking to art for an understanding of what art is and does.¹⁰⁴

Bal's focus is on "what the work is, means and does" in the present time of my viewing" and it is the emphasis on the "time of my viewing" that is particularly salient to the approach herein referred to as witnessing. For Bal the starting point is not constructing a narrative to encase and explain the object, but rather to allow an attentive experience of the object to generate an understanding of it that also incorporates a recognition and exploration of the process of looking itself.¹⁰⁵ Bal's account of Bourgeois' work is built around fragments of experience and thoughts that she recorded whilst spending time with the work: her initial attempt to bring these considerations close to language.

Witnessing as an attitude to aesthetic engagement does not promote an approach that ignores the discipline of art history and theory, but it does privilege becoming more conscious of one's affective interrelations with the artwork, enabling a space to open where the work's alterity may be met without being subsumed by the attribution of singular meanings and concepts. This perspective also takes into account, that the temporal relation built between the viewer and the artwork is itself dynamic, changing and developing over time (both the duration of time spent with the object and the reflective time after the physical experience). This is also the case in the cultivations of relations between subjects of difference, as discussed in this chapter.

Irigaray's work has embraced many of the aspects of subtle subjectivity, yet her absolute essentialism, makes the relations between two subjects, the meeting ground,


¹⁰⁵ Bal, Louise Bourgeois' "Spider" xii-xiii
the affective medium through which they can co-cultivate one another difficult to envisage. The Buddhist, Tantric and Esoteric ontologies discussed address this issue in a way that enables multiplicitous difference and relations between subjects of difference to occur within the framework of subtle subjectivity. Both traditions understand that conscious mind–body cultivation is required. That such "vision" requires time: the patience to 'sit' with the unresolved, unrecognisable, unknown. But it does not presuppose that what is met in self and other will be hostile or unpleasurable (however neither does it preclude such perspectives). Their methods of approach seek to avoid presupposition: to bear witness and to be witness, and to "give" witness.
Section III

Ethics
Chapter Nine

An Ethics of Grace: The Laws of Desiring Angels

The Law, without grace, would be impossible to respect, that is, to maintain, even at a distance.¹

We sometimes, at least partially, find this state again, I would say this state of grace, in which the spring puts us, when we are immersed in a new landscape, in an extraordinary cosmic manifestation, when we bathe in an environment that is simultaneously perceptible and imperceptible, knowable and unknowable, visible and invisible to us. We are then situated in a milieu, in an event that escapes our control, our know-how, our inventiveness, our imagination. And our response to this mystery is or could be astonishment, wonder, praise, sometimes questioning, but not reproduction, repetition, control, appropriation.²

The last chapter focused its discussion on the relation between two — the lovers — this chapter focuses more directly on the "third" that is both of, and not of, the dual relation. In this chapter there is a return to a consideration of the child that has been left suspended since chapter six, where it emerged as a seed from the Deleuzian crystal–image. Like the child (by inferred paternity) from *In the Mood For Love's* Chow–Chan relationship,³ it is a child that is symbolic of a creative emergence, simultaneously virtual and actual. In this way, the child is used not only to designate an individual, but as a term to designate the creative and cultivated aspects of self that are generated through subtle relation with an other (and in this sense, the figure of the child is synonymous with that of the angel). As the previous discussion sought to explicate, both Irigaray and Tantric doctrines commence their consideration of the cultivation of self not simply from the position of the single I, but from the relation between two: both in acknowledgment of difference as a path to intimacy, and as a presentation — especially for Tantra — of a relation of non-oppositional


² Irigaray, *Between East and West* 122.

³ That the paternity is not identified, but left inferred is part of the potency of the figure of the child in *In the Mood for Love*: not only does the child symbolize the new and potential; but he does so from outside of conventional, nuclear 'family' genealogy: his claim to subjectivity cannot therefore be made through a patriarchal family lineage.
difference. As Rita M. Gross notes: "duality is mostly clearly transcended in the mutuality of the couple or the parent and child." This is a relation understood to be generative of self and Other, including the creation of the mysterious, the unknowable, multiplicitous 'movements' that are beyond 'mastery' and in its entirety are beholden to neither — these are the relations and the constitution of the child, at the heart of the subtle subject.

Responsibility is amongst the overarching themes of this chapter, and perhaps its concurrent social and intimate aspects cannot be more adequately invoked than by the relations between parent and child. Such relationships traverse the personal and social, the intimate and communal in a manner that gives testimony to the thorough interrelationship of these spheres, rather than the clear-cut differentiation that usually accompanies their designation. Avoiding a replication of the Hegelian separation between cultural (civic) and natural (or divine) forms of relationships/ethics/laws, this chapter seeks to outline a perspective that makes nebulous the very boundaries used to distinguish the civic and natural, one that will enable both 'types' of responsibility identified by Hegel to be considered in harmonious — rather than oppositional — relations with one another. It posits a law that is simultaneously of the divine (natural) and of the human (civic): the laws of desiring Angels. This 'law' is an ethics that emerges out of the relations of subtle subjectivities.

The site for the emergence of this presentation is the family — conceptualized as a crystalline relation — with the operation of love again central to its articulation. The concept of extensive subjectivity that has been examined herein furnishes the individual as (and with) an agency able to initiate and maintain the non-oppositional relations of responsibility for both familial and communal contexts. This is the attitude— an embodied attitude — of grace.

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4 Gross, Buddhism After Patriarchy 198.
Grace is not a mindless, resigned surrender to a higher power (legal or divine), or a deferral or "giving away" of one's personal power or agency; it is, rather, a more fully conscious acceptance and use of one's own power that is inclusive of forces over which one has no control (be they considered of self, other, divine origin or not).

The parent-child relation can be thought of as symbolic of this relationship of grace: of a simultaneous familiarity and alterity — to use an appropriate albeit clichéd image — of a holding with an open hand. Rather than a continuation of the same through the 'screen' of the Deleuzian crystal, the familial relation is onto-ethical desire's unbounded interval: it is the diachronic relation. The form of the ethical family thus conceptualised is not a closed unity, but one that is founded on a non-oppositional, multiplicitous difference that infinitely and intimately opens the family unity to community (and vice versa). That is, family relations may be conceptualised as a form of open unity that still holds form. They hold form because of subtle responsibility — an ethics of grace founded on cultivated (aesthetic) bearings of self and Other. The laws of desiring angels thus provide an ethics of grace.

The plural uses and meanings of the term 'grace' embrace the simultaneous aesthetic and ethical relations that characterise subtle subjectivity, including the activity of cultivating non-oppositional relations with alterity. As a noun, grace both encapsulates the bearing of a "pleasing quality," as aspect of appearance and expression attractive to another; as well as the attitude of "gratitude" and "thanks." If a person is attributed the virtue of "good grace" they are considered to approach

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5 This discussion of the family is concerned with reconceptualising the denegation of the form of family relation as proposed by Hegel, its concern is with thinking through the quality and nature of relation between individuals' intimate and public relations. It is not a proposition for an 'idealised' family magically insulated from the 'tribulations' of living relationships — quite the contrary. The type of relations herein discussed seek to negotiate the family as a site where subtle responsibility can be cultivated through relations with alterity and in the face of adversity: it is inclusive of ALL types of family forms — nuclear, same-sex, single-parent, step-parent, etc. The concept of family being evoked could also be considered imaginal in Ficino's sense — consciously created through attitudinal orientation.

activity and others "with a show of willingness." To show grace is also to "pardon" or "forgive," often implying an acceptance of acts and decisions that one does not understand. As evidenced in these uses, grace is employed to both designate a pleasing physical appearance and effect, as well as an attitudinal orientation. The three Graces of Greek mythology — Aglaia (brightness), Thalia (bringer of flowers), and Euphrosyne (joy and mirth) — ruled social and "elegant arts" (including "banquet, the dance, and all social enjoyments") as described by Thomas Bulfinch. Interestingly, his quotation of Edmund Spenser's (1552-1599) description of their arts in *The Faerie Queen* [1590; 1596] makes their simultaneously aesthetic and ethical role quite apparent:

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These three on men all gracious gifts bestow
Which deck the body or adorn the mind,
To make them lovely or well-favoured show;
As comely carriage, entertainment kind,
Sweet semblance, friendly offices that bind,
And all the complements of courtesy;
They teach us how to each degree and kind
We should ourselves demean, to low, to high,
To friends, to foes; which skill men call Civility.  
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Leaving aside — whilst acknowledging the gender bias — the designation of a specific type of male subjectivity as attributed with the right and ability to be able to

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9 Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queen*, Book VI, Canto 10, verse xxiii; quoted in Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch’s Complete Mythology* 12. This particular book of the poem concerned courtesy (the themes of other books included friendship and justice): in this way the poem itself was a discourse on Elizabethan ethics. Francis Yates notes that Spenser was also a Renaissance Neoplatonist, and that Alaister Fowler in *Spenser and the Numbers of Time* [1964] identifies complex numerological and astrological patterns in the poem. Yates, also argues that the different books of the poem relate to different planets, for example: "Book VI with its courtly hero, Sir Calidore, or Courtesy, and its vision of Venus and the Graces, is the Venus book." Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* 118.
discern "civility," and receive the Graces' teachings, Spenser clearly articulates the role attributed to the Graces in cultivating beauty in a physical and relational sense, as an approach towards the other "to friends, to foes." The Graces preside over interrelated aesthetic and ethical sensibilities. Taking into account this mythological attribution, the term 'grace' does not divorce the pleasurable from the responsible. Further, in its use as a verb, it carries the meaning "to give pleasure to, to gratify, delight." Grace is simultaneous an offering and a response, a reaction: grace as a prayer for blessing or thanks; grace as the giving of "permission to do something."  

The term is even more pertinent to the themes of this chapter considering its association with assisting the birth process — a "grace-wife" being an English term for a midwife (seventeenth to nineteenth century); and as a form of temporality that is characterized by the suspension of action: an interval. Thus a period of grace between the issue of a bill and its payment; a "moment's grace" is a delay that is beneficial, allowing for repose, contemplation or "immunity from penalty." In the Deleuzian crystal-image, the suspension between action-reaction by which it is characterized enables a glimpse of durée, the direct image of time to be presenced, and with it, the seed of the new, of alterity. New aspects of self emerge in the intersubjective relations between subjects of difference. As constituted by onto-ethical desire, the subtle subject is an angel of extensive and subtle matter–consciousness, whose radically open and plural self is both constitutive of, and constituted by, the interval. The laws — and the use of this term here interfolds the use of this term in religious (spiritual) and jurisprudential contexts — of these simultaneously actual and virtual, visible and invisible subjects is the ethics of grace explored herein.


In the exploration of this relation, this chapter further elaborates upon the mutual concurrence of the synthetic and diachronic, taking up a consideration of Hegel as a philosopher of diachronic simultaneity (rather than only of an interminable dialectical oscillation) through the consideration of his presentation of will and time in counterpoint with Deleuze's crystalline relation. Emerging from this comparison, and taking an analysis of contemporary French philosopher Catherine Malabou's into account, it will be proposed that Hegel presents two modes of time that are not altogether irreconcilable with the Bergson–Deleuzian modalities of time. Further, that the simultaneous occurrence characteristic of the two modes of time (expressed together) equates to a concurrence of presence–absence (of a type similar to that explored in the discussion of Tibetan Buddhism in chapter seven), and a consideration of the dialectical relation as, not only a teleological pendulum swing, but also a relation of non-oppositional duality of which 'suspension' is a core feature: *dans l'intervalle*. A subject of such simultaneity, of concurrently synthetic and diachronic relations is a subtle subject, and a consideration of this extensive form of materiality is also undertaken vis-à-vis Hegel in this chapter's development towards a conceptualization of subtle responsibility.

These reflections both necessitate a return to, and commencement from, a consideration of the pneumatological aspects of energetic dynamics with particular regard to the Hegelian will as a central constituent of the self-conscious subject (picking up on themes introduced in chapter three). After considering the intersubjective constitution of these relations, a discussion of the Hegelian family, and the role of love in its operations, will be undertaken in order to elaborate the division between human and divine law that Hegel proposes, and to propose that a subtle responsibility — the law of desiring angels — brings forth acknowledgment of the intersubjective nature of these oppositional ethics as proposed by Hegel.

The third, that is the ethics of grace, is not the result of a dialectical synthesis: rather, like the "other" thirds previously explored herein, it operates as a mutually co-constitutive 'between' that is founded on self cultivation and a meeting with alterity
outside the bounds of mastery and representation. These themes are further elaborated with reference to Irigaray.

**The Pneumatological Foundation of Relation**

The animation, the very pneuma of the psyche, alterity in identity, is the identity of a body exposed to the other, becoming "for the other," the possibility of giving.13

Air, the place in which to dwell, to cultivate flowers and angels.14

The intertwining of corporeality and spirit in Hegel's concept of Individual will as practical spirit — a will centrally constituted by desire — was highlighted at the close of chapter three. In particular it was stressed that the Hegelian will is interrelated with Absolute Spirit, and with forces, desire and Action in such a way that Absolute Spirit and will — in its more usual correlation with consciousness/intellect — is not so easily divorced from the physical, the corporeal, through which it is not only expressed but also constituted. In short, the Hegelian subject can never really divest itself of desire because it is a central constituent of its agency (will) and essential for Action (the activity of spirit in-the-world). A core feature of Absolute Spirit's manifestation through subjective action in the world is the presentation of it as a pneumatology. It is also this pneumatology that founds the ontological intersubjective relations in Hegel's system.

The term 'pneumatology' is most commonly used in reference to the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but it also designates theories (and sciences) of gaseous matter, including air, and was in the seventeenth century, considered a distinct area of metaphysics, pertaining to the theories of spiritual beings (including Angels), or 'spirits,' an attribution that changed in the eighteenth century when the term was used in reference to the human soul and/or what is now designated as psychology.15


14 Irigaray, *I Love To You* 148.

The understanding that Absolute Spirit incorporates pneumatological activity and agency is proposed and elucidated by Alan M. Olson in *Hegel and the Spirit: Philosophy as Pneumatology*.\(^{16}\) It is an examination primarily concerned with the Western Christian tradition, in particular, the influence of the Augustinian Friar Martin Luther's doctrine of the Holy Spirit and Pietism on Hegel's development of Absolute Spirit. Olson proposes Hegel's project as inherently pneumatological; that it has a direct correspondence with the Christian proposition of Holy Spirit.\(^{17}\) Such a perspective also lends itself to correlations with the Eastern (especially Vedic and Tantric) and Esoteric traditions (discussed herein) in which the universe is animated by *prāṇa*: divine "breath" embodied. This idea — as has been discussed — is central to Irigaray's conceptualization of intersubjective relations and self-cultivation as presented in *Between East and West*. In addition, as previously noted, air as an ontological "ground" for being/becoming was also Irigaray's concern in *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, an analysis specific to the Western philosophical tradition.

No other element is as light, as free, and as much in the "fundamental" mode of a permanent, available "there is."

No other element is in this way space prior to all localization, and a substratum both immobile and mobile, permanent and flowing, where multiple temporal divisions remain forever possible. Doubtless, no other element is as originally constitutive of the whole world, without this generativity ever coming to completion in a primordial time, in a singular primacy, in an autarchy, in an autonomy, in a unique or exclusive property… [sic].\(^{18}\)

Air, as it is presented here, prior to taking on an Eastern conceptualization (*prāṇa*) within her work, still encompasses a pneumatological agency: it is considered both generative and "constitutive of the whole world." Significantly, for the discussion developed later in this chapter, it is also described as the 'medium' that allows for the


\(^{17}\) "Hegel's mature philosophy of Spirit can be viewed, therefore, as the existential and metaphysical appropriation and transformation of conventional pneumatology whereby Holy Spirit becomes identical with Absolute Spirit." Olson, *Hegel and the Spirit* 140.

\(^{18}\) Irigaray, *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger* 8.
interfolding of multiple forms of time. As was noted in chapter three, Hegel is no Vitalist, but Spirit is manifest in the world through movement and communicative exchanges (Action): it is central to the development of individual self-consciousness, ethical relations and social institutions: "The living ethical world is Spirit in its truth." Although in Hegel's scheme there are different forms of ethical relations, each eliciting a different degree of relation to spirit (and attributed a value accordingly), individual will is implicit in this relation through activity. It is the pneumatological aspect of this will within Hegel's System that manifests Absolute Spirit in the world. Considered thus, from an Irigarian perspective Hegel cannot be charged with the same forgetting of air — as an ontological/metaphysical force — as Heidegger.

In a further resemblance to Irigaray's positioning and use of air, Hegel was also influenced by Eastern conceptualizations of Spirit, notably its "movement" (although his particular form of orientalism, as distinct from Irigaray's, allocated the Eastern a 'lower' position in the teleological development of religion (and self-consciousness); 20

19 Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit 442; 265.

20 Amongst Hegel's extensive critique of Indian "Hindoo" culture and religion is a refutation of its Vitalist qualities, equating their religious attitude as one dominated by imagination and dreaming: "Absolute Being is presented here as in the ecstatic state of a dreaming condition." (139). The result of which annuls Spirit's particular expression and achievement of freedom (its expression as Ideal): "The Indian view of things is a Universal Pantheism, a Pantheism, however, of Imagination, not of Thought. One substance pervades the Whole of things, and all individualizations are directly vitalized and animated into particular Powers. The sensuous matter and content are in each case simply and in the rough taken up, and carried over into the sphere of the Universal and Immeasurable. It is not liberated by the free power of Spirit into a beautiful form, and idealized in the Spirit, so that the sensuous might be a merely subservient and compliant expression of the spiritual; but [the sensuous object itself] is expanded into the immeasurable and undefined, and the Divine is thereby made bizarre, confused and ridiculous." (141) Although acknowledging scholarship of his day that identified the influence of Sanskrit in the foundation of European languages, and the extensive Indian philosophical, algebraic, geometrical and astronomical knowledge, Hegel relegates the Indian cultures historical import to that of prehistory "for History is limited to that which makes an essential epoch in the development of Spirit." (142). Indeed, it is a lack of the discipline of History which he identifies as the culture's marker of lacking individual independent self-consciousness; thereby positioning the Hindu religion and culture in an inferior position vis-à-vis Christianity: "For History requires Understanding — the power of looking at an object in an independent objective light, and comprehending it in its rational connection with other objects. Those people therefore are alone capable of History, and of prose generally, who have arrived at that period of development (and can make it their starting point) at which individuals comprehend their own existence as independent, i.e. possess self-consciousness." (161-2). G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History [1837], trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956) 139;141;142;161-2.
whilst Irigaray's orientalism is marked by a more general and nebulous romanticism that positions the Eastern perspective as inherently superior to patriarchal Western religions, even though many Eastern traditions are also patriarchal and enforce unequal gender relations). As Olson puts it:

Indeed, as the general trajectory of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion indicates quite clearly (1821, 1824, 1827, 1831), Hegel was both increasingly drawn toward and perplexed by Buddhist and Vedantic philosophy — Benares beginning to serve, in addition to Athens and Jerusalem, as an additional point of dialectical reference in the movement of Spirit.  

Olson highlights the 'pervasive' (if not always readily manifest) nature of Hegel's Spirit: "Spirit is identical with the power, the creative force, and the structural energy simultaneously at the bottom and at the top of things ... ." This interpretation supports the discussion presented in chapter three, that individual will is a correlate of an onto-ethical desire that is inclusive of 'matter' and feeling, an interpretation that is shared by David Farrell Krell: "Hegel wants spirit alive. Spirit alive is not only rational (vernünftig), not only thinking and willing spirit, but also spirit sentient, sensible, and sensuous (sich empfindender Geist)."

This chapter endeavors to make this interpretation's links with diachronic time and non-oppositional relations of difference (as constitutive of subtle subjectivity) evident: diachronic time (and multiplicity) will be presented as not antithetical to

This is a point stressed with relation to the activity of the will in The Philosophy of Religion: "The activity of the will, therefore, does not arrive at freedom of the will — does not arrive at a content which, being determined through the unity of the Notion, would consequently be rational, objective, and in accordance with right. This unity, on the contrary, remains the merely potentially existent substantial Power existing in seclusion, namely Brahmā, which has let go actuality as mere contingency, and now abandons it entirely to its own wild caprice." G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Religion [1832], trans. Rev. E.B. Spiers and J. Burdon Sanderson (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner, 1895) 31.

21 Olson, Hegel and the Spirit 132. Benares or Kāsi is a city of spiritual significance in India, particularly for devotees of Śiva. Bowker, ed., The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions 538.

22 Olson, Hegel and the Spirit 147.

Hegel's System, but as discernible within the 'domain' of ethical relations (or, for Hegel, the "Philosophy of Right"). This evidence of diachrony — as found in the "action" of the family — works to undermine Hegel's abrasive division between the family and the community, between divine and human law. Thus, the pneumatological aspects of Hegel's will draws close to the subject constituting relational activity proposed by Irigaray: a relation that, for both, interfolds spirit–corporeality and aesthetics–ethics (in mutual concurrence).24

Before turning more directly to this task, it is useful to further refer to Olson's discussion of the etymology and influence of Hegel's concept of Geist, as his research demonstrates the term's interrelations with energetic dynamics and elemental materials — particularly air — and provides a conceptual etymology that is inclusive of both Eastern and Western influences (influences that are also common to the Western Esoteric tradition):

the German word Geist, according to the philologist Walter Wili, "goes back to the Indo–Iranian gheizd whose root ghei means 'to move powerfully.'" The original meaning of Geist, therefore has to do with both "motive" and "vital force."25

Olson argues that this Eastern energetic etymology is "subsumed" by Hegel's greater interest in the word's connotations from the pre-Socratic, middle Platonic and Early Christian presentations. It is the Latin conceptual precedents that Olson considers held the prime interest for Hegel:

for in these reflections one finds a rich and imaginative association of Spirit with a notion of psyche that conveys the meaning of the Latin terms animus and spiritus as the embedded experiences of Atem and Luft, breath and wind or air — precisely those sensory manifestations in and through which pneuma and Geist become initially manifest.26

This reference to the "sensory manifestations" of geist gestures toward a conceptualisation of materiality that has parity with the previous discussions of

24 It similarly shares correlations with Bergson's élan vital as discussed in chapter three.

25 Olson, Hegel and the Spirit 132.

26 Olson, Hegel and the Spirit 132, referencing Hegel VGP 1, 213-19.
extensive corporeality: the matter–consciousness of subtle bodies. Catherine Malabou also proposes Hegel's *geist* as indicative of a particular type of 'form' or materiality that she terms "plasticity" (an argument that is examined in more detail in relation to time later in this chapter).\(^{27}\) However, at this point it is worth noting the above reference to "sensory manifestations" as it is a useful reminder of the embodied and active nature of *geist* as figured by Hegel, of its substantiality. This emphasis on the process of becoming is an aspect which Olson identifies as a link between Hegel's rendering of Spirit and those found in Hindu belief, as presented in the *Rig Veda*:\(^{28}\)

In accounting for the being of becoming, Hegel cannot improve on the descriptions of Primordial Spirit one finds for example, in the *Rig Veda* (to which, apart from mood, his account is strikingly similar). As the poet ponders the primal unity of Being and Nothing, in the *Rig Veda*, an undulation or unrest first marks the source of Becoming, the "breathless breathing of its own accord," and prior to this initial ground of determinancy, nothing whatever can be said of the nature of reality.... Hegel's position is therefore something of a combination of Heraclitus (vis-à-vis the Eleatics, ...),\(^{29}\) Genesis 1.1-2,\(^{30}\) and Eastern philosophy: "Becoming is therefore the first concrete thought and therefore the first notion of which Being and Nothing are mere abstractions."\(^{31}\)

There are resonances with this presentation of becoming as 'prior' to the presencing of Being or Nothing with the Buddhist concept of șūnyātā: the processural

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28 The *Rig Veda* (or *Rg Veda*): Sanskrit "knowledge in verse") is understood to be the oldest of the *Vedas* that are devotional hymns, mantras and ritual instructions that enable contact with Hindu divinities. Bowker ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* 815; 1019.

29 Olson provides the following conceptual trace through pre-Socratic Greek philosophy: "The primal element of water (conceived as the formless-form or essence not unlike the conception of *Tao* in Chinese philosophy), is further abstracted from matter in Anaximander's conception of *to apeiron*, the "boundless indefinite," which contains all definites within it by the principle of *energeia* (VGP 1, 211; HP 1, 186). It is this "absolute continuity" between the indefinite and the definite, so central to Heraclitus's active notion of *logos*, which fascinates Hegel even though Anaximenes, the contemporary of Anaximander, reconnects this boundless indefinite with "air" (*aer*) or *Luft* as the primal material element necessary to account for the nature of the "soul" (*psyche*). This anthropological composite of reality as definite-indefinite, as infinity, represents, for Hegel, the first decisive movement from "natural philosophy to a philosophy of consciousness" in pre-Socratic philosophy (VGP 1, 214; HP 1, 189). Olson, *Hegel and the Spirit* 134.

30 Genesis 1.1-2: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." *Holy Bible. New International Version* 3.

31 Olson, *Hegel and the Spirit* 131, quoting Hegel E §88, z.
groundless ground of simultaneous presence–absence. It is a dialectic movement without its hostile teleological impetus — in suspension — that does not so much oscillate between but, rather, is a continual process or flux of emptying, differentiating: simultaneous presence and absence devoid of essence.

Returning to Olson's discussion of the Hindu correlates — given that the Vedas contain devotional texts of mantras and hymns that are understood to enable the practitioner to enter into direct relation with the divine — the discussion of pneumatology is extended by him to include Hegel's interpretation of speech. However, the directional imperative has been altered: language elicits a positing of spirit in the world as speech for Hegel, rather than speech enabling a transcendent union of the subject with Spirit. One carries the sense of bringing Spirit "down" to earth, the other of raising the self "up."

Hegel ... emphatically asserts in the so-called First Philosophy of Spirit (1802-03) that "language" is the first and primary manifestation (or potency, as he put it, emulating Schelling) of Spirit separating itself from "air" as its primal element and positing itself as "speech." 

An account of Hegel's concept of speech and its ramifications for the process of subjective interrelation with spirit is beyond the scope of this project. However, it should be noted that a language able to 'represent' the concurrence of the universal and the particular — that is, in George di Giovanni's terms, something which "in being social, is at the same time religious" — is significantly valorized in Hegel's scheme.  

The mediating role 'air' plays in spirits 'distribution' is shared by the previously discussed accounts of spirit: Hindu, Pre-Socratic Greek (Heraclitus) and Christian.

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32 Olson, Hegel and the Spirit 33.

With regard to Hegel the salient feature of this association, rather than just being another instance of air–spirit correlation, is that when taking into account the constituents of the Hegelian will, the subject designating correlation becomes air–spirit–desire: this admixture founding the potentiality for ethical relations in the world. This is a combination that is separated within Irigaray's recent work: *To Be Two* features desire as mediating the relation between subjects of difference, and *Between East and West* features air–spirit as mediating the relation (both are presented as requiring conscious cultivation). They are drawn together in Hegel's scheme, albeit that Irigaray's critique of Hegel's inherently hostile relations and reductive conceptualisation of desire must be taken into account to enable "responsible" form of relations with alterity to emerge from his proposition.34

This is an undertaking that Hegel himself helps with — just a little — when he illustrates freedom (the requisite of Free Will) by recourse to feeling: in particular, the feelings of friendship and love. In this way, an ethical imperative of self-consciousness is intimately tied to sensation and emotion, not simply located in the realm of reason (presented as distinct from emotion) or in the institutions of civil society.

This, then, is the concrete concept of freedom, whereas the two previous moments have been found to be thoroughly abstract and one-sided. But we already possess this freedom in the form of feeling [Empfindung], for example in friendship and love. Here, we are not one-sidedly with ourselves, but willingly limit ourselves with reference to an other, even while knowing ourselves in this limitation as ourselves. In this determinacy, the human being should not feel determined; on the contrary, he attains his self-awareness only by regarding the other as other. Thus freedom lies neither in indeterminacy nor in determinacy, but is both at once.35

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34 For example, writing in *To Be Two* of desire's role in establishing and generating relations between subjects of sexual difference: "Desire can keep us together, can reunite us. But although it is as old as the world, this way of mediating communitarian life has not been understood. The nostalgia for the one has always supplanted desire between two." Irigaray, *To Be Two* 57. A similar type of reconceptualisation of Hegelian desire also proposed by Kelly Oliver: "While I agree that the onset of self-consciousness and subjectivity is necessarily intersubjective and motivated by desire, I do not figure that desire as a necessarily hostile desire to annihilate the other. Rather, I figure that desire as a desire for exchange that benefits both parties." Kelly Oliver, *Feminizing Nietzsche* 195.

35 Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* §7 Addition: 42.
Here simultaneity emerges as a feature of subjectivity: and not a subjectivity considered inadequate but, rather, a subjectivity that has achieved the self-conscious realisation of freedom. The form of relation being proposed\(^{36}\) can be viewed as a relation of intimate detachment: the "both at once" of determinacy and indeterminacy, the limited and unlimited, the universal and the particular.

In a discussion of this section of *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* Axel Honneth stresses the "communicative" aspects of the relation, and argues that these ultimately enable Hegel's relational goal of "being with oneself in another" — the definition of Free Will:

in reality we are free only when we know how to modify our desires and needs so as to orient them toward social interactions, which, when we participate fully in them, can for their part be experienced as expressions of our unrestricted subjectivity. In short, only self-limitation on behalf of others allows full, free experience of self.\(^{37}\)

The modification of "desires" would necessarily require the ability to apprehend and identify them, which — as exemplified by the Buddhist models previously discussed — necessitates a return to self, a cultivation of a simultaneously embodied and extensive self. Its proposal by Hegel signals not only the common prescription of the modification of (an assumed libidinal) desire to enter into ethical relations with others, but that this modification enables a change in self-relation — the emergence of

\(^{36}\) Without forgetting Hegel's gender bias: the ethical subject for Hegel is masculine (or a dead sister), but even while alive Antigone was delineated by Hegel as being able to act ethically only in an unconscious manner. As Tina Chanter aptly summarises Antigone's positioning vis-à-vis ethics: "According to Hegel, Antigone does not, cannot, will not attain self-consciousness. Why? Because she is a woman not a man. She can act ethically. *But she cannot know what she is doing.* She cannot understand the rational and the universal implications of her divinely inspired, sisterly act on behalf of her brother. She acts on the basis of blood kinship, on the basis of an intuitive sense of her duty. *She knows what is right. What she does not know is why it is right.*" Chanter, *Ethics of Eros* 85. For further feminist analysis of Antigone vis-à-vis feminine subjectivity see Elaine P. Miller, "The 'Paradoxical Displacement': Beauvoir and Irigaray on Hegel's Antigone," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 14.2 (2000): 121-137; Patricia Jagiellonczek Mills, "Hegel's 'Antigone','* Feminist Interpretations of G.W. F. Hegel*, ed. Patricia Jagiellonczek Mills (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996) 59-88.

\(^{37}\) Axel Honneth, *Suffering From Indeterminacy: An Attempt at a Reactualisation of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right,"* trans. Jack Ben-Levi (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2000): 41. It is worth noting that Honneth avoids using the term love when discussing this paragraph, but rather refers only to Hegel's example of friendship, even though both types of relation (which of course can be considered as mutually constitutive) are given as examples.
freedom — thereby tying the spiritual and ethical 'progress' of the individual to their capacity to respond to the needs of others (or, the perceived needs of others, and it is this perception, and its apprehension, that has been under scrutiny herein). In other words, Hegel's prescription for the cultivation of spirit (and therefore, simultaneously, of self-consciousness) does not take place without the body, emotion or feeling and, although more commonly, and most definitely denigrated in his system, these aspects of 'lived' experience are indeed central to, and constitutive of, both subjectivity and ethical relations. As will be taken up later, such a perspective ruptures the divide Hegel proposes between the family (personal) and the social (public). Bringing to bear the pneumatological perspective — because it is this subject-forming 'element' that posits an intersubjectivity that disrupts the dialectical pendulum — on this interpretation, the modification of "desires" is not a purely rational or conscious undertaking. Desire and its interrelation with feelings cannot be purged from the will — even in its most exalted state as Free will — however much it seems Hegel wanted to do so. The modification of desire is a fully embodied experience that is essentially intersubjective. If Hegel's prescription of freedom — "to be in another" — is considered from the perspective offered by subtle subjectivity, it advocates not so much the inhabitation of someone, the usurpation of their subjectivity (like a "walk-in" spirit possession), or the assumption that one can know (and therefore master) the Other in their entirety but; rather, that they recognize the affective matter–conscious intersubjective relations that constitute their becoming. From the perspective of detached–immersion "to be in another" can signal the acceptance of one's inability to know, control and master the other, as well as the realization of one's own constitution as inevitably being open to, and to an unknown extent constituted by, radical alterity.

Mapping this form of subjectivity — that of subtle bodies — onto an Hegelian concept of the subject would seem entirely far-fetched without the identification of the pneumatological 'foundations' of the will previously discussed; with the emphasis on understanding that the will is Absolute Spirit as Action, through which it 'takes on' a materiality. These 'material' aspects of Spirit are a feature of Catherine
Malabou's analysis of Hegel, which she designates as "plasticity," melding its form with a type of time that she proposes is Hegel's concept of the future (a paradoxical proposition of course, considering Hegel's predilection for terminating futurity by proposing ends). In a parallel development, Malabou's plasticity, like subtle matter–consciousness, accommodates aesthetic and ethical interrelation (supported by a pneumatological foundation). Her discussion of 'plasticity' commences from an account of Hegel's presentation of exemplary Greek subjects: "In Hegel's account 'plasticity' describes the nature of those Greek figures who represent an individuality he names 'exemplary' (exemplarische) and 'substantial' (substantielle)."\textsuperscript{38}

This form of subjectivity was — like Free Will — comprised of another simultaneity, in this case the "plastic and universal" and the "individual."\textsuperscript{39} Further, this plasticity — as constitutive of "exemplary" subjectivity — is also pneumatological, giving form to "the spirit in its embodiment (Körperlichkeit des Geistigen)," as Malabou quotes Hegel.\textsuperscript{40} Indeed, the plastic subject is identified by Malabou as a middle term in itself within the larger movement of the System, as it is teleologically positioned between the plastic art of sculpture and the emergence of "philosophical plasticity."\textsuperscript{41} It is an extensive form of matter–consciousness not beholden to the 'purely' corporeal but essential to the development of self-determination.

Self-determination arises through the "play" of the universal and particular, to quote Malabou's description. It is this very activity of their "dynamic" interrelation that constitutes self-determination and, here again, to "play" takes on a subject-modifying

\textsuperscript{38} Malabou, "The Future of Hegel" 205.

\textsuperscript{39} Malabou "The Future of Hegel" 205.

\textsuperscript{40} Malabou "The Future of Hegel" 205.

\textsuperscript{41} Malabou defines "philosophical plasticity" as both a "philosophical attitude, the behaviour specific to a philosopher" and as indicative of philosophy itself "to its form and manner of being." The latter identified by her as the manner in which the philosophy is presented "to that rhythm in which the speculative content is unfolded and presented." Malabou, "The Future of Hegel" 205.
and generating role. Malabou's argument presents plasticity (incorporating a
dialectical movement) as a form and quality of substance, at the heart of self-
determination: "Indeed it is this 'activity' [Absolute Relation] that indicates precisely
the very plasticity of substance itself, its capacity both to receive form and to give
form to its own content."\[^42\]

As it is with the matter–consciousness of subtle bodies, concurrent reception and
creation feature as the movement of this "substance," and reflects a central
proposition of Malbou's, that plasticity is itself a dialectical process:

The dialectical process is "plastic" because, as it unfolds, it makes links between the opposing
movements of total immobility (the "fixed") and evacuation ("dissolution"), and then links both in
the vitality of the whole, a whole which, reconciling these two extremes, is itself the union
(conjugaison) of resistance (Widerstand) and fluidity (Flüssigkeit). The process of plasticity is
dialectical because the operations which constitute it,— the seizure of form and the annihilation of all
form, emergence and explosion — are contradictory.\[^43\]

Salient to this concept of substance — akin to subtle bodies — is its processual
nature: its very constituency, its substantiality is a dynamic relation possible
because of difference. In contradistinction to a subtle subject's matter–consciousness,
the process of Hegelian self-determination is predicated on hostile relations; the
movement between differences positioned as oppositional. A similar form of subject
— that is determined by a continual processual relation — was explored in chapter
seven. The subject-less subject that emerges from the 'experience' of śūnyatā
incorporates a dialectical movement between universal–particular/full-empty:
however, it is a "double" dialectical movement that also 'erases' the oppositions
between which it 'moves.' Yet the dissolution process is not the cataclysmic variety
inferred by Malabou's choice of "explosion" to express dissolution with regard to the
dialectical relation. The entire śūnyatā relation is itself conceptualised as a
concurrent presencing and erasure that is not generated from confrontation but,
rather, attests to a concordance that fissures the limits of a dialectical movement.

\[^42\] Malabou, "The Future of Hegel" 207.
\[^43\] Malabou, "The Future of Hegel" 207-208.
As discussed in section II and, with regard to Deleuze in particular, the matter–consciousness of subtle subjectivity, comprised from an onto–ethical desire, is correlate with a particular modality of, and relation to, time: the diachronic time of *durée* and the relation of suspension, the "meanwhile:" *dans l'intervalle*. This implicit association between a form of substance, its emergence, and a particular conceptualization of time is also present in Malabou's proposition of plasticity. For Malabou, plasticity signals the presence of the concept of the future in Hegel's philosophy, as its processural constitution founds self-determination which gives testament to "*that which happens:*" "Following this line of thought we understand the 'future' (*a-venir*) in the philosophy of Hegel as the *relation, the connection, which subjectivity maintains with the accidental.*"  

This is a significant proposition, not least because as constituting the *relation*, it must be understood to exist concurrently with the present (and not only in the linear proposition of past–present–future). Further, the "accidental," the particular, emerges through this simultaneous relation of the present (moment) and diachronic forms of time. In a correlation with the relations of the Deleuzian crystalline regime, this accidental is the "new" or the "seed." A correlation further supported by Malabou's interpretation that, for Hegel, time "is an *agency,*" that it is marked and expresses an 'internal' splitting: "Time is an agency (*une instance*) characterised by dialectical differentiation; if it finds itself divided into definite moments, these determine it only for a moment."  

The second type of time Malabou identifies in Hegel's work (as distinct from linear) shares with Bergson's *durée* an inherent process of differentialisation: "Time is not *always* (simultaneously, successively and permanently) the same as itself. The


45 "In fact, Hegel works (in) on two 'times' at once." Malabou, "The Future of Hegel" 209.

This interpretation of Hegelian time that allows for a multiplicitous difference to exist in the concept of time (and there is no indication here that, as time differentiates itself, these movements are subsumed into a single unity) counters the Hegel renowned for unity and synthesis. It is a position that Malabou articulated in an earlier essay — "Who's Afraid of Hegelian Wolves" — in which she argues that Hegelian multiplicity has been reduced to unity by Deleuze and Guattari; that Hegel has suffered the same fate as Freud's wolves at their hands: his wildness tamed, he has been domesticated: "But doesn't Deleuze transform Hegel into a dog? Doesn't Hegel become the 'bow-wow' of contemporary philosophers, the abhorred victim of the pack of the thinkers of difference, their absolute enemy?"

Certainly Deleuze does not attribute any form of radical difference or multiplicity to Hegel's system (that is, difference is not conceptualised outside of the discourse of the Same); writing in Difference and Repetition he states:

Thus, Hegelian contradiction appears to push difference to the limit, but this path is a dead end which brings it back to identity, making identity the sufficient condition for difference to exist and be thought. "It is only in relation to the identical, as a function of the identical, that contradiction is the greatest difference. The intoxications and giddinesses are feigned, the obscure is already clarified from the outset. Nothing shows this more clearly than the insipid monocentricity of the circles in the Hegelian dialectic."

For Deleuze, Hegel's system is closed, "monocentric," devoid of the conceptualization of difference as differenciation that he proposed (as discussed in chapter two). That Deleuze was not enamoured by Hegel's project is clearly
illustrated by his remark in *Negotiations*, regarding the history of philosophy: "What I most detested is Hegelianism and dialectics."\(^50\)

Malabou's perspective upon Hegel problematizes the reading of Hegel's teleological dialectic, and calls for a reconsideration of the type of unity that he prescribed (and whether or not this unity 'incorporated' a multiplicity).\(^51\) The correspondences between Hegel's form of diachronic time with *durée* are further evidenced in the following statement:

In this capacity to differentiate itself from itself time shows exactly the sign of its *plasticity*. Yet this differentiation itself further requires a *twofold understanding*. For it is, on the one hand, *synchronic* — the Hegelian concept of time does not reduce to a singular meaning. And on the other hand, it is *diachronic* — to say that time is not always what it is signifies also that it differentiates itself from itself in time, that it has, to put it another way, a *history*.\(^52\)

Interestingly, whereas Bergson discussed the limitation of *durée* by perception as constituting the real, in Malabou's discussion of Hegel's diachronic time, its self differentiation appears to be more "fully" presenced in the real, as an activity of the real through which it generates itself and, as such is, more 'concretely' tied to subtle or "plastic" materiality. Its movement necessarily 'happens' in the real: that is, it is capable of being allocated a "history" in the Hegelian sense (emerging from a dialectical process).

This is a concept of diachronic time — like the Bergsonian and Deleuzian — that admits, or expresses alterity within its agency. Accompanying such an interpretation, Malabou designates this temporal relation (constituting subjectivity) as "*le <voir venir>*" — "wait and see," in an interesting correspondence with the


\(^51\) This is also the subject of Andrew Haas' text *Hegel and the Problem of Multiplicity* in which he also proposes that a form of multiplicity that is not predicated on the discourse of the same (repeat of the one) is developed by Hegel, which Haas designates as the "manys." Andrew Haas, *Hegel and the Problem of Multiplicity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000).

\(^52\) Malabou, "The Future of Hegel" 211.
concept of *dans l'intervalle* discussed herein.\(^{53}\) Both the "meanwhile" (*dans l'intervalle*) proposed in chapter six, and the "wait and see" relation are characterised as states of suspension that do not equate with passivity. Malabou defines the "wait and see" as the experience of "concurrently knowing and not knowing."

Previous discussion of the "meanwhile" articulated it as a site (sight) of the emergence of the "new," that required the giving up of the discourse of the same (and an attitude of mastery) whilst simultaneously cultivating skills and knowledges able to perceive and enter into relations with alterity: a form of knowing and not knowing. This emphasis on perception is again close to Malabou's considerations of Hegel. In particular, she interprets his definition of time — "a pure form of sense … it is the non-sensuous sensuous" (following the Kantian concept of intuition) — as evidence that Hegel did not consider time as a "mere series of nows:" that is, not as a perpetual present, as a repetition of the same.\(^{54}\)

Malabou focuses her analysis of Hegel's concept of time on his paradoxical definition of time, given in *The Philosophy of Nature*,\(^{55}\) as "the being which, in being, is not and in not-being is."\(^{56}\) She interprets this as containing a "double-meaning;" both that time is comprised of moments which "cancel one another out" as well as meaning: "Time itself is not what it is."\(^{57}\) The latter attribution introduces an alterity into the heart of the concept of time, as well as enabling Malabou to argue for the form of diachronic time (and a time that differentiates itself from itself) as previously outlined.


\(^{57}\) Malabou, "The Future of Hegel" 209.
The interpretation emphasises the Hegelian concept (and privilege) of Action: that time itself is an activity, which generates itself, and can, therefore, change over time and in so doing create History (in the Hegelian sense). Although Kojève's interpretation of Hegelian time is more conservative that Malabou's — he presents a re-ordering of the logical movement, past–present–future, into future–past–present — Kojève's analysis similarly highlights the ontological activity of Time\(^{58}\) (worked out through Action) in Hegel's scheme, through an analysis of its identification with desire. In Kojève's reading it is desire that creates the 'gaps' that enable the future to precede the present.

Now, if Desire is the presence of an absence, it is not — taken as such — an empirical reality: it does not exist in a positive manner in the natural — i.e. spatial — Present. On the contrary it is like a gap or a "hole" in Space: an emptiness, a nothingness. (And it is into this "hole," so to speak, that the purely temporal Future takes its place, within the spatial Present).\(^{59}\)

Although the concept of desire used here, is a limited one — premised upon lack — Kojève's reading of Hegel also contends that Time was for him more than a series of nows — of a repetition of the same — even though Kojève is only concerned with a singular time (and a singular form of desire), History, he did attribute to it the "creative" role of a desire presencing a futurity (that which has yet to be known).\(^{60}\)

Malabou's concept of Plasticity is akin to the type of desire–time proposed herein (and subtle–matter consciousness) in its positioning as a processural "middle-term," in its pneumatological composition, and in its expression of the actual–virtual.

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\(^{58}\) Kojève considers Hegel's identification of the Concept with Time, as one of his greatest achievements: "Hegel is the first to identify the Concept and Time …. Hegel said it as early as the Preface to the Phenomenology, … 'Was die Zeit betrifft, … so ist sie der daseiende Begriff selbst' (As for Time, it is the empirically existing concept itself). …. the real Concept (that is, Being revealed to itself by an empirically existing Discourse) is Time." Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* 131-132.

\(^{59}\) Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* 134.

\(^{60}\) Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* 134. Time's ontological and material implications are extended further by Kojève in his identification of this particular mode of desire that is time (historical time) with "Man." "Now, we have seen that the presence of Time (in which the Future takes primacy) in the real World is called Desire (which is directed by another Desire), and that this Desire is a specifically human Desire, since the Action that realizes it is Man's very being. The real presence of Time in the World, therefore, is called *Man*. *Time is Man, and Man is Time." Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* 137-138.
The scarcity of references to the notion of plasticity is thus evidence of its distinct mode of presence, which is that of the originary synthesis, maintained only in the interval between presence and absence. It is for this reason, because plasticity works within the body (au corps) of the systematic presentation, without ever extending above it or overdetermining it, that it is revealed as the concept capable of accounting for the incarnation, or incorporation, of spirit.  

As discussed by Deleuze, the crystalline relationship is never completed, it never forms a totalized "crystal": static, closed, unified. In this aspect the conceptualization differs from Malabou's designation of plasticity as the "originary synthesis" between presence and absence. The crystal-image always expresses something that escapes it: a glint of the direct image of time, there is no static synthesis. Similarly, the relation of dans l'intervalle calls for relations of concurrence rather than synthesis. However, Malabou's analysis of Hegel is not entirely without postulation of a potentiality capable of moving outside the bounds of dialectical relations (of which it is constituted), and she renders plasticity as maintaining the internal differentiation of the "wait and see" which at its heart is a relation of anticipation — awaiting an unknown future (that has a processual presence — 'plasticity' — in the moment). "Plasticity for its part guarantees the differential energy which moves at the heart of the "wait and see," appearing as the condition of possibility for this projection."  

Plasticity is a type of matter–consciousness capable of rendering relations with diachronic time, with a time that emerges between "potentiality and act" that "does not move forward according to teleological deployment." This relation of "wait and see" posits potentiality in its anticipation. Like the Deleuzian seed of the crystal-image, such anticipation 'escapes' the relations from which it is initially constituted.

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If a self-conscious attitude of self-cultivation is a feature of this interval of "wait and see," then it requires the development of aesthetic–ethical response-ability: it is the process of orientation toward self, other and futurity, a getting "in the mood" that involves feeling and sensation as much as ration and intellect.

In Malabou's discussion, both the activity of "waiting" and of "seeing" are presented as generic terms: she does not explore the different ways in which one can wait, the different ways one sees. There is an assumed and limited visual literacy attributed to the subject. In contradistinction, in the previous proposition of *dans l'intervalle*, both the activity of suspension and the activity of looking were addressed as very particular types of activities, and it was noted that the apprehension of diachronic relations required a very specific mode of embodied visuality. The cultivation of Spirit (self-consciousness) retains a mono-focal impetus in Malabou's construction as the practice of seeing itself is not examined. By drawing attention to the responsibility of the individual to consciously cultivate both the disciplines of waiting and of seeing — their response-ability — a gentle rupture emerges in the discourse of the Same through which onto-ethical desire simultaneously slips and manifests itself.

This extended discussion of Malabou's presentation of plasticity has sought to illustrate the idea that the constituents of subtle subjectivity — its matter-consciousness as comprised of energy–desire–time — is not entirely alien to the Hegelian concept of the subject; that the potential for conceptualizing an onto-ethical desire lies quietly within Hegel's oeuvre. Plasticity and subtle matter-consciousness present the shared idea that relation is a form of *substance* that is both of and not of individual subjectivity, and that it 'exists' as a form of presence–absence: its inherent processural activity forever casting it as simultaneously, concurrently both.

From this 'foundation' of subtle substance as spirit–will–desire in relation, the argument will now turn to examine its presentation in, and disruption of, the
Hegelian family relations; where the split between natural (divine) and human (or civic) ethics occurs. Akin to the crystal-image that is constituted by a splitting of time, the Hegelian family is constituted by a splitting of ethical responsibility (and capacity for ethical responsibility): it is a divisive schema whose binary oppositions falter when subtle materiality and desire–will–spirit are taken into account. As modes of subjectivity plasticity and subtle bodies posit a subject within the Hegelian system that is capable of reconciling — through their very ontological constituents — the division he draws between divine and human law.

**Simultaneously Whole and Fragmented: The Loving Family–State.**

In fact, nothing is unconditioned; nothing carries the root of its own being in itself. [Subject and object, man [sic] and matter.] each is only relatively necessary; the one exists only for the other, and hence exists for itself only on the strength of a power outside itself; the one shares in the other only through that power's favour and grace.6

There is a strong sense of an essential intersubjectivity65 in Hegel's discussion of love, as illustrated in the above quotation and, as identified in the previous discussion of Axel Honneth's commentary on the Hegelian will. Yet in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Right* there is a clear sense that the love relationship inherent in family relations needs to be purged in order for its members to enter into conscious ethical communal relations and, more specifically, conscious ethical relations can only be achieved by male subjects.

The family forms a 'between' in Hegel's system. It enables transition from the natural (divine) ethics that its relations exemplify to the conscious (human) ethical

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65 Michael Theunissen argues that intersubjectivity is the "foundation of the theory of ethical life" (9) as it is predicated (as will be discussed more fully below) on the dynamic of love. Theunissen proposes that the love relation is not excluded from the state, but only its "sensual moment. (9)" He also contends that intersubjectivity is removed from *Philosophy of Right*. However, if the operations of spirit from the perspective of pneumatology proposed herein are considered, the intersubjective operations of love can be seen to be elided in *Philosophy of the Right* by the intersubjective dynamic of the will and, as later discussion will illustrate, love and will as manifestations of Spirit, cannot be so easily separated. Michael Theunissen, "The Repressed Intersubjectivity in Hegel's Philosophy of Right," *Hegel and Legal Theory* 3-63.
order: it is positioned between 'nature' and 'culture.' Hegel proposes that the transition to conscious ethical subjectivity relies on the knowing individual detaching from the "unconscious" ethical order of the family; a movement characterized by a rejection of love relations, and of the type of emotional and physical bonds that are stereotypically attributed to the feminine. Hegel writes, "The family, as the immediate substantiality of spirit, has as its determination the spirit's feeling [Empfindung] of its own unity, which is love," and qualifies this statement in the following Addition:

But love is a feeling [Empfindung], that is, ethical life in its natural form. In the state, it is no longer present. There, one is conscious of unity as law; there, the content must be rational and I must know it.

It is for this very reason that the irrational female is barred from taking up a conscious form of ethical subjectivity in the community, a point elaborated succinctly by Kelly Oliver in her consideration of family relations, and their dual purpose in Hegel's system — the production of ethical duties between members of the family and, secondly, the performance of burial rituals to re-establish bonds with the community/culture — as illustrated by Hegel's discussion of Sophocles' play Antigone (441BCE) in the Phenomenology of Spirit. Oliver writes:

66 "The Family, as the unconscious, still inner Notion [of the ethical order], stands opposed to its actual, self-conscious existence; as the element of the nation itself; as the immediate being of the ethical order, it stands over against that order which shapes and maintains itself by working for the universal; the Penates stand opposed to the universal Spirit." Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, §450; 268.

67 Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right §158; 199.

68 Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right §158, Addition 199.

69 Sophocles' play narrates the story of Antigone (Oedipus' daughter) who, against the directives of King Creon, provides burial rights for her brother Polynices, deemed a traitor for his attack on Thebes. In punishment for her defiance, Creon orders Antigone to be jailed in a cave (buried alive) even though she is engaged to his own son, Haemon. After receiving counsel from the seer Teiresias, Creon changes his decision but, upon reaching the cave to free Antigone, he finds that she has hung herself, and in despair his son Haemon also takes his own life. On hearing the news of her son's death, Eurydice, Creon's wife, also takes her life. Sophocles, "Antigone," The Theban Plays, trans. E. F. Watling (London: Penguin, 1974) 126-162.
If we look closer at Hegel's text, it becomes apparent that the individual who moves into culture through this double operation of the family is always and only the male; and, the family members who do the necessary work in order for this movement to take place are always and only female.\(^7\)

This allocation and division of gender responsibilities is significant — and will be returned to — not least for its inequality and essentialism, but also, because in this form gender roles are central to the fissure inherent and internal to the family's operations that necessarily foil its pretence of unity. In the Hegelian family, only the male subjects (exemplified by the brother) move into the community; but this is not the only way in which the family relationship form is escaped and, as later discussion will examine in more detail, it is the figure of the sister — Antigone — that works the splitting of the circuit and that opens the system at the cost of her life.

The Deleuzian crystal-image is also inherently fissured, but that which exceeds it, the seed, the child is celebrated by Deleuze. In the Hegelian family two types of ethics, two laws, the divine and the human cannot be reconciled, they cannot brought into relation unless it is a relation of dominance and inequality. There is nothing that is conceded by Hegel to exceed the dialectical system he proposes, even though, while central to its operations, the natural, the feminine subjectivity is not given a valid place within it: a place from which women could claim an individual subjectivity, a self-conscious ethical subjectivity is denied. One type of ethics, the unconscious (whose working is ascribed to the feminine), is devalued because of its immersive relations; the other, the conscious ethical relation (whose working is ascribed to the masculine), is valorised because of its relation of detachment. Following the previous chapter's examination of witnessing, it is proposed that these conflicting modes of responsibility can be considered as non-oppositional through the rubric of subtle subjectivity: that an ethics of grace emerges once subjectivity becomes response-able. This ethics of grace is of, but not entirely of, both forms of ethics as proposed by Hegel. A dynamic third emerges out of the onto-ethical desire of which a subtle

subjectivity is constructed, and which forms the 'essence' of freedom and the 'foundation' in Hegelian terms of the self-conscious subject through the pneumatological relation with will. In short, the intersubjective pneumatological relation presences affect in both familial and civic relations. As previously proposed, the free will that Hegel identifies in the *Philosophy of Right* as requisite for establishing self-consciousness cannot so easily be divorced from the feminised aspects of emotion (love), desire, materiality aligned with the unconscious ethics and natural law as he contends.

Hegel's designation of the family as the "immediate substantiality of spirit" clearly imbues it with a preeminent interrelation of spirit and/as substance: "The family, as the *immediate substantiality* of spirit, has as its determination the spirit's *feeling* [*Empfindung*] of its own unity, which is *love*."\(^{71}\)

In this way it has parity with Malabou's proposition of 'plasticity' and with subtle forms of materiality. As previously discussed, Spirit has substantiality within Hegel's system as Action, with an extensive pneumatological agency in the activity of the will. It renders a form of self-conscious subjectivity possible that has the ontological qualities of the subtle subject; that is, it is simultaneously extensive matter–consciousness. It will be seen that this determination of the family's 'embodiment' of Spirit's feeling, this love, simultaneously ruptures and coheres the family's unity. In the manner of its activity, love operates in this relation as an onto–ethical desire.

There is however a layering of ruptures within Hegel's system, for not only does Antigone rupture the familial operations, but the family itself has been identified as a site of the entire System's rupture.

\(^{71}\) Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* §158;199.
Jacques Derrida examines the family's role as a between in his exposition of its location in *Elements of The Philosophy of Right* between morality (*Moralität*) and ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*). Interestingly, *Glas* — Derrida's examination of Hegel (and Jean Genet) which is comprised of two parallel columns of text (containing smaller 'windows' of quotations and references) — commences in its indirect fashion ("what, after all, of the remain(s), today, for us, here, now, of a Hegel?") with reference to Hegel's discussion on the religion of flowers from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and on phallic Indian columns from the *Aesthetics*. As Simon Critchley notes, this choice sets up "*leitmotifs*" for each text column that are elucidated more fully by the book's close. However, Critchley remains silent about the inherent gendering of the text's subject matter: it is not directly identified by him (perhaps it is just too obvious) as one of the enduring *leitmotifs* pertaining to each column. Derrida is not only setting up a dialectic between two columns of text, in so doing he also, quite obviously makes reference to a dialectic between subjects of sexual difference that mirrors the two types of ethical orders between which the family mediates and, of which it is also comprised.

In Critchley's reading of *Glas* the family is Derrida's central subject. Derrida identifies the family as both exemplifying a macrocosm of the Hegelian system, as

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75 Critchley also argues that Derrida is trying to locate within Hegel's oeuvre a "non-metaphysical moment" (as another moment of the system's rupture): "Hegel concludes that the content of essential light is 'pure being' (*das reine Seyn*); an essenceless by-play (*ein wesenlosen Beyherspielen*) in this substance which merely ascends, without descending into the depth to become a subject (*Subject zu werden*) (ibid) (Pstr 419/PS 372). Essenceless substance without subject, 'the many-named one,' that 'lacks a self' (ibid), is the thought that interests Derrida here. To express this differently, to think essenceless substance without subject is akin to thinking Being (*das Sein*) prior to its determination with regard to particular beings (*das Seiende*). Derrida asks: 'How can the self and the for-itself appear (*pour-soi*) appear?' (Gtr239a/G334a). That is to say, how can the transition from the in-itself to the for-itself that opens dialectics and history begin? How is the transition from this oriental sunrise to occidental sunset to be accomplished?' Critchley, "A Commentary Upon Derrida's Reading of Hegel in *Glas*" 217.
well as being "the sight of the system's rupture." This reading of the family has parity with the action and form of the crystal-image. Further, Derrida argues that, although love is used by Hegel to characterise the family relation, it is also central to its dissolution. Love cannot be accommodated within the bounds of dialectical logic when defined by the contrary prescriptions that Hegel attributes to it, as Derrida argues through dialogue with Hegel on love:

"The first moment in love is that I do not wish to be for me as an independent person and that, if I were, then I would feel lacking and incomplete (mangelhaft und unvollständig). The second moment is that I attain myself in another person, that I count in the other for what the other in turn attains in me."

So these two moments divide the moment of love; they divide, parcel out, work (over) the inside of the family's essential kernel. Contradiction: I do not wish to be independent; I do not wish to be what I am; I experience [ressens] autarky as a lack. But what I count for in love, the price of what I dispossess myself of is fixed by what the other finds in me. I am only as much as I count for something (ich gebe). I count for something for the other, a formula about which we would have to agree before concluding any deal [marché] whatsoever, good or bad. I speculate here, like the other, in order to derive some profit from a contract between love as narcissism and speculative dialectics.

This contradiction is unintelligible; its economy surpasses understanding; no formal logic can master or resolve it. Its actual solution does not return to the intellect (Verstand), to the instrument of a formal [formelle] analysis.

That does not entrain love in irrationality, on the contrary. Love plays, on the contrary, in the gap [écart] between understanding and reason.

Derrida's discussion focuses on Hegel's own interpretation of love as contradictory. The development of self-consciousness is reliant upon giving up a "selfish" isolation leading one to discover lacking aspects of self in "unity" with another. Love here is equated firstly, with a lack in terms of self-unity and, secondly, with a reclamation of self made possible only by unity with another. This process is complicated by Hegel's alignment of love with the family and natural law: for, to find oneself with another can only be understood to generate truly ethical self-consciousness in the realm of the state, where all is rational and knowable. However, as a feeling, love, is prohibited from this realm, it is excluded from human law and conscious ethical relations: it has, for Hegel, no place in the polis.

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77 Derrida, Glas 18.
Derrida's analysis is couched in the terms of economic exchange — reflecting the consumer relations that often dominate human (civic) law — the goods (selves) being dealt with are attributed firm borders and solid surfaces. However, with regard to self-consciousness considered within the framework of subtle subjectivity, love's effect (and affect) may not be quite so problematic with a re-conceptualisation of independence that acknowledges an inherent ontological inter-dependence with one another that is not premised on lack or subsumation. Independence would be ascribed permeable borders, and could be understood as a form of co-dependence exemplified herein in the discussion of pratītya–samatpāda. To "find myself in another person" would then simultaneously require finding myself in myself, and in the relations between (as a continual process), as well becoming acquainted with the self as necessarily 'incomplete' and meeting this vulnerability with compassion rather than shame. Such a perspective, would then have to admit the love relation — and other affective interrelations — into the civic realm, and vice versa (the rationality attributed to civic relations into the familial sphere).78

In the discussion that immediately follows the above quotation Derrida is careful not to cast love as reason's opposite. That is, he clearly outlines that it should not be categorized as irrational. In this way, it cannot be usurped back into the Hegelian system again by being aligned with natural law. For, if this was the case, it could not exceed the system as Derrida proposes: love would simply remain a factor (however devalued) that actually enables the system to continue operating. Therefore, Derrida describes love as playing in the "gap between understanding and reason." What is it that differentiates understanding from reasoning? Is it the body? Or is it Action, in which the body is clearly implicated? That is to say, is reason differentiated from understanding because it is defined as a purely abstract, mental activity, whilst understanding is this reasoning applied to the world. This gap that love then plays in, is the interval from thinking to action. Such a conceptualization further strengthens the corollary between love and Spirit (even outside the previously

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78 Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* §158; 199.
discussed pneumatological interrelations) as Spirit is expressed in the world as Action. As an active occupant of the gap, this love then, takes on the guise of desire. The associations between emotion and spirit are further evidenced in Critchley’s analysis of *Glas* which highlights the correlation of filiation with spirit: “The relation that binds the father to the son, the infinite to the finite, is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Spirit, then, is filiation, a familial relation between father and son.”

In this analysis there is a correlation of the Christian God's relation to his son (and filiation is more commonly associated with reference to a son rather than daughter) with the relation of father and son in the Hegelian family: the third operating between them — as Spirit — is clearly pneumatological and intersubjective. The material (or biological) aspect of filiation is, in this relationship, not so much the entirely immaterial (of spirit or symbolic) relation, but could — considering the previous discussion of pneumatology and the way that Spirit is worked out for Hegel in the world through Action — be considered a form of subtle matter–consciousness (of onto–ethical desire). However, Hegel was also critical of the relationship between parent and child, for he perceived that there could not be an objective return to self through this form of relation with another:

That of parents towards their children is emotionally affected by the fact that the objective reality of the relationship does not exist in them, but in the children, and by their witnessing the development in the children of an independent existence which they are unable to take back again; the independent existence of the children remains an alien reality, a reality all its own. That of children towards parents is emotionally affected, conversely, by the fact that they have derived their existence from, or have their essential being in, what is other than themselves, and passes away, and by their attaining independence and a self-consciousness of their own only by being separated from their source — a separation in which the source dries.

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80 "Filiation's etymological roots includes no distinct male gender bias: the medieval Latin, *filiatioem* meaning "of action;" or *filiare* "to give birth to." However the Latin *fili-us* designates son. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989 ed.

81 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* §456; 773-74.
The parents are unable to make the necessary reclamation of self from their children, whilst the children develop an independence entirely alien to the parents. Even for Hegel, the figure of the child symbolized an alterity sharpenly differentiated from its 'origins.' On the other hand, the child in order to fully achieve an ethical self-consciousness must necessarily leave the family unit. Hegel proposes that the most ethical of the family relationships is between the brother and sister, a relationship in which it is understood that all vestiges of desire are absent (not so that of the husband and wife, whose desire taints the child and their relation with it), and in which each person may approach one another as equals:

The brother, however, is for the sister a passive, similar being in general; the recognition of herself in him is pure and unmixed with any natural desire. In this relationship, therefore, the indifference of the particularity, and the ethical contingency of the latter, are not present; but the moment of the individual self, recognizing and being recognized, can here assert its right, because it is linked to the equilibrium of the blood and is a relation devoid of desire.

Irigaray points out that this relation of "nonviolent co-penetration" as figured by Hegel can only last for the duration of adolescence, and that the expression of sexual desire terminates its possibility.

Thus we must go back to the decisive ethical moment which saw the blow struck producing a wound that no discourse has closed simply. The harmonious relationship of brother and sister involved a (so-called) equal recognition and nonviolent co-penetration of two essences, in which femininity and masculinity achieve universality in human and divine law. But this mutual agreement was possible only for as long as adolescence lasted and neither was impelled to act. A prolongation of childhood, a kind of Eden shielded from war and blessed by the household gods. But these idyllic and because immaculate loves of childhood could not last.

Irigaray identifies the relation between brother and sister as a moment where the two laws — divine and human — harmoniously co-exist, yet she points out that this is a transitory space annullled by the process of maturity, of becoming an adult. To enable the two laws — the two subjects — to exist in harmonious relationships then corresponds to finding a way of suspending this moment of subjective development,

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82 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* §457; 775.


84 Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* 222.
which equals a termination of growth. As Farrell Krell puts it: "Antigone. A girl
under arrest. And a case of arrested development." For Hegel, adulthood was
marked by the entering into sexual relations, by the male move from the family to
state and the resulting subjugation of the feminine and natural law to the masculine
and human law that this entails. The previous discussion of witnessing — as an
embodied modality of vision that interrelated the personal and the ethical —
emphasised that intimate relations are a valid means of cultivating an ethically
conscious subjectivity for both subjects of sexual difference, whilst simultaneously
cultivating one's independence. The realm of desire and sexual relations is not the
space in which to take leave of one's capacity for conscious ethical responsibility;
and the types of perceptive skills learned therein can be applied and further
developed in wider communal and institutional relations. Such a perspective requires
acknowledging the ontological and ethical aspects of desire: as a force that leads one
towards others; that raises a curiosity capable of meeting alterity with generosity
rather than hostility; of deeply committed and attentive relations of care and
sensitivity that are not necessarily an expression of sexual desire. In this way, it is
the presence of desire rather than its absence that enables conscious ethical relations
as proposed by Hegel for surely, the relation between Antigone and Polynices can be
figured as such. Their relation is not so much devoid of desire but, rather, was not
defined by a particular type or expression of a singular desire.

The subjugation of natural law to human law that characterizes the taking up of an
adult subjectivity (the domain of men) is resisted by Antigone and, ironically this
resistance is made possible by Antigone's strict adherences to her feminine duties in
following the natural, unconscious ethical law ascribed to (and delimiting) her
subjectivity, as discussed by Tina Chanter:

Antigone subverts the rationale of the state, putting herself outside its jurisprudence by rigidly
adhering to her role within it. … She turns her subordinate role into a challenge to the status quo,
not by abandoning her feminine duty, but by sticking to it at all costs — and she pays for her
decision with her life.\footnote{Farrell Krell, "Lucinda's Shame: Hegel, Sensuous Women, and the Law" 289.}

\footnote{Chanter, \textit{Ethics of Eros} 81.}
For Derrida, the equal concurrence of the two laws identified by Irigaray as synonymous with the brother–sister relation, is the very site of the Hegelian system's rupture.

Brother and sister "do not desire one another." The for-(it)self of one does not depend on the other. So they are, it seems, two single consciousnesses that, in the Hegelian universe, relate to each other without entering into war. …

Is this possible? Does it contradict the whole system? Is one still in the natural sphere of Sittlichkeit (the family) from the moment the sexual difference seems suspended, the moment desire absents itself as well as the contrary of desire in a kind of fidelity without love? …

Unique in the system: a recognition that is not natural and yet passes through no conflict, no injury, no rape: absolute uniqueness, yet universal and without natural singularity, without immediacy; symmetrical relation that needs no reconciliation to appease itself, that does not know the horizon of war, the infinite wound, contradiction, negativity. Is that the inconceivable? What the greater logic cannot assimilate? 87

An ethics of grace proposes that the assumed clash of ethical relations between family and state (as rendered feminine and masculine) can be brought together in a relation that is neither a synthesis that smothers difference, nor a relation of hostility, of rage, or of violence. Critchley in his commentary on Derrida's reading of Hegel identifies Antigone's "impassive rage" as that which splits the system and directly designates that which escapes the bounds of the ethical relation as its femininity. 88 Interestingly, this feminine ethical relationship is characterised by Derrida as a simultaneous lack and excess of desire.

Like Hegel, we have been fascinated by Antigone, by this unbelievable relationship, this powerful liaison without desire, this immense impossible desire that could not live, capable only of overturning, paralyzing, or exceeding any system and history, of interrupting the life of the concept, of cutting off its breath, or, better, which comes down to the same thing, of supporting it from the outside or underneath a crypt. 89

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87 Derrida, *Glas* 149; 150.

88 "The figure of Antigone gazing with impassive rage at the unburied body of her brother cannot be dialectically appropriated and stands outside any attempt at assimilation. She exemplifies the femininity of the ethical relation with the other that is not based upon dialectical structures of recognition, reconciliation, and reciprocity." Critchley, "A Commentary Upon Derrida's Reading of Hegel in *Glas*" 209.

89 Derrida, *Glas* 166.
Derrida's central point is that what was excluded from the system, what it rejects, makes the system itself possible: "Isn't there always an element excluded from the system that assures the system's space of possibility?" This is a claim in accord with Irigaray's analysis that the dominant patriarchal system has been built upon and is maintained by the exclusion of an individual female subjectivity, hence her call for dual subjectivity.

In Derrida's discussion of Antigone, Critchley identifies a third ethics: the ethics of the singular. It is a prescription of ethical relations cognate with Kelly Oliver's proposition of witnessing:

Starting from Derrida's reading, I would want to argue that by exemplifying the essence of ethical life, of Sittlichkeit, Antigone marks a place ('an impossible place') within the Hegelian system where an ethics is glimpsed that is irreducible to dialectics and cognition, what I would call an ethics of the singular. Such an ethics would not be based upon the recognition of the other, which is always self-recognition, but would rather begin with the expropriation of the self in the face of the other's approach. Ethics would begin with the recognition that the other is not an object of cognition or comprehension, but precisely that which exceeds my grasp and powers.

However, rather than accept and celebrate with humility this essential inability to master the Other, to not know, Critchley delineates its "formal structure" as that which "might well be analogous to that of mourning." The loss that Critchley laments is the dominance of recognition and the myth of mastery; but surely if this leads to an ethics that does not inherently violate alterity, then it is not the work of mourning but that of birth. The rupture may lead to a collapse, or a splitting of its

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90 Derrida, *Glas* 162; quoted by Critchley as "Is there not always an element excluded from the system which assures the space of the system's possibility?" Critchley "A Commentary Upon Derrida's Reading of Hegel in *Glas* 209.

91 Critchley, "A Commentary Upon Derrida's Reading of Hegel in *Glas*" 210-211.


93 In her analysis of the gendering of religion in Western culture Grace Jantzen highlights the necrophilic symbolic in dominant Western philosophical discourse. In contra-distinction she proposes a symbolic of natality and flourishing: "The central contention of this book has been that it is urgently necessary for feminists to work towards a new religious symbolic focused on natality and flourishing rather than on death, a symbolic which will lovingly enable, natals, women and men, to become subjects, and the earth on which we live to bloom, to be 'faithful to the process of the divine which passes through' [Irigaray, [1984] (1993)* An Ethics of SexualDifference, 118] us and through the earth itself." Grace Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999) 254. This is a perspective that is
initiating form, but this does not necessarily equate with loss. As with the Deleuzian crystal–image, it could be considered as a simultaneously creative–destructive moment (in much the same way that the crystal image itself is simultaneously actual–virtual). From this perspective it would appear, then, that out of the brother–sister relation a child is actually born, a third ethics.

For Critchley, this third ethics is only glimpsed in these Hegelian relations and Derrida's analysis of them. The discussion in previous chapters has been concerned with how to turn this glimpse into a vigil — in honour of self and other — through the cultivation of perception. Critchley deems Antigone to be "the quasi-transcendental: she is both of and not of the system. Her subjectivity — which Critchley argues is symbolic of the third ethics — can also be considered as that of an 'everyday' mystic; the onto–ethical desiring angel who, through their visible–invisible constituents, enter into simultaneous relations with the discourse of the Same and what exceeds it (or cannot be presenced – even in absence – within it). Critchley's ethics of singularity is resonant with an ethics of grace, however an ethics of grace proposes witnessing as central to its practice and, as such, does not approach the Other in mourning for the loss of mastery, but in reverence and celebration for the creation and transformation that an attitude of not knowing continually brings. Neither human or divine law are subsumed by this third ethics (nor are they implicitly ascribed a gender affiliation), but a different perspective is brought to bear on their prescribed operations and interrelation that would respect their specific orientation towards different types of social relations, whilst enabling a dialogue 'between' to take place that does not implicitly subjugate one value system to the other.

cognate to that proposed by Kelly Oliver: "Within the imaginary of Western culture, the first call or invitation from an other comes from the mother. Her call is an invitation to speak, to respond. Her body opens an invitation to both sexes without descrimination. It provides the model of a discourse as a call that cannot be reduced to either biology or culture. It provides a model for an economy of exchange that is not defined by a violent struggle to the death. By acknowledging the importance of the maternal body to our collective culture and to our philosophy, philosophy becomes a subject in process; it becomes ethical; 'it becomes maternal.'" Oliver, Womanizing Nietzsche 200-201.

Antigone's death simultaneously gave birth to that which exceeded the dialectical system, to that which could not be bought under the dominant control. The inability for this 'other' to be presenced with power and agency within the dominant system in any way other than in a defiance followed by punishment and absence is central to the tragedy. An ethics of grace, resembling Critchley's ethics of the singular, proposes possibilities for sustaining relations with this alterity commencing with an acknowledgement of its visible-invisible constituents. Such a perspective requires that affect perceived through the act of witnessing be acknowledged as pertaining to the realms of both divine and human law. It requires that love's ironic intersubjective movement be conceptualized as a singularity operable between the two (two whose boundaries are permeable), and that, love is an aspect of the onto–ethical desire which this thesis has previously proposed and traced. It is not divorced from the pneumatological agency constitutive of Free Will in the Hegelian scheme: it has a subtle matter–consciousness. This perspective of love reflects a Sufi understanding of subtle anatomy as identified by Henry Corbin (as presented in chapter five): "although love is also related to the heart, the specific centre of love is in Ṣūfism generally held to be the rūḥ, pneuma, 'spirit.'" In the fluid dynamics of subtle anatomy spirit, emotion and the physical body interpenetrate: in the fluid relations of subtle responsibility, self, other and the between interpenetrate. To approach oneself and another is an aesthetic and ethical undertaking; it calls for creative vision, a vulnerable suspension of the discourse of recognition and an openness that is willing to explore rather than be terrorized by its own unknowable expanse.

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95 Corbin, Creative Imagination 221.
**Irigarian Love–Law**

Her [Antigone] law — neither simply civil nor simply religious — is not abstract or empty. It does not deal solely with the ownership of goods, but concerns respect for persons, for concrete persons, for persons who surround us: neighbors, those closest to us.  

and;

In my opinion, the major stages that need to be accomplished at this stage are:

1. Securing rights that give women a civil identity and not only a natural one.

2. A culture of sexuality and affectivity that allows perceptible social victories not to be nullified in love relationships or in the intimacy of home or the family.

3. Reciprocal recognition between man and woman, men and women, that implies using a negative that's open to the existence of two genders, two subjects. Of course, all these stages require developing languages appropriate to each one of the two genders, as well as developing a language that allows for exchanges between both.

Considered through a Hegelian framework, Carl Dreyer's film *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* [The Passion of Joan of Arc, 1928] — that portrays Jeanne d'Arc's heresy trial based upon the trial transcripts — succinctly illustrates the clash between divine (natural) and human (cultural) law that Hegel's work proposes (and presupposes). Jeanne d'Arc's immersive and mystical relationship with God is scrutinized by the church hierarchy in an effort to define its validity — or, more truthfully, their perceived lack of its credibility — within the Canon Law system. She is an adolescent female who claims to directly 'hear' God and the Angels, to have an

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96 Irigaray, *To Be Two* 77.


99 Trial records illustrate Jeanne's d'Arc's own understanding of the clash of authority: "As to the Church militant I wish to show it all the honor and reverence that I can. As for referring my deeds to the Church militant, I must needs refer them to our Lord, who caused me to do what I have done." Trask, comp. and trans., *Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words* 127.

100 It is generally recognised that Jeanne d'Arc attributed the voices she heard to St. Michael the Archangel, St. Margaret of Antioch and St. Catherine of Alexandria. For discussion of these and
immediate, intimate relation with the divine that was not mediated by State religious institutions. Jeanne's presence and voice is a powerful challenge to the dominant system.\footnote{Grace Jantzen highlights the power of the dominant religious institutions in defining what did or did not constitute Medieval Christian mystical experience, she argues: "those who held power in the ecclesiastical establishment were able to determine, whether by their articulating of a doctrine or by their control of court and the judiciary systems, who should be honoured as mystics and who should be considered demonic." Jantzen, Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism 327.}

Dreyer stated that the effect that he wanted the film to achieve was that of a "realized mysticism,"\footnote{Carl Theodor Dreyer, "Realized Mysticism [1929], The Passion of Joan of Arc, DVD brochure (Criterion, 1999) n.p.} and key to the visual communication of that effect are the close-up shots of actress Renée Falconetti's face [fig. 13], a visage racked with incomprehension. An incomprehension of the jury's inability to understand the type of relation that she had with God; with the other. Her face simultaneously 'showed' the emotion (knowledge) that seeped through the boundaries ascribed to acceptable religious experience (and relation) and the dismay, not only at the failure to have her experience acknowledged as legitimate, but at its branding as heresy: a relation of sacrilege rather than a sacred relation. This representation of Jeanne d'Arc's experience illustrates a violent meeting with alterity, from which an ethics of grace is absent. In contradistinction, the epigraph given at the opening of this section presents a series of strategies of how Irigaray proposes that relations may be established between subjects of difference, without the experiences of either party being subject to domination or subjugation, within a political, social and cultural context which, at its very core, privileges a particular form of subjectivity and relation. This final section takes up a further discussion of the love relation vis-à-vis the Hegelian division between State and Family, love and law and, following Irigaray, reconsiders the religious ideology that underpins the traditional concept of the family and relations between subjects of sexual difference in the Judeo–Christian West.

Following this, Gail Schwab's proposal for types of intervention and change that would result from the application of Irigaray's theory within the realm of "real" law is examined to illustrate its potential effects.

Fig. 13. Jeanne (Renée Falconetti), *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, 1928.
In chapter six, Jeanne's choice to face death rather than recant the truth of her relationship to the divine was referred to as following the law of her heart. There is in this phrase an assumed reference to a personal law positioned as antithetical to the communal laws regulating society. Similarly, Antigone commits suicide, knowing full well that her choice to fulfill burial rights for her exiled brother Polynices was illegal. The defiant actions of both young women give presence to an ethics that is most usually rendered 'illogical' for its inability to be understood or be reasoned within dominant discourse. Central to these experiences were the women's respect and allegiance to intimate relations. They are girls on the wrong side of the law because the bonds they embody and honour are — as previously discussed — cast as natural, familial and spiritual, rather than cultural, civic or religious (institutionalized). In the 'end,' or more correctly at their 'ends,' both women are consigned to an elemental smothering — Jeanne in flame, Antigone by the earth — as befitting persons cast as symbolic of natural law. Yet, their claims and actions highlight the question of the relation between subject and state raised by the affect of divine law: an affect that need not be rendered as alien to civic law.

The law of the heart is a crucial development for self-consciousness in Hegel's teleology, because it is at this point that self-consciousness acknowledges the plight and pleasures of others.

This individuality therefore directs its energies to getting rid of this necessity which contradicts the law of the heart, and also the suffering caused by it. And so it is no longer characterized by the levity of the previous form of self-consciousness, which only wanted the particular pleasure of the individual; on the contrary, it is the earnestness of a high purpose which seeks its pleasure in displaying the excellence of its own nature, and in promoting the welfare of mankind. What it realizes is itself the law, and its pleasure is therefore at the same time the universal pleasure of all hearts. To it the two are undivided; its pleasure is what conforms to the law, and the realization of the law of universal humanity procures for it its own particular pleasure.\(^3\)

Hence, its recognition is the birthplace of the ethical individual (not forgetting that for Hegel this individual can only be male). It is in the analysis pertaining to the dialectic of Reason that Hegel outlines this stage of subject development in a section

\(^{103}\) Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* §370; 222.
titled "The Law of the Heart and the Frenzy of Self-Conceit." The subtitle gives away the end point Hegel attributes to pursuing the law of the heart's course: in his view it leads to a self-absorbed belief in the universal truth of one's own perspective — a dangerous fanaticism — that finds the self-interest of others (their own law of the heart) abhorrent.

His deed, *qua actuality*, belongs to the universal; but its content is his own individuality which, as this particular individuality, wants to preserve itself in opposition to the universal. … Consequently, others do not find in this content the fulfillment of the law of *their* hearts, but rather that of someone else; and, precisely in accordance with the universal law that each will find in what is law *his* own heart, they turn against the reality he set up, just as he turned against theirs. This, just as the individual at first finds only the rigid law, now he finds the hearts of men themselves, opposed to his excellent intentions and detestable.\(^{105}\)

This unfortunate state of affairs is brought about because as self-consciousness becomes aware of a universal law internal to it\(^{106}\) — the law of the heart — its expression necessarily individualises this universality, pitting it against the law of other hearts as well as the laws regulating society.\(^{107}\) The law of the heart is drawn as "confronting" the "real" world, thus a schism is placed between it (the subject) and its expression. As rendered by Hegel the problem is one of passage — from self to world, from internal to external.\(^{108}\) It is little wonder, then, that to assure a smooth passage from family to state for the self-conscious subject Hegel excludes the love (intimate) relation from the latter. However, in doing so, he also excludes a particular


\(^{105}\) Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* §373; 224.

\(^{106}\) "It knows that it has the universal law immediately within itself, and because the law is immediately present in the being-for-self of consciousness, it is called the law of the heart." Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* §367; 221.

\(^{107}\) "The law of the heart, through its very realization, ceases to be to be a law of the heart. For in its realization it receives the form of an [affirmative] being, and is now a universal power for which this particular heart is a matter of indifference, so that the individual, by setting up his own ordinance, no longer finds it to be his own." Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* §372; 223.

\(^{108}\) "The heart is confronted by the real world; for in the heart the law is, in the first place, only for itself" Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* §369;221. It is also a problem of relating individualized expression of the universal law — of cultivating relations with alterity: " The consciousness which sets up the law of *its* heart therefore meets with resistance from others, because it contradicts the equally individual laws of their hearts; and these others in their resistance are doing nothing else but setting up and claiming validity for their own law." Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* §379; 227.
expression or understanding of spirituality, and this is what Jeanne d'Arc personifies. Her passion could not be accommodated within the regulatory bounds of Canon Law, because the singularity of her subjectivity was not met with grace. In discussing the inherent rupture of the Hegelian family, and the interrelation of the family and civic realms, it is necessary to reconsider the religious ideology underpinning the relations between subjects of sexual difference and the concept of the family, as identified by Irigaray:

Aller au-delà du rachat de la faute "originelle" consisterait à retrouver l'innocence de l'amour, y compris charnel, entre femme et homme. Celui-ci dans le livre de la Genèse et certains versets du Cantique des Cantiques est d'ailleurs évoqué comme ayant lieu dans la nature: hors de toute possession de biens, même pas celle de vêtements. La famille, telle que nous l'imaginons trop souvent, telle qu'elle nous est généralement présentée comme modèle religieux, serait le résultat d'une "faute" de l'humanité, et non la voie de l'accomplissement du divin dans l'homme et dans la femme.109

To go beyond buying back the "original" sin would consist of recovering innocence and love, understood as carnal, between women and men. This, in the book of Genesis and certain verses of the Song of Songs is evoked as taking place in nature: outside of all possessions, (not) even of clothes. The family, as we imagine it too often, such that it is generally presented as a religious model, would be the result of a "sin' of humanity, and not the way of the accomplishment of the divine in man and woman.

This "way" of accomplishment, is for Irigaray the "Way of Love."110 Before turning to Irigaray's prescription for the interrelation of the love and family–state relationship, it is worth noting that Hegel has also stressed the spiritual, dynamic and infinite aspects — the incommensurability — of love.

True union, or love proper, exists only between living beings who are alike in power and thus in one another's eyes living beings from every point of view; in no respect is either dead for the other…. Love neither restricts or is restricted; it is not finite at all. It is a feeling, yet not a single feeling [among other feelings].111

Here Hegel is presenting a concept of love quite different to his presentations in the *Phenomenology and Spirit* and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (as discussed in


110 This is the title of a recent text: Luce Irigaray, *The Way of Love* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002).

111 Hegel, "Love" 31.
the last section), this understanding of love stresses its active and multiplicitous nature: its inability to be bounded. This essay — "Love" — also contains a discussion of the child emerging from the love relation that posits it as "a seed of immortality," as the embodiment of God's love and the human race's futurity:

The lover who takes is not thereby made richer than the other; he is enriched indeed, but only so much as the other is. So too the giver does not make himself poorer; by giving to the other he has at the same time and to the same extent enhanced his own treasure (compare Juliet in Romeo and Juliet [ii.2.133-5 "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, My love as deep;] the more I give to thee, The more I have"). This wealth of life love acquires in the exchange of every thought, every variety of inner experience, for it seeks out differences and devises unifications ad infinitum; it turns to the whole manifold of nature in order to drink love out of every life. What in the first instance is most the individual's own is united into the whole in the lovers' touch and contact; consciousness of a separate self disappears, and all distinction between lovers is annulled. The mortal element, the body, has lost the character of separability, and a living child, a seed of immortality, of the eternally self-developing and self-generating [race], has come into existence. What has been united [in the child] is not divided again; [in love and through love] God has acted and created.112

Hegel presents the coming into being of a child as the ultimate creation of the love relation. In Hegel's trajectory of a love relation — "unity, separated opposites, reunion" — it is the child that forever signifies the unseparated aspect of the lover's relationship: "in the child their union has become unseparated."113 Irigaray is strongly critical of advocating that the arrival of a child is essential to the designation and definition of a love relationship and particularly of a family. She claims that the family should not be founded on "paternal or maternal authority" but on the love that is between "woman and man, man and woman."114 Therefore Irigaray argues that the family is founded on two, not three:

In my opinion, a family is born when two persons, most generally a man and a woman, decide to live together on a long-term basis, to "set up a home," to recover an old expression that, deep down, is beautiful.115

In the discussion of the interrelation between the spiritual and the physical, Irigaray chooses Tantric couples to exemplify the simultaneous sexual and sacred relationship

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112 Hegel, "Love" 32-33.

113 Hegel,"Love" 33.

114 Irigaray, Between East and West 110.

115 Irigaray, Between East and West 105.
as a microcosm of creative divine relations. It is worth noting that, in this description, she pointedly notes a lack of the representation of children, and excludes them from the relations of love they exemplify.

In India women and men are god together, and they create the world, including its cosmic dimension. The divine couples, whether or not it is Vishnu or Shiva, along with their lovers, are microcosms in constant economic relations with the macrocosm; the same goes for Tantrism. These couples are generally represented without children. They are lovers, and lovers of the universe.¹¹⁶

These claims are made to counter a Hegelian model of the family:

To make it begin with three is to reduce it to 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, but an already abstract and neuter naturalness that erases the physical, psychological, or legal singularity of each person.¹¹⁷

This concern for the social and legal singularity of the person is a feature of Gail Schwab's consideration of Irigaray's work in relation to contemporary American feminist legal studies.

One of her [Irigaray] main criticisms of the law as it is practiced is its lack of focus on life as it is lived by human beings. The first law, the fundamental right to be protected by law is the right to one's own life, to one's own identity — which in Irigarayan terms always means a sexed identity — and includes the right to maintain control over this life and sexed identity.¹¹⁸

This highlights the paradox of Irigaray's position: she embraces a deeply founded essentialism in order to evidence a subject of singularity. Schwab is concerned with the applicability of Irigaray's theories to contemporary legislature, on "how to" translate the theory into 'real' law. Such a concern is also critical to the ethics of grace proposed here (albeit that the full exploration it requires far escapes the scope of this research project) and Irigaray's propositions coupled with Schwab's analysis, give at least an indication that such an undertaking is possible.

¹¹⁶ Irigaray, Between East and West 29.

¹¹⁷ Irigaray, Between East and West 105.

Schwab begins with an examination of the contentious interpretations and uses of the term "equality,"119 citing the dangers of its application based solely on the interpretation of the concept as numerical parity that leads to an annulment of difference:

If true equality is not after all just a numbers game, would it not be better to begin to address legal issues in the context(s) of women's actual lives and experiences before making the assumption that parity will establish women as full members of society, that parity is indeed equality?120

Schwab further contends that this danger is usefully negotiated through application of the Irigarian concept of "equivalence:"

Equivalence as a principle moves beyond the sameness implicit in the concept of equality, and recognizes the importance of multiplicity and variety in human experience and life in general. It constructs difference positively, rather than claiming to construct it neutrally while in actuality constructing it negatively.121

This call for equivalent rights (rather than equal rights) dislodges the recourse to the discourse of the Same: the assumption of a dominant subject as the 'norm' against which the subjects of difference's equality (or lack thereof) is then measured. Schwab argues for retaining the term equality as an ideal, whilst seeking applicable ways to legislate "equivalence" wherein difference is perceived positively and not as a deviation from the norm.122

As with her proposal for the re-foundation of the family on the two subjects of sexual difference, Irigaray advocates the entire revision of the Western legal system in respect to these two subjects.

119 "The ideological fault line separating feminist 'assimilationists' and feminists of difference tends to fracture precisely on the word 'equality.'" Schwab, "Women and the Law in Irigarayan Theory" 149.

120 Schwab, "Women and the Law in Irigarayan Theory" 149.

121 Schwab, "Women and the Law in Irigarayan Theory" 152.

122 Schwab is also aware of the critiques of Irigaray's project by feminist legal scholars Martha Minow, Angela Harris, Patricia Cain and Kimberle Crenshaw, who express understandable reservations about any one single perspective on women's — "in this case that of the white, French, upper-middle-class, highly educated, intellectual, feminist elite" — as being appropriate for all women. Schwab, "Women and the Law in Irigarayan Theory" 148.
In my opinion defining special laws for women is still one of the primary duties of a democratic government. But not all of today's "feminists" share this point of view. They often fear the law as something that could subject them to the State, without understanding that civil rights specific to the persons actually represent a possibility for male and female citizens to maintain an autonomy and a tension in relation to State institutions. Too many women forget that for a subjective growth, especially one that's collective, mediations are necessary, including judicial mediations.¹²³

Further, and similar to her critique of the family, Irigaray also identifies a religious model as underpinning the dominant form of legal discourse that requires alteration to enable equivalence. In particular, it is the initiating clause "Thou shalt not" of the Judaeo–Christian Ten Commandments that she identifies as prefiguring civic law as a discourse of negation, as Schwab notes:

the penal code has remained at the very primitive, almost tribal level of the divine precept "Thou shalt not kill." … The Law has never established positive laws that would actually affirm and protect life, in women, in men, in children, in animals, in nature in general. In many ways the Ten Commandments still constitute the core of our theoretical thinking here.¹²⁴

As an example of how a positive jurisprudence could operate, Schwab considers Irigaray's proposition of "virginity" in the context of rape allegations made by women against men. For Irigaray, virginity is not a term to designate the state of the physical hymen — whether the woman has or not experienced sexual penetration — but, rather, is a term that can be used to designate a girl or woman's right to their own integral identity in both private and public spheres of life.¹²⁵ It is considered as a right to "corporeal integrity, an integrity which is non-negotiable by her father, family, husband, state or religion."¹²⁶ That is, the right to a singular existence grounded in one's corporeality and individual identity. For Irigaray, this right to virginity is also a spiritual undertaking:

¹²³ Irigaray, "Different From You/Different Between Us" [1993], Why Different? 83.

¹²⁴ Schwab, "Women and the Law in Irigarayan Theory" 162-163. Although Schwab's use of the term "primitive" here does itself need revision, because it carries the assumption that the systems for social regulation within tribal cultures are necessarily inadequate, and that these cultures are less developed than that of a 'civilised' Western culture.


¹²⁶ Schwab, "Women and the Law in Irigarayan Theory" 165.
This meaning of the word "virgin" is to be distinguished then from the assimilation of virginity to the conservation or non-conservation of a corporeal hymen. It is a question of becoming spiritual aiming at the maintenance of the integrity of self and of the other in becoming proper (le devenir proper) and in becoming common (le devenir commun). 127

Schwab's analysis of the implications of the "right to virginity" presents women as having an independent subjectivity within the domain of civic law — "Virginity, constituted as a woman's right to the maintenance of her own identity, would allow women to bring charges against anyone who threatened it" 128 — and she illustrates this point by reflecting on Irigaray's concern that the female subject be given the right to exist in public spaces without intimidation or fear caused by the threat of potential violence. Further, she utilizes Susan Estrich's discussion of "real rape," to illustrate how a "right to virginity" renders all types of rape as "real." Estrich emphasises that the majority of rape cases deviate from the clearly criminal "traditional" form of abduction by a stranger and "forced intercourse" and that these deviations are not as likely to be acknowledged as crimes, that they are not considered to be "real rape." She exemplifies the deviations as follows:

Where less force is used or no physical injury is inflicted, where threats are inarticulate, where the two know each other, where the setting is not an alley but a bedroom, where the initial contact was not a kidnapping but a date, where the woman says no but does not fight, the understanding is different. In such cases, the law ... often tells us that no crime has taken place and that the fault, if any is to be recognized, belongs to the woman. 129

The right to virginity claims Schwab, would more clearly enable the identification of such acts as "real" rape. The reference to inarticulate threats by Estrich highlights the affective aspects of such crime: it draws the 'silent' affectivity usually associated with natural law more clearly into the civic realm (and vice versa). For Schwab, the value in Irigaray's concept is the way in which it articulates the female position rather than that of an assumed neuter perspective that is founded on male experience, and it is this that she identifies as pointing "the way toward a totally new

127 Irigaray, "Thinking Life as Relation" [1996], Why Different? 159.
128 Schwab, "Women and the Law in Irigarayan Theory" 165.
relationship between women and the law." Intersubjectivity is crucial to this relationship, and the concept of subjective integrity that the "right to virginity" proposes. To attribute "corporeal integrity" to a subject is not necessarily antithetical to conceptualizing the subject as subtle. The interrelation that posits this intersubjectivity is love, and in Irigaray's rendering it is not distinct from civic law. It operates as a third — like desire in *To Be Two* — that both separates and intimately interrelates the subjects.

It is the separate corporeal integrity and bodily identities of the two partners in the love relation that guaranteed what Irigaray calls the "space of love," .... Without the inviolability of both partners, the love relation is either mutual exploitation and domination or exploitation and domination of one by the other. Love relations moved to a new ethical plane would break the hold over women held by traditional narratives of romance, and nourish the growth of a true intersubjectivity between two different selves in the space of love. 131

The claim for inviolability in this context is very pertinent. From the perspective of subtle subjectivity, "corporeal integrity" is inclusive of vulnerability, of being intimately open to alterity, of one and another's mystery. This proposition of subjectivity in its vulnerability activates the spiritual ascriptions to the meaning of inviolability — "to be kept sacredly free from profanation."132 That is, the right of the subject to maintain their integrity in relation to violence of any type, including affective, which would include, considering the Jeanne d'Arc example, the right to defining one's own sacred (spiritual) identity and relations. As previously discussed, from the position of a subtle subject, this is achieved through the acknowledgement and acceptance of one's radical openness and unknown extensiveness made conscious by the cultivation of perception — of relations of simultaneous detachment-immersion. The responsibility for subjective integrity becomes grounded in one's own capacity for response-ability.

130 Schwab, "Women and the Law in Irigarayan Theory" 167.

131 Schwab, "Women and the Law in Irigarayan Theory" 167.

According to Schwab, relations between subjects are inadequately "mediated" in current law. She contends that the law is based primarily on the relations between persons and objects, and that the revision Irigaray calls for is also a call for a "different law" that accommodates to a greater extent, intersubjective relations.\textsuperscript{133} The corporeal integrity central to intersubjective relations that Irigaray proposes relies upon the limits that difference posits, the boundary of mystery that calls for the surrendering of mastery: "My interiority, my intention, remains my own in spite of the crowd. This interiority of mine safeguards my mystery as your interiority leaves you a mystery for me."\textsuperscript{134}

This intersubjective exchange is the same in the civic, as it is in the familial, sphere. From the perspective of an ethics of grace, it is difficult to conceptualise this interrelation without the mediating third — the child — which Irigaray seeks to erase from the family, but that nevertheless remains symbolically as the 'of and not of' relations between dual subjects (and dual-laws). It is in Irigaray's recent work \textit{The Way of Love}, a decade after \textit{To Be Two}'s original publication, that she acknowledges that the relations between two subjects of radical difference must necessarily posits a third (albeit she does not clearly attribute to it an ontological singularity\textsuperscript{135}): "This never a completeness of the One, but constitution of two worlds open and in relation with one another, and which give birth to a third world as work in common and space-time to be shared."\textsuperscript{136}

Irigaray recognizes a birth, but she is reluctant to say child, as "that third which arises and grows from the two and which too quickly and to its detriment, is

\textsuperscript{133} Schwab, "Women and the Law in Irigarayan Theory" 173-174.

\textsuperscript{134} Irigaray, \textit{To Be Two} 37.

\textsuperscript{135} "This distance is never covered, always to be passed through, and even to be started anew. And the gap has to be maintained. The transcendence between us, this one which is fecund in graces and in words requires an interval, it engenders it also. The space will be more or less left in its elemental form, the air, or will be more or less woven from the flesh of the one or other, and from flesh generated by the encounter." Irigaray, \textit{The Way of Love} 66.

\textsuperscript{136} Irigaray, \textit{The Way of Love} 10.
assimilated to a child." The birth she acknowledges is however akin to onto-ethical desire. Irigaray's "way of love" is attributed a simultaneously separate but interrelated relation to the dual subjects, and this chapter has considered an extension of this intersubjective relation in the elision of a impenetrable boundary between law and love, the state and the family so sharply separated by Hegel.

**Conclusion: A Child's Grace**

There is a long tradition of opposition between the precisely worded law and the silent spirit of grace, one which we find already at work in the writings of John: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth come through Jesus Christ." And Paul: "Law intruded into this process to multiply law-breaking. But where sin was thus multiplied, grace immeasurably exceeded it." (And grace, displaying the character of silence, always exceeds immeasurably, while time is measured out by speaking) ....

Grace as an open, silent space always entails chance and uncertainty.

This chapter sought out a nine-headed hydra: Hegel (and the three by three craniums is an apt numerical association for the ternary enthusiast). The work of Bergson, Deleuze and Irigaray is much more conducive to a consideration of subtle subjectivity, ontological desire and the interrelation of aesthetics and ethics than that of Hegel, whose predilection is for clearly staged teleological development emerging from identifiable and bounded dialectical oscillations. This foray has in no way attempted to be conclusive, but rather sought an avenue, an interval where subtle subjects may play and where a subtle responsibility may emerge amongst the manifestations of Spirit and the working of desire in his system. Through the inclusion of Gail Schwab's analysis, this chapter has also sought to exemplify the potential of subtle responsibility's application in 'real' terms.

The cultivation of subtle responsibility is what enables a 'move' outside the Deleuzian crystal circuit and, similarly, away from the Hegelian 'family,' and the oppressive ethical relations that designate its scope and place, whilst also allowing

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137 Irigaray, *The Way of Love* 149.

the family to be considered as a domain in which conscious ethical relations are
established, thus drawing the civic as internal to its operations and vice verse.

Grace highlights a mode of relationship that is neither naive nor blind nor dependent
upon certain criteria. To acknowledge something — person, process, event — as
being necessarily beyond one's mastery and accepting its manifestation is to abide by
law(s) of singularity; laws of desiring angels. Hegel speaks of two types of singular
law but not a law for the singular (that would necessarily be plural). Irigaray
critiques the singularity of law and proposes a model for conceiving a specifically
female subjectivity within its bounds that requires accommodation of the natural
(divine) law that is excluded from civic law in Hegel's system. The laws of desiring
angels, premised upon onto–ethical desire — the constituents of subtle subjectivity
— presents natural and human law as necessarily interpenetrating one another, like
the actual–virtual circuit of the Deleuzian crystal image.

To return to a consideration of the crystal-image as a form of relation (chapter six)
and in light of the previous discussion of how its forms echoes the relations of the
Hegelian family, it is useful to briefly note Peter Canning's attack against discourses
of morality — as implicit in the dominant discourse of representation — through his
reading of Deleuze's "cinematic cosmology." Canning argues that the immanent
properties and creative agencies of Deleuze's images — and in particular the crystal-
image — requires a particular mode of perception–interrelation; that they can only be
witnessed: "An uncanny image cannot be understood or acted on, only
witnessed."¹³⁹ This, for Canning, is an ethics of the cinema. The request for this
mode of perception (simultaneously aesthetic–ethical) is engendered by the image's
own generative capacities. An ethics of grace results from a similar call in the realm of
the familial–communal relations, the results of its generative capacities — emerging
from intersubjective relations — also require the cultivation of witnessing.

¹³⁹ Peter Canning, "The Imagination of Immanence. An Ethics of Cinema," The Brain is the Screen.
Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema, ed. Gregory Flaxman (Minneapolis and London: University
When we meet another being, we begin to experiment with our relations and create possibilities together. This creation of possibility is an aesthetic act, an experiment in vibration, resonance, composition of affects (mutual synthesis of powers).\textsuperscript{140}

The rupture of the crystal-image, and of the Hegelian family relations, is the call to take responsibility for the "child," the new that they generate, which simultaneously requires becoming response-able oneself. To take up this responsibility is to become acutely aware of one's own and another's vulnerability, of one's Angelic subtle subjecitivity, and to meet this radical openness with grace.

\textsuperscript{140} Canning, "The Imagination of Immanence: An Ethics of Cinema" 351-352.
Conclusion
Figure 14. "Temperance" Tarot of Marseilles (known as French and Italian) Deck

Figure 15. "Temperance" Albano–Waite Deck
Conclusion: The Angelic Ternary

The Angel has no proper place, but for this reason it is the necessary figure of the instant that brings to a standstill the arrow of time, that interrupts the continuum.¹

the absolutely inaccessible other is, above all, here and now between us.²

The fourteenth card of the Tarot — Temperance — depicts an Angel undertaking the work of transfiguration. In the popular French and Italian decks a female Angel is rendered pouring water almost horizontally between two jugs [fig. 14]³; in the Albano–Waite deck⁴ the Angel holds a ball of flame in one hand while pouring water from a jug into a stream with the other [fig. 15]. As Fred Gettings writes, both images illustrate the alchemical conjunctio oppositorum: the conjunction of opposites.⁵ The esoteric meanings attributed to this card are focused on the creative negotiation of difference. This is symbolised in the French/Italian image by the two different colours of the jugs: one is blue, the other red. With regard to the Albano–Waite deck, difference is symbolised by the two elemental forces the Angel holds in either hand: fire and water. At first glance the meaning of the harmonious synthesis of divergent materials is evident.

However, the Angel of Temperance also symbolises the new that emerges out of that conjunction: that the meeting of difference is a ternary relation. In this aspect, the term conjunction or synthesis does not retain a sense of subsumption, or the seamless incorporation of difference into a homogenous whole. It is, rather, closer to its use in astrological nomenclature where the conjunction of two planets signifies their direct meeting at the same point of the zodiac, an event that is understood to

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² Irigaray, To Be Two 43.

³ Lee Irwin identifies this Angel as Archangel Michael, however, this Angel is usually depicted with a sword. Irwin, Gnostic Tarot 270.

⁴ This Tarot deck is based on the set developed by Pamela Colman Smith and Arthur Edward Waite.

generate a blending of celestial energies: the emergence of a third 'force,' that does not erase either planet's effective autonomy. This perspective of conjunction, of synthesis, is a central point that has emerged in this thesis' consideration of subtle subjectivity: the meeting of inherently extensive and open subjects is a generative encounter beyond the incorporation of either. This is not a dialectical relation in the Hegelian sense; that is, its movement does not require the domination of one subject by another, and the resulting third does not subsume or erase the validity of either of its generating forces (subjects); rather, it is closer to that of the Deleuzian whole as an open totality.

What is the message of the Angel with two wings, in the red and blue robe, holding two vases, one red and one blue, and making water gush in a mysterious way from one to the other? Is he [sic] not only the one who bears the good news that beyond the duality of "either-or" there is — or is possible — still that of "not-only-but also" or "both-and."? Does not the totality of the Card, the Angel of the Card, suggest the problem of cooperating polarity, or integrated duality? Does it not first of all suggest the presentiment or suspicion that perhaps it is thanks to the wings, the two arms, the two colours of the robe, the two vases, that the water pours forth? … that this water is the fruit and the gift of the "both-and" of integrated duality, which jumps to one's attention as one looks at the Card?

The third that has been considered as arising out of this encounter, has been rendered herein as an onto-ethical form of desire that is synonymous with a diachronic form of time. When Irigaray turns to address the third that emerges between an encounter of subjects of difference (it is not directly delineated as a separate 'world' until The Way of Love) she designates it as a place (as a "real") between "subjective" and "objective," a third she identifies as built equally by both subjects. However, she

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6 The card Temperance has been allocated various astrological assignations, including Virgo and Sagittarius, the latter being the most common. See Gettings, Fate and Prediction 224; Amber Jayanti, Living the Tarot, Wordsworth Reference (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 2000) 271-272.

7 Deleuze predominantly refers to cinema (and specifically the movement-image) to illustrate his concept of the open whole: "The idea of an open totality has a specifically cinematic sense. Because when images move, then by linking up with one another they’re internalized in a whole, which is itself externalized in the linked images. … The model of the whole, of an open totality, presupposes that there are incommeasurable relations or rational cuts between images, in the image itself, and between image and whole. This is the very condition for there being an open totality…" Deleuze, Negotiations 63.


9 Irigaray, The Way of Love 9; 18-19. Irigaray does specifically write about the significance of the third earlier in An Ethics of Sexual Difference: "It is moreover a danger if no third term exists. … This third term can occur within the one who contains as a relation of the latter to his or her own limit(s): relation to the divine, to death, to the social, to the cosmic. If a third term does not exist
also designates it as a place that is "first of all nature" which amounts to an attribution of this place to the stereotypical and essentialised feminine: "This interval — and this medium — is first of all nature, as it remains left to itself: air, water, earth, and sun, as fire and light."^{10}

This rendering raises the question of where, and how nature is "left to itself," for the various elemental aspects identified by Irigaray are, in the experience of life, intermingled with each other. Although her further definitions of the interval (the shared third) resonate with a Deleuzian perspective (as a specific form of space–time),^{11} this elemental ascription, and what amounts to a call for a type of 'pure' space, does not easily suit an understanding of the third (the between) as being generated by two subjects, who in themselves can make no claim to elemental purity. Nor does it adequately meet her own designation of it as being comprised of "air" and the "flesh" of the subjects involved: "This space will be more or less left in its elemental form, the air, or will be more or less woven from the flesh of the one or the other, and from flesh generated by the encounter."^{12}

It is unclear, how this air — previously identified as pneumatological — or flesh can be precisely delineated from the cultural, from the social. This thesis has argued for the consideration of this third, of the interval, as simultaneously natural and cultural, as it is comprised of the simultaneously intimate and detached relations of subtle matter–consciousness. It has sought to develop the argument that this space between — because of its inherent interrelation with difference — is the responsibility of each of the subjects to consciously cultivate, and further, that in

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^{10} Irigaray, The Way of Love 19.

^{11} Irigaray, The Way of Love 19.

^{12} Irigaray, The Way of Love 66. This also seems contradictory considering Irigaray's discussion of relations in I Love To You: "The oeuvre of human incarnation thus becomes the locus for the dialectic's becoming. It is realized between nature and culture without forsaking one pole to the advantage of the other." Irigaray, I Love To You 144.
doing so, they enable not only respectful dialogue with the Other, but also with oneself.

Such a practice can also be considered as one of temperance, but not in the more usual sense of restraining desire (or alcohol consumption) — as chapter eight sought to propose, desire can be enjoyed, expressed and cultivated for simultaneously aesthetic and ethical purpose — but in the senses that emerge from its etymological roots "temper" and "tempere." This includes the meanings of mixing together and combining; "to cure, heal, refresh;" and significantly in this context, to both soften and harden: to temper steel is to soften it over flame and then to quickly harden it by immersing it in water (the very elements in the hands of the Albano–Waite Angel). To enter into relations of subtle subjectivity — being conscious of the third — is to both acknowledge one's extensive boundaries — one's soft edges — and to acknowledge the hard edge of the unknowable, the mystery which this nebulous matter–consciousness interpenetrates. It is these hard edges that call for the surrendering of discourses of mastery and recognition and for the cultivation of witnessing.

Entering into a practice of witnessing takes time — also a meaning of tempere: to take time — and the Angel of Temperance requests a similar type of contemplative attitude developed through a continual practice for the careful consideration and appreciation of the blend it is performing. For the card carries yet another meaning, which is to be tested: it can signal a time of travail that requires great skill and sensitivity to be harmoniously negotiated.

In the Fourteenth Portal we are constantly being tested. In fact, throughout this interaction of Fire on Water and Water on Fire, the ancients express its dynamics in a double pun: Our "metal" is being "tempered" along with our "mettle."13


14 Sterling, *Tarot Awareness* 146.
The cultivation of "response-ability," of simultaneously aesthetic–ethical relations with respect for difference is an often extremely difficult task. It continuously calls into question the limits of our knowledge, of our expression, of our very selves. In so doing it requests the subject to suspend judgment of others, to allow them to speak in a discourse and with reasoning which is perhaps foreign and confusing, and to meet such alterity not only with compassion, but also with a commitment towards sustaining those relations that are confrontational, rather than terminating or avoiding them (whilst maintaining our own subjective integrity). The Angel of Temperance is in the process of producing the alchemical "work," and this card signifies a mutual state of activity–passivity; of simultaneous contemplation and action. It is to be patient and accommodating whilst concurrently exploring and questioning. Further, it is to recognise the possibility of incomplete wholes (crystal–images), through which relations with alterity may be established: "This infancy of the Angel produces lucida intervalla (clear intervals): holes, ruptures, tears in the apparent continuum of Time–Kronos."¹⁵

In this relation between two that is a three — the relation that calls for suspension and creates ontological intervals — there is the mutual concurrence of synthesis and diachrony that permits singularity. It is a dynamic unity that is multiplicitous, that is fissured but not wounded. The figure of the Angel is concurrently the figure of the child.

**Taking Wing**

They [angel's wings] express the desire to bear the sense of touch further …. They are *active extensions* of the passive and receptive sense of touch which is spread out over the surface of the organism. In making use of them, the sense of touch makes "excursions" from its usual orbit circumscribed by skin which covers the body.¹⁶

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¹⁵ Cacciari, *The Necessary Angel* 27.

¹⁶ Anonymous [Tomberg], *Meditations on the Tarot* 381.
[Valentin Tomberg] proposes the wings of the Angel on the Temperance card as synonymous with the subtle body, he identifies them as its organs comprised of "currents of vital and psychic forces."17 [Tomberg] proposes that it is the Guardian Angel's role to make up for the human's inability to perceive invisible relations (he argues that this was a skill humans lost as a result of "original sin"), that the angel is "the clairvoyant helping the non-clairvoyant."18 It is in this sense that wings are an extension of touch for sensing the ephemeral. The subtle form of subjectivity examined herein incorporates this role ascribed to the Guardian Angel. It has been argued that the cultivation of subtle bodies, their apprehension and conscious utilisation requires the development of perceptive skills attuned to affective and energetic relations. It is these relations that both substantially comprise subtle subjects and enable their relation with others. This form of perception is understood to involve the whole physical body as a sensate matrix, a schema that does not divorce the mind from the body, or feeling from thought. Although the type of aesthetic relation discussed herein has called for a suspension of judgment based on a priori knowledge, and/or discourses of representation in favour of contemplative consideration that enters into a subtle, temporal, affective dialogue with the 'object,' it has not advocated an approach that is 'unthinking.' Rather, it has attempted to proffer ways in which the unthought and the invisible can be thought–experienced without erasing or compromising alterity. This presentation of that which exceeds the five senses is for Massimo Cacciari the hallmark of angelic communication: "The form of angelic communication differ in principle from those of sensible apprehension and sight. The Angel witnesses the mystery as mystery, transmits the invisible as invisible ...."19

17 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 382.
18 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 381.
19 Cacciari, The Necessary Angel 3. Cacciari argues that angelic communication can only be "intuited sola mente (only by the mind)." If he is using a conventional concept of the mind as distinct from the body, then this proposition is antithetical to the perspective of subtle bodies.
In a further corollary of the act of witnessing and the angel, Peter Lamborn Wilson notes that out of the traditions generated by Ibn 'Arabi's Šūfism were accounts of Šūfis, who:

trained their active imaginations to transmute, through the power of Love, a living human being into a Guardian Angel. Such a beloved was called 'the Witness,' not only because his or her human beauty might 'bear witness' or testify to the Divine Beauty, but also because through the Beloved the lover might witness all of reality.²⁰

This "all of reality" is inclusive of the 'invisible' realms of subtle substance. Esoteric literature contains many examples of an interrelationship — a correspondence in an esoteric sense — between Angels and subtle bodies. Deghaye discussing Jacob Boehme's system identifies this as a shared celestial corporeality and spiritual materiality:

Boehme discusses at length the creation of the angelic spirits, their function in the core of divine nature, their life, their different categories, their relationships with us. "The angel puts the divine name into language" (p. 25) [Bernard Gorceix, "L'Ange et l'homme en Allemagne au XVIIe siècle," Recherches germaniques, Strasbourg, Université des sciences humaines, no.7, 1977]. This relationship of the angel to God, and the angel to Man, introduces here, once again, the theme of celestial corporeality, of spiritual materiality that, from Paracelsus to Saint-Martin and including Caspar Schwenckfeld and Valentin Weigel, remains one of the principle components of theosophical mediation.²¹

The cultivation of a creative theosophic vision — capable of apprehending invisible, subtle subjects — has been identified herein as useful for the development of an ability to witness. Mundus imaginalis, the imaginal world is a non-location built by an extensive form of embodiment (radically synaesthetic) — like the third that mediates between subjects — with its 'own' creative agency from which emerges the new. Cacciari considers this non-location as the specific realm of Angels: "The dimension of the Angel is ou-topic. Its place the Land-of-no-where, the mundus imaginalis, whose fourth dimension (axis) lies beyond the sphere that delineates the axes of the visible cosmos."²²


²² Cacciari, The Necessary Angel 1.
As the Greek etymology of Angel (angelos) demonstrates, Angels are messengers who in the Judaeo-Christian tradition belong neither wholly in heaven nor on earth.\textsuperscript{23} Their realm is that of the processural between. This aspect of the angelic is also an attribute of the Western archetypal messenger Hermes–Mercury — "the god between"\textsuperscript{24} — whose ability to move between the material and the spiritual, between the human and the divine is symbolized by his winged feet.\textsuperscript{25} Hermes Trismegistus, the equivalent of a "patron saint" for esoteric spirituality (including occult sciences) possesses many of the qualities ascribed to Hermes–Mercury (and Esotericism itself can be considered as a mediating discipline between the Eastern and Western religious traditions):

mobility, mutability (eclecticism), discourse interpretation (hermeneutics), the function of crossroads (tolerance, irenicism). Most importantly, it seems, is this role of the middle term, held by both figures: Mercury holds the equilibrium between Apollo and Dionysus, while Trismegistus is the catalyst for the union of reason and inspiration, the logos and the Sibyls, history and myth.\textsuperscript{26}

Subtle subjects are also engaged in the mercurial activities (listed above) that Angels share with Hermes–Mercury and Hermes–Trismegistus. As this research has sought to illustrate, developing an awareness of the subtle body requires 'playing' in the 'between:' renegotiating dualisms at the heart of Western discourse and endeavoring to utilise diverse knowledges and practices in ways that do not position them as antithetical to one another, whilst ensuring respect for their difference. Thus, subtle subjectivity as a form of 'everyday' mysticism fuses the Apollonian and Dionysian (perhaps best exemplified in the previous discussion of Tantric relations). The union of reason and inspiration is a feature of the renegotiation of the Hegelian dialectic,


\textsuperscript{25} Hermes, the Greek counterpart of the Roman Mercury is the son of Zeus and Maia. His figure is associated with the mythological archetypes of the Eternal Child, the Trickster, the Healer, the Alchemist, the Traveller (soul-guide), the Shaman, and the Rapist. Edis, *The God Between* 18.

\textsuperscript{26} Antoine Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes: From Greek God to Alchemical Magus* (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1995) 104-105.
which takes into account the will's pneumatology — the term inspiration coming from the Latin "to draw in breath" and to "breath into" — and proposes embodied thought–feeling and psychic (including affective) responsibility.

[Tomberg] identifies the Angel's two wings — defined as "semi-organic" — as methods of contact with two types of knowledge. One with "divine understanding" or the "contemplative" aspect of the divine, the other with "divine memory/imagination" or the "creative" as aspects of the divine. Significantly, his perspective on wings incorporates the onto–ethical aspects of desire as constitutive of subtle subjectivity, for he considers them as "an exteriorized will — a will become organ." The role of this will — akin with the Hegelian conceptualization previously explored — is a pneumatological relation that is both vertical and horizontal, central to intersubjective relations with other subjects and the divine: "an exteriorized will — a will become organ. This is the will to go out from the usual orbit not only in the horizontal but also in the vertical, not only to bear touch forward, but also to bear it above." A similar type of intertwining of transcendent and immanent relations is as aspect of Irigaray's proposition of horizontal transcendence, in which cultivating relations with another subject incorporates cultivating relations with the mystery of one's own divinity and with the wider universe: "Between us is created a field of life's vibrations intersected with those of the universe. United to the earth and to the sky, we are supported by our horizontality, sustained by it, by us."

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27 The Hegelian will itself is an expression of simultaneity: of the concurrence of determinacy and indeterminacy.


30 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 382.

31 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 381-382.

32 Irigaray, To Be Two 14.
Therefore a central quality of an angelic subjectivity — a subtle subjectivity — is the cultivation and use of perceptive skills 'beyond' (but also incorporating) the five senses, which results in an extension of agency, an extension of embodiment: "to go out from the usual orbit." The cultivation of angelic, theosophic 'vision,' results not only in a heightened awareness of (and immersion in) sensation–embodiment, but also of one's wings: of one's subtle body. In comprehending this aesthetic intersubjectivity, the subject takes up the Angel of Temperance's stance on the Albano–Waite deck [fig. 15]; with one foot in the stream and the other on dry land they mediate and synthesise between the known–unknown, presence–absence, visible–invisible. This is not only an act of apprehension, but a mediation that is simultaneously creation.

**Mysticism and the Power of Subtle Subjects**

They [Angels] do not see God; they are united to him substantially.

In [Tomberg's] Hermetic Christian figuration, mysticism is the experience of legitimate two-foldness — the meeting of two substances — and of a single essence: "The essence of pure mysticism is creative activity." This description mirrors the relation of two that is three as explored in this thesis and summarized above. This research has argued that developing a relation with one's subtle bodies, the perceptive cultivation this entails, is a form of everyday mysticism. That is, a relation with radical alterity (whether figured as another subject or the divine) is premised on a form of mysticism characterised by affective intersubjectivity and the development of perceptive sensitivity, rather, than the stereotypical hysterical form of mysticism that envelopes the subject in throes of bliss or terror. Central to a

33 Anonymous [Tomberg], *Meditations on the Tarot* 382.
34 Anonymous [Tomberg], *Meditations on the Tarot* 378.
35 Anonymous [Tomberg], *Meditations on the Tarot* 36.
36 Anonymous [Tomberg], *Meditations on the Tarot* 40.
practice of 'everyday' mysticism are love relations. This love is rendered by Henry Corbin in his analysis of Ibn 'Arabi's Šūfism as "the angelic function of beings."

Thus the experience of mystic love, which is a conjunction (… "conspiration") of the spiritual and the physical, implies that imaginative Energy, or creative Imagination, the theory of which plays so large a part in the visionary experience of Ibn 'Arabi. As an organ of the transmutation of the sensible, it has the power to manifest the "angelic function of beings." 37

Interestingly, Corbin calls this meeting of the physical and spiritual a "conspiration:" a simultaneous act of co-breathing and co-inspiration. For Corbin the very relation between the physical and the spiritual as "the theophanic vision of the divine and the human" is mystic love. 38 [Tomberg] is of a similar opinion, and argues that two is the number of love:

Two … is the number of love or the fundamental condition of love which it necessarily presupposes and postulates … because love is inconceivable without the Lover and the Loved, with ME [sic] and You, without One and the Other. 39

Thus the outer characteristic of those who choose the other mystical way, that of the God of love, is that they have the “gift of tears.” This is in keeping with the very essence of their mystical experience. Their union with the Divine is not the absorption of their being by Divine Being, but rather the experience of the breath of Divine Love, the illumination by Divine Love, and the warmth of Divine Love … This is the experience of ‘legitimate twofoldness” or the union of two separate substances in one sole essence. The substances remain separate as long as they are bereft of that which is most precious in all existence: free alliance in love. 40

Central to the practice of everyday mysticism is the love relation, which has been explicated herein as a modality of perception and "response-ability" that is simultaneously aesthetic and ethical. It incorporates a consciousness of one's own and another's affective expression and calls for a form of psychic responsibility in which one chooses to — through perceptive cultivation techniques — gain a greater ability to apprehend and effect their own affective expression. Paradoxically, as has also been outlined herein, this requires an acceptance of one's inability to know or master the entirety of self and Other. The term 'love' in this usage and context

37 Corbin, Creative Imagination 155.
38 Corbin, Creative Imagination 135.
39 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 33.
40 Anonymous [Tomberg], Meditations on the Tarot 36.
Therefore becomes synonymous with onto-ethical desire as proposed and explored herein.\(^{41}\) It operates a mediating, generating 'activity' between the two, it constitutes the invisible third: "To foster growth in difference: tender happiness. This grace flickers across my lips, my heart, my thoughts. I love you upon the threshold of this permanent alterity, offered to my attentive senses and spirit."\(^{42}\)

Just as love is understood to mediate between subjects, it is also understood as mediating between the divine and the human, and in fact in Irigaray's and Tantric propositions, these relations are intertwined. The cultivation of relations (including carnal) between subjects with attention to their onto-ethical aspects becomes a relation with the sacred. As Irigaray deftly identifies and expresses, such sacred relations require the recognition of women's spirituality — and its numerous expressions — as well as an undertaking to struggle with expressing these spiritual relations in a patriarchal culture that has previously ignored, silenced or demonized them: excluding them from the dominant social and cultural realm.

\section{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{}}}}} Đăkini: Tantric Goddess and Angel}}}

The reciprocity of Tantric union may be difficult to recognise for a western reader who assumes that gender always means a power relation or relation of domination. Tantric Buddhism represents a different cultural realm and a novel variation on gender relations. The power that reigns in this realm of cultural meaning is not a power of domination, but a power of transformation and liberation. This nonhierarchical power is seen as a fluidic, dynamic property variously and momentarily inhering in persons, objects, places, symbols, and especially ritual activities meant to generate and channel power. In Tantric Buddhist ritual, power at times inheres in persons, most often in women. This is not a discourse that either assumes or constructs male power or male social or ritual dominance.\(^{43}\)

As Miranda Shaw illustrates in the above quotation, and as traced in chapter eight, the traditions of Tantric Buddhism offer a spiritual practice that accommodates the cultivation of relations of sexual difference as Irigaray proposes. These are relations

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  \item \(^{41}\) Therefore love is figured as a subtle ontological substance. The preference for the use of desire (onto-ethical desire) in the thesis results from its more visceral associations, with the emphasis on the active and visceral relations that are constituted of subtle subjectivity.
  \item \(^{42}\) Irigaray, \textit{To Be Two}, 13.
  \item \(^{43}\) Shaw, \textit{Passionate Enlightenment} 175-176.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
that cultivate a generative, creative power for both subjects (of sexual difference): this power is correlate to onto–ethical desire. The reconceptualisation of power identified by Shaw above attests to the empowering attitude developed through the giving up of discourses of mastery and recognition resulting from the cultivation of the subtle aspects of one's subjectivity. There is strength to be found in the vulnerability associated with type of radical openness implicit in subtle subjectivity. In Tantric Buddhism, this transformative power, and its operations is signaled by the Ṛkṣīni.

Traditionally referred to as a Tantric Goddess, the Ṛkṣīni can, because of their interrelationship with subtle substance, be considered as angels; the subtle subjects form of embodiment which is not tied to materiality, and interrelated with spirits, as well as the role attributed Ṛkṣīni as a messenger, a mediator, a symbol of Buddhahood and the process of self cultivation.

On an inner, ritual level, she is a meditational deity, visualised as the personification of qualities of Buddhahood. On an outer, subtle–body level, she is the energetic network of the embodied mind in the subtle channels and vital breath of Tantric yoga. She is also spoken of as a living woman: she may be a guru on a brocaded throne or a yogini meditating in a remote cave, a powerful teacher of meditation or a guru's consort teaching directly through her life example. Finally, all women are seen as some kind of dākinī manifestation.

The form of embodiment associated with the Dākinī is a pneumatology — the prāṇa of subtle body systems — and it is in this way that the Goddess can be considered as a correlate to onto–ethical desire: "The network of channels of moving breath throughout the body–mind is spoken of as the network of dākinī (dākinī–jāla)." Although the Dākinī is closely aligned with the female gender, it does not preclude the male gender from embodiment of the deity; there is no biological essentialism implicitly associated with expression of the Goddess. However, because of the power and respect associated with its presence, it does promote a positive attitude

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44 "These subtle realms are considered the home of deities, ancestral spirits, and other entities…" Feuerstein, *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy* 140.


toward characteristics associated with the feminine, as Simmer–Brown puts it: "For
the female the Đākīnī represents embodiment that is not a defilement, nurture that is
not a fate, and relationship that is not subordination."47

The cultivation of this type of relation with deity is — through the utilisation of
pneumatological forces — a generative aesthetic practice. As Miranda Shaw points
out, the deities "envisioned represent aesthetic patterns of enlightened energy and
liberating activity."48 Such an undertaking (as previously discussed in chapter eight)
does not exclude the physical–emotional experiences of joy, pleasure, and playful
attitudes.

Drawing together art and worship in this practice is the activation of the modes of
perception this research has addressed. The playful, expansive attitude is featured
in the etymology of their name: Đākīnī from the Tibetan meaning "sky-goer,
sky–walker, or sky–dancer."49 There are also etymological correlations with
śūnyatā (emptiness), as Keiji Nishitani writes:

In accord with the image suggested by the Chinese character, it is said to be "skylke" and is
compared in the text to an all–encompassing cosmic sky. The same character can be read in
adjectival form as muniha, thus creating a phonetic resemblance to mu or nothingness.50

The Đākīnī as a dancer emphasises the dynamism associated with her embodiment,
which, as illustrated in Simmer–Brown's comment below, is also the cultivation of
śūnyatā (as outlined in chapter seven):

the subtle-body yoga practice itself is considered to be the dākini, the arising of the experience of
bliss-emptiness that allows the fundamental nature of mind to manifest itself. This is fullest
meaning of sky-dancer, the actual accomplishment that opens the gates of wisdom.51

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48 Shaw, Passionate Enlightenment 84.
49 Phillippa Berry, "Sky–dancing at the Boundaries of Western Thought: Feminist Theory and the
Limits of Deconstruction" in Healing Deconstruction: Postmodern Thought in Buddhism and
Christianity 65.
50 Nishitani, Religion and Nothingness 296.
It should also be observed that the Dākinī is not only personified as playful, she is also associated with wrathful states and as Phillipa Berry notes, many Buddhist siddhas reported meeting Dākinī at funeral burning-grounds: these are not lightweight characters, they are powerful deities associated with both the generative and destructive aspects of existence.\textsuperscript{52}

The figure of Dākinī embodies both plurality and singularity. The goddess is referred to with both a proper noun — as an individuality — and as a general name, connotative of a plurality. This is a conceptualisation of a metaphysical being (Spirit) that is not singular nor dual but is present in a multiplicitous movement of double negation (śūnyatā) that neither confirms a fixed identity, nor erases identity: the continuous becoming of a concurrent presence–absence.

**Onto-Ethical Desire: An Angelic Substance**

The conflict which arises from the appropriation of the freedom of the other no longer makes sense between those who love each other: desire grows from an irreducible alterity.\textsuperscript{53}

Recognising and cultivating oneself as a subtle subject (as an angel of onto-ethical desire) does not necessitate the denigration of the material, the physical, the pleasurable. This interrelated physical–spiritual (pneumatological) substance capable of meeting alterity with grace requires a profoundly intimate and sensitive relationship with embodiment; a fuller embodiment reached through the cultivation of perception, of sensation. Angles of desire are embodied, active, angels — subtle subjects — simultaneously diaphanous and substantial. In Jacob Boehme's cosmological development, the angelic body signals both the beginning and the completion of the cycle, a cycle generated by the activity of desire:

\textsuperscript{51} Simmer–Brown, *Dākinī's Warm Breath* 181.

\textsuperscript{52} Phillipa Berry, "Sky–dancing at the Boundaries of Western Thought" 64.

\textsuperscript{53} Irigaray, *To Be Two* 18.
The body represented in the final degree of the seven-part cycle is born of this conversion of desire. It is the body of the angels represented according to the dimension of the celestial macrocosm. The completion of eternal nature co-incides with the first creation, which is that of the angels.54

This research has argued that an onto-ethical form of desire can be understood to comprise not only the subtle subject, but the interval, the between which simultaneously mediates and separates subjects of difference. This onto-ethical desire renders the two in relation three, yet the third is beyond being fixed within logocentric representations of singular subjectivity: this third: the other–other of I–Other relations is desire. In this way, the discourse of the Same, called into question by Irigaray's proposition of dual subjectivity, is further challenged by subtle subjectivity. Subtle subjects are always creative and differentiating (even from themselves) so too, subjects of difference — alterity — cannot be conceived of as an inert singular entity, but rather, as implicitly differentiating becoming (this too is the perspective taken up with regard to Spirit, the Spirit — and spirits — associated with transcendent and immanent religious practices is considered as heterogeneous). The conceptualisation of onto-ethical desire presupposes ontology and ethics as both co-dependent and co-arising. The apprehension of this aspect of desire is — as argued herein — a result of a praxis of self cultivation, in which rather than turning away from physical–emotional desire, requires a greater immersion in these psycho–physical states to enable a respectful detachment to be cultivated. The realisation of concurrent detachment–immersion is through desire, allowing acknowledgment of it as an ontological force and a source of valid knowledge. To develop one's apprehension of desire's dynamics is to enter into simultaneously intimate–detached relations with oneself and another, that results in the creation of an attitude of compassion: this is the operation of an ethical desire, it the articulation of the responsibility of desire.

Like psychoanalytic models of desire, onto–ethical desire is never satiated, but it is not driven or defined by lack, rather, as inherently processural, its very activity is

54 Deghaye, "Jacob Boehme and His Followers" 225.
generation, of self, of other, and of the between, as Peter Canning writes: "This power of metamorphosis or 'evolution' is called Eros or libido — not energy but desire, creativity that irresistibly and irreducibly informs matter from within and makes it live."\(^5\)

According to Peter Lamborn Wilson, winged Eros is the "highest of Angels," being both the source of inspiration for love, a guide and spirit that brings messages between mortals and gods, and a "guardian or spiritual double of man." For Wilson (following Socrates) Eros is both a spiritual practitioner of the highest degree — cultivating relations with the Gods — and the Beloved, the source of divine inspiration and love.\(^6\) These two aspects parallel the attributes [Tomberg] associates with the Angel's two wings: one the "contemplative" aspect of the divine, the other its "creative" aspect.

**Subtle Subjects — Angels of Desire**

A sexual or carnal ethics would require that both angel and body be found together.\(^7\)

An ontology of creative movement is the foundation of an angelic subjectivity: angels are mediation and enact mediation. Paradoxically, their substance is passage: a passage allowing habitation in the intimate folds of transcendence and immanence. To return to the quotation that opened the introduction of this thesis, being "stalled at the heart of the invisible" is to occupy the place and 'being' of an angel. To be an angel of desire (a subtle subject) is to be in suspense.

To be suspended is to progress. Rather than a state of arrested development, this state of suspension is characterised by concurrent activity–passivity and, this is the

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\(^5\) Peter Canning, "The Imagination of Immanence: An Ethics of Cinema" 337.

\(^6\) Wilson, Angels 13; 15.

type of state that Marina Abramovic's installations requests of the viewer/participants. Although stationary in the chairs of Wounded Geode or Crystal Cinema I the subject's attention is drawn towards the very active subtle, affective, extensive aspects of subjectivity that potentially lead to a consideration of the praxis of looking: its concurrent aesthetic–ethical import. A style of viewing that can witness the diachrony of self and other and the creativity of its junctures.

A consideration of subtle subjectivity illuminates the state between subjects — inclusive of Irigaray's dual subjects — as ontologically dynamic. The between is thus conceived not only a site of interaction, but as a creative, generating agency in itself: not singular and discrete (in the same way that Irigaray's dual subjects are not wholly discrete entities but draw one another forth through interrelation), but an interpenetrating onto–ethical force that is simultaneously of and not of the subjects in relation. The between is no mere playing field on which one meets an Other, it is itself a player in the game.

From this perspective the idea of an individual subject is not of a closed unit, but of a dynamic, fragmentary movement. To be whole is not to be solid, but to surrender to a concept of self as boundless and fluid. Subtle bodies require an extensive form of responsibility for the mutual co-cultivation of self and others. As absolute boundaries cannot be drawn this responsibility cannot be built upon concepts of ownership, but upon self-cultivation that enables a greater apprehension of alterity, and acceptance of one and another's unknowable boundaries.

This thesis' method of exposition has been paradoxical with regard to its aim; it has through its designation of separate sections — subjectivity, aesthetics and ethics — drawn apart the areas that from the perspective of subtle subjectivity are inherently co-constitutive. How one chooses to look, one's ability to feel, to be sensitive, one's comprehension of their psycho–physical states, is an ethical choice.
It is the proposition of this thesis that subtle bodies are exactly the porous sites where both an angelic and corporeal subjectivity exist concurrently. The subtle subject is indeed inherently the subject becoming angel. The process of this becoming is predicated upon a fully embodied subject accomplished in multiple forms of knowledge and perception, that enables respectful relations with both oneself and another. As noted at the outset of this conclusion, the Angel of Temperance is also known as the Angel of Healing.
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