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***Luce Irigaray and the Concept of Woman:
The Fate of the Dialectic After Hegel, Marx and Lacan***

By

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ABSTRACT

The main concern of this dissertation is to examine how the images of blood, the couple and the lips figure in the writings of Luce Irigaray. I argue that the images are Irigaray's way of both highlighting the flawed notion of nature in Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian thought, and of proposing a different way of thinking about nature. The importance of this analysis lies in the fact that Irigaray is trained in the dialectical method, she is thus acutely aware that notions of subject and object, and thus nature, are intimately linked. A change in the notion of nature thus implies a possibility in the change in the notion of the subject.

An understanding of the function of the images of 'woman' in Irigaray's method is important for establishing how her work is to be understood within a certain strand of the history of philosophy. This is valuable for addressing some of the criticisms that have been levelled against her work.

Chapter one distinguishes Irigaray's dialectical position from that of Hegel. A proper understanding of Irigaray's position *vis-à-vis* Hegel is vital because it enables us to recognize several important aspects of Irigaray's philosophy. Irigaray's relation to Hegelian and post-Hegelian philosophy is certainly one of the perspectives that would shed considerable light on her formulations of questions of identity. Since her relation to Hegel has often been misunderstood, the clarification thereof will afford a deeper understanding of Irigaray's philosophical position. Furthermore, such an understanding will enable us to distinguish Irigaray's position from important thinkers such as Marx and Lacan, both of

whom have been influenced by Hegelian Philosophy. In this chapter, I examine the image of blood to gain a better understanding of the limits Irigaray sees in Hegelian theory.

Chapter two addresses Irigaray's relation to Marx's dialectical method. The first part of this chapter outlines Irigaray's analogy between women in patriarchal society and Marx's account of commodities in capitalism. Outlining this analogy has a twofold purpose. Firstly, it indicates to what extent Irigaray is theoretically indebted to Marx. Secondly, I demonstrate that more is involved with this analogy. More precisely, I argue that the reason why the analogy functions underscores the limits of Marxist theory. In this chapter, I employ the image of the couple to demonstrate these limits.

In chapter three, I examine Irigaray's position in light of Lacan's account of the mirror stage and the psychoanalytic theories supporting this position. As a trained analyst, she is aware of how psychoanalytic theory unveils patriarchy in the development of the subject. Irigaray accepts the validity of these theories and views them as an accurate analysis of Western patriarchal society. However, she criticizes Lacan for the abstractions inherent in his account of the mirror stage. I employ the image of the lips to highlight this shortcoming.

In Chapter four, I return to the images of blood the couple and the lips and explain how each of these images is a way in which Irigaray demonstrates two important things. Firstly, the images expose the problematic notion of unitary nature in Hegel, Marx and Lacan. Secondly, they form the basis for a calculated intervention into discussions of representation.

An analysis of the works of Hegel, Marx, and Lacan demonstrates that speculative and ideological thought is an activity that defines the so-called nature of 'woman.' This has far reaching consequences since ideology informs practice. Indeed, political and legal activity, informed by ideology, defines the lived conditions of women. Thus, an understanding of Irigaray's images of woman, and the fate of the dialectic after Hegel, Marx and Lacan is valuable for addressing the problem of woman's identity in patriarchal society.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to the memory of my mother, Marianne Friedrich. Her love, understanding and belief in my abilities always kept me going, even in the moments of greatest doubt. She remains my constant inspiration.

University of Cape Town

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I offer a new interpretation of Luce Irigaray based on her use of images. I argue that Irigaray's images of blood, the lips and the couple are her way of rethinking the notion of nature in Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian thought. I believe the best way of understanding Irigaray's use of images is thus viewing her philosophy of sexual difference as a philosophy of sexed nature. Irigaray is most often interpreted as a philosopher of sexual difference. Dominant interpretations of her work have largely focused on how she both criticizes masculine theory for the erasures of the feminine and how she attempts to provide conditions under which it may be possible to reconstruct a feminine identity. As such these interpretations have largely focused on the epistemology of the subject. Although I do not disagree with current interpretations of Irigaray's works that focus on her unearthing of the problem with the notion of a female subject, I suggest that something more may be learned about Irigaray work's when we approach the use of images that she employs. I view the use of the images as a calculated intervention into discussions of representation. The Concept, labor and the sign – the central figures of Hegel, Marx, Lacan – rely on representations of difference and unitary nature. I will argue that Irigaray uses images to propose an alternate philosophy of nature. My analysis of her images of blood, the couple and the lips, demonstrates that these images are proposed as an analysis not primarily of the notion of the subject, but rather of the notion of how nature, and thus the object, or otherness is conceived. More precisely, I maintain that through the images, Irigaray approaches the problem with, and the solution to woman's identity through a resolution of the problem of nature. I also suggest that Irigaray's method does bear

similarity to what Adorno suggests with his negative dialectic. The similarity lies in the idea that we cannot address ontological or epistemological questions about the subject without also considering the way in which the object is conceived.

Although I refer to the notion of a concept of woman, I approach the notion of such a concept with caution. The very idea of a concept is tied to a certain Hegelian way of thinking that views nature as a unity. I argue that this is the very idea from which Irigaray tries to distance herself. It is difficult to discuss the idea of woman or an identity for women without invoking some idea of a concept. I have tried to limit talk about the concept when discussing Irigaray's notion of woman, and have thus shifted the focus to her use of images. As will be seen, the possibility of a concept of woman is tied to an aspect of the Hegelian dialectic that creates abstractions and treats nature as if it were indifferent. This is the very problem from which Irigaray tries to distance herself. This distancing is accomplished through the use of images. These images are intended to return an already existing difference to nature and try to find a way to think about woman that respects what is already given.

My analysis of Irigaray's images spans several of her works as well as several of the different phases they underwent. Although Irigaray does not explicitly bring out the images in all her works, I have referred to several of her publications where the images are not explicitly mentioned to validate my interpretation of her methodology. Although there are important differences, especially in the different phases of her work, I do not explicitly engage these differences in the thesis. For example, the first phase began in 1974 with the original French publication of *Speculum of the Other Woman*. This phase of her work also

includes *This Sex Which is Not One* and, to some extent, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* originally published in French in 1977 and 1984. Irigaray maintains that this first phase was her most critical.¹ In these works she sought to demonstrate that the masculine subject had constructed and interpreted the world according to a single standpoint. Irigaray describes this first phase of her work as “the auto-mono-centrism of the Western subject.”² It is difficult to give an exact time when the second phase of her work began. To some extent, it had already begun in 1984 with the French Publication of *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* and includes such books as *Sexes and Genealogies*, *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution* and *Je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*. The second phase of her work is largely concerned with trying to forge the possibilities wherein a female subject may be elaborated in such a way that it is not defined by masculine ideology. Irigaray describes this phase of her work as concerned with defining “those mediations that could permit the existence of a feminine subjectivity – that is to say – another subject [. . .]”³ The third stage of her work began in 1994 with two books that she wrote directly in Italian and which were translated into English as *To Be Two* and *I Love to You*.⁴ This phase is concerned with developing the conditions under which a relation between the male and the female subject may be possible. Irigaray describes this third phase as “[. . .] how to define a relationship, a philosophy, an ethic, a relationship between two different subjects.”⁵

There are important intricate differences within Irigaray’s work.⁶ For example, the manner in which the figure of Antigone appears in her writings changes. In the earlier writings the figure of Antigone is treated by Irigaray as the ‘anti-woman’. Irigaray views

Antigone as completely absorbed within masculine ideology. In later writings, Antigone appears as a heroine in Irigaray's writings. She is viewed more positively because Irigaray maintains that her actions defy the masculine state. Although these differences are important elements in understanding Irigaray's work, I do not focus so much on the changes in her writings. Rather, I focus on a different interpretation of her work and show how it may be grounded her various writings. I concentrate on the use of images in the first and second phases of her work and interpret them as a way to question the notion of a singular nature in Hegelian thought. I also turn to her later works that encompass the third phase of her work, such as *I Love to You* and *To Be Two*, to demonstrate that Irigaray is indeed still concerned with addressing the problem of how nature is viewed. In turning to Irigaray's later writings, I am showing that Irigaray more explicitly claims that the notion of the Hegelian unitary nature is problematic. I believe this gives weight to my interpretation of the images as her way of changing the way in which nature is to be conceived.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first three chapters address Irigaray's engagement with Hegel, Marx and Lacan respectively. The reason for proceeding in this manner is not merely to address three important thinkers that Irigaray has been meditating on, but rather to also expose something more about the images Irigaray employs. I begin with the chapter on Hegel to demonstrate, on the one hand, how indebted Irigaray is to Hegelian theory, and on the other, to demonstrate where she deviates. The problem has to do with how Hegel's dialectic functions. As will be seen, it is Hegel's notion of the Concept that introduces difference into unitary nature. Irigaray views this form of thinking as responsible for a skewed notion of nature and thus a limited notion of the subject. The

following chapters on Irigaray's engagement with Marx and Lacan are dependent upon this problem in Hegelian theory. As will be seen, both Marx and Lacan are deeply influenced by Hegelian theory. Although they each are critical of Hegel, and they each develop a unique dialectic and a unique notion of the subject's relation to otherness, they both retain an important element of Hegelianism. This important element is that nature is undifferentiated until it is theorized. More precisely, Marx appears to repeat Hegel's notion of nature, insofar as Marx's account suggests that nature is given value only through labor. Lacan does a similar thing with his notion of the symbol. In other words, the self is differentiated from otherness only through the work of symbolization. Lacan's account of the Real is such that it really cannot be talked about in itself because it exceeds symbolization. The reason for addressing Hegel, Marx and Lacan in three distinct chapters is thus to demonstrate that Irigaray is concerned with the problem of Hegel's notion of a unity of nature that is repeated in thinkers who have been influenced by his work. In addition to this, however, I am also showing that Irigaray's use of images demonstrates something more. These images are not merely one of the ways in which Irigaray tries to oppose Hegel's unitary nature with a dual sexed nature. In the final chapter I argue that these images and the manner in which they appear in Hegel, Marx and Lacan suggest that Irigaray is employing various disciplines to establish a way of thinking about sexed nature. Each discipline can be used to build upon ways in which to address the problem of unitary nature and help create a way to think about a nature that is already differentiated insofar as it is sexed.

The main concern of this dissertation is to examine how the concept of 'woman' figures in the writings of Luce Irigaray. This means querying what is meant by 'woman' as has often been done in the scholarship on Irigaray; but it also means asking what the concept means to her. This involves engaging her dialectic method. Since Irigaray is trained in the dialectic method, it is necessary to analyze her use of, and approach to this method. I argue that the images of 'woman' in Irigaray's writings figure as a conceptual tool. I am building on existing interpretations of Irigaray as a philosopher of sexual difference. Such interpretations suggest that the images in her writings achieve two things: on the one hand, expose the apparent contradictions inherent to Hegelian, Marxian, and Lacanian dialectical thought from a gender perspective; and on the other hand, they open the possibility of rethinking an identity for woman that is not tied to patriarchy. I believe, however, that something more can be learned from Irigaray's use of these images when she is viewed as a philosopher of nature. As such, I interpret the images as addressing a problem inherent to the notion of nature or otherness in the writings of Hegel Marx and Lacan.

An understanding of the function of 'woman' in Irigaray's method is likewise valuable for addressing some of the criticisms that have been levelled against her work. Placing her work within a certain strand of the history of philosophy allows us to unhinge criticisms, such as the charge of essentialism. Furthermore, the criticism that Irigaray upholds prevailing social configuration, such as the nature/culture or female/male divides, rests on the failure to distinguish her view on language from metaphysical accounts. As Tina Chanter explains: "[i]t is hard to imagine two more divergent views of language than

those endorsed by post-structuralism on the one hand, and those of empiricism on the other – yet [when criticizing Irigaray] these are [often] hastily lumped together as if one explains the other.”⁷

My point of departure is an inquiry into how Irigaray’s dialectical position differs from that of Hegel. A proper understanding of Irigaray’s position *vis-à-vis* Hegel is important because it enables us to recognize several important aspects of Irigaray’s philosophy. As Margaret Whitford suggests, “Irigaray’s relation to Hegelian and post-Hegelian philosophy is undoubtedly one of the perspectives which would shed considerable light on her formulations of questions of [among other things] subjectivity [and] identity.”⁸ Importantly, this will afford a deeper understanding of Irigaray’s philosophical position because her relation to Hegel has often been misunderstood. Indeed, Naomi Schor noted in 1994 that the “the crucial question of Hegel’s influence on Irigaray remains to be dealt with.”⁹ Ten year later, this observation remains valid.

There are several reasons for analyzing Irigaray’s adherence to and deviation from Hegelian dialectical thought. In the first place, it makes evident that her theorizing is indeed dialectical. In the second place, it brings forth a very significant aspect where Irigaray deviates from Hegel. Both of these are indispensable for understanding how the image of ‘woman’ is used in her method. Finally, these aforementioned aims enable us to distinguish Irigaray’s position from important thinkers such as Marx and Lacan, both of whom have been influenced by Hegelian Philosophy.

In the first chapter, I examine various important aspects of the Hegelian dialectic. I bring to the forefront important elements such as the master-slave relation, the notion of

desire, and negativity. I build on existing feminist interpretations of Irigaray's engagement with Hegel. Irigaray is most often read as a philosopher of sexual difference. When interpreted as such, the image of blood she employs in her discussion of Hegel is viewed as both deconstructing the masculine subject and providing a manner of rethinking woman's identity. Although I do not disagree with such interpretations, I think more can be learned from Irigaray when the image is viewed as addressing Hegel's notion of nature rather than the notion of the subject. Therefore, in this chapter I will examine how the image of blood may be interpreted as proposing a different way of thinking about nature and otherness. To understand how the image is intended to function, it must be stressed that Irigaray envisions a difference in the way the dialectic functions. There are two important aspects about Irigaray's refashioning of the dialectic that need to be highlighted. In the first place, Irigaray does not accept the third stage of the Hegelian dialectic where differences are overcome in thought. In the second place, I maintain that Irigaray provides a novel way to think about nature. With the image of blood, Irigaray attempts to keep the sexing of nature alive. In other words, contrary to Hegel where the Concept introduces difference into nature, Irigaray's image of blood suggests that difference already exists, and thus all theorization about the subject should respect this difference.

Chapter two addresses Irigaray's relation to Marx's dialectical method. The first part of this chapter outlines Irigaray's analogy between women in patriarchal society and Marx's account of commodities in capitalism. Such an analogy is not a novel interpretation for feminist thought.¹⁰ I will thus be demonstrating how Irigaray builds on an existing feminist tradition. However, the purpose of outlining this analogy is twofold.

In the first instance, it indicates to what extent Irigaray is theoretically indebted to Marx. As will be seen, she brings Marx to her reading of Hegel and Lacan. In the second instance, I demonstrate that more is involved with this analogy. More precisely, the question arises: Why does this analogy between women in patriarchy and Marx's account of commodities in capitalism function? The answer to this question is where Irigaray deviates from Marx. By turning to more recent writings, such *I Love to You*, I argue that Irigaray makes more explicit what was implicit in her earlier essays on Marx. I maintain that Irigaray is showing that the manner in which Marx's account of labor functions reinstates a problem inherent to the Hegelian notion of nature. I argue that Irigaray's image of the couple may be interpreted as a way to address the problem of a unity of nature that that is implied by Marx's account of labor

In chapter three, I examine Irigaray's position in light of Lacan's account of the mirror stage and the psychoanalytic theories supporting this position. She is aware of how psychoanalytic theory unveils patriarchy in the development of the subject. Instead of abandoning psychoanalytic theory, she accepts the validity of these theories, and views them as an accurate analysis of Western patriarchal society. She thus views them as descriptive rather than prescriptive. In this chapter I build on existing interpretations of Irigaray's critique of Lacan. These interpretations suggest that Irigaray is critical of the a-sexual and a-historical nature of Lacan's account of the mirror stage. In other words, because the mirror reflects only the Phallus, it cannot provide a gendered account of the genesis of the subject. There is a consensus among readers that Irigaray's image of the lips is intended to deconstruct the primacy of the Phallus, and to provide an alternate mode of

symbolization that is not tied to masculine discourse. Similar to the previous chapter, I do not disagree with the deconstructive and positive value that the image may provide. I argue, however, that more can be learned from Irigaray when the image is interpreted as addressing the notion of the Real in Lacanian theory. I maintain that Irigaray criticizes Lacan for his notion of otherness or his conception of the Real. In Lacanian theory, the symbol introduces difference and makes individuation possible. I believe that Irigaray is critical of this kind of move. She appears to be suggesting that Lacan repeats Hegel's notion of a unity of nature in his account of symbolization. I argue that the image of the lips is her way to expose this Hegelian notion of unity in Lacanian thought. The image is also a way to think about nature as already sexed and thus also an argument for the need to respect this difference in theorization about the subject.

In analyzing Irigaray's position regarding these three thinkers, I examine their account of extracting the self from otherness. In this sense, I bring forth the Hegelian aspects of Marx and Lacan. In Irigaray's writings, we can discover a theoretical indebtedness accompanied by criticism and deviation. The manner in which Irigaray deviates is repeated for each of these thinkers. When Irigaray speaks about woman, she employs many images. Whether it is the image of woman's red blood with Hegel, or the image of woman as part of a larger ethical totality with Marx, or the image of woman's lips with Lacan, Irigaray always returns to a notion of woman's so-called nature and her difference. Irigaray maintains that the concept of nature, as it has been conceived in patriarchal culture, needs to be rethought. The first step to this is a rethinking of the Hegelian dialectic. This is similar to what Theodore Adorno proposes with his negative

dialectics. More precisely, like Adorno, Irigaray is concerned with determining how conceptions of subject and object belong together and change together. But, in addition to this, Irigaray has always been concerned with the issue of sexual difference. Feminist theory cannot secure its goals by privileging an epistemology of the subject, rather than the metaphysics of the object.¹¹ I argue that Irigaray's images may be interpreted as addressing this deficit, and reinstating the metaphysics of the object by way of a philosophy of sexed nature. Irigaray's images of 'woman' are a way to rethink woman's nature (or the object) with a twofold aim: Firstly, it exposes the idea of a unity of nature which results in highlighting the limitations gender imposes on Hegelian, Marxian and Lacanian thought. Secondly, it affords the possibility of rethinking nature and otherness in such a way that it respects sexed identity.

In the final chapter, I return to each of these images to demonstrate that each of these is concerned with opposing the Hegelian notion of a unity of nature. In addition to this, however, I argue that these images are more than this. I maintain that they are part of Irigaray's project of delineating a way to think about a dual sexed nature. More precisely, I argue that from Hegel, to Marx to Lacan, Irigaray employs various disciplines to try to forge the means of thinking about nature as sexed.

NOTES

¹ Luce Irigaray, "Je-Luce Irigaray: A Meeting with Luce Irigaray," ed. Elizabeth Hirst and Gary A. Olson, trans. Elizabeth Hirsh and Gaëtan Brulotte *Hypatia* (1995): 91-114: 96

² Luce Irigaray, "Je-Luce Irigaray: A Meeting with Luce Irigaray," ed. Elizabeth Hirst and Gary A. Olson, trans. Elizabeth Hirsh and Gaëtan Brulotte *Hypatia* (1995): 91-114: 96

³ Luce Irigaray, "Je-Luce Irigaray: A Meeting with Luce Irigaray," 96

⁴ See Luce Irigaray, "Je-Luce Irigaray: A Meeting with Luce Irigaray," 96. The English translations were published in 2000 and 1996 respectively.

⁵ Luce Irigaray, "Je-Luce Irigaray: A Meeting with Luce Irigaray," 96.

⁶ Penelope Deutscher, for example suggest that a development in Irigaray's thinking can be found. Deutscher suggest that while Irigaray's early works, such as *Speculum*, tend to mimic traditional notions of femininity and women in order to render them absurd, her later works are characterized by the idea of sexual difference as "anticipated, abstract possibility." See Penelope Deutscher *A Poetics of Impossible Difference: The Later Work of Luce Irigaray* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2002) 49.

⁷ Tina Chanter, *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers* (New York and London, 1994) 3.

⁸ Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London and New York: 1991) 3.

⁹ Naomi Schor explains, "[w]riting in 1977 the presenters of an interview with Irigaray published in *Ideology and Consciousness* note that '*Speculum* has been criticized on the ground of Hegelianism, and to some, such may seem to be the present text as well.'" See Naomi Schor, "Previous Engagements: The Reception of Irigaray," *Engaging With Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought*, eds. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor, Margaret Whitford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 7. See also Diana Adlam and Couze Venn, "Introduction to Irigaray," *Ideology and Consciousness* (1977) 1: 57-61.

¹⁰ There has been a significant amount written outlining this analogy. A few examples of these are: Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Wellington, London, and Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1989) 146-150; Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray* 21. Whitford also makes the very useful observation that a writer Irigaray appears to draw on is Jean-Joseph Goux.

¹¹ Christine Battersby makes this observation in *The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 127.

CHAPTER ONE

Dialectic, The Universal, and the Fate of 'Woman':

In this chapter, I examine how Irigaray reworks the notion of nature through an analysis of Irigaray's relation to the dialectical thinking of Hegel. This is central to understanding how Irigaray develops a conception of woman's identity that is not constrained by patriarchal definitions. I argue that the manner in which Irigaray speak about woman's difference is through a rethinking of the notion of nature in the image of blood. Understanding her notion of woman through the image requires analyzing how this notion is affected through dialectical reasoning. In this chapter, therefore, I examine Irigaray's analyses of the dialectical thinking of Hegel. The first part deals with Hegel's master-slave relation and the dialectic upon which it rests. This is followed by an analysis of the difficulty Hegel's dialectic faces with regards to corporeality. I will then look at Simone de Beauvoir's application of the master-slave relation to the male-female relation. I will show that, although this is an unorthodox interpretation of Hegel's master-slave relation, it demonstrates an important consequence for women's place within the dialectic, namely, that of the object. From this, I will proceed to distance Irigaray's position from that of Simone de Beauvoir. This will provide a clearer understanding of how Irigaray's method of thinking is both indebted to, and yet critical of the Hegelian dialectic. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that Irigaray's project, though dialectical, is critical of the abstractions that occur within Hegelian dialectical forms of thought. She suggests that Hegelian dialectic entails the concept of a masculine universal, and as a result, does not permit thinking or realizing a concept of subjectivity for woman from a female perspective.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight how Irigaray builds on aspects of the Hegelian dialectic through revisiting the notion of nature. The image of blood is intended to demystify the myth of a singular nature and, that of a singular subject. The image of blood is thus interpreted as Irigaray's manner of maintaining the two-ness of the sexes within nature. Such an interpretation of Irigaray's method implies that she is not only a philosopher of sex and gender as dominant interpretations suggest. Rather, an interpretation of her image of blood suggests that she is also a philosopher of nature. The way in which the image functions in her philosophy suggests that she is concerned with changing the way in which we think about nature in order to change not only how woman is conceived, but also the masculine subject.

For the purpose of this chapter, I will begin by discussing aspects of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* that are central to understanding both Irigaray's indebtedness and her distancing and elaboration on Hegel's dialectic. The passages most relevant to this end deal with Hegel's treatment of the master-slave relation in "Independent and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage" and his treatment of the relation between men and women in "The True Spirit. The Ethical Order" which is in part IV under the heading of Spirit. I will also discuss the notion of negativity and the 'concept', both central to Hegel's dialectic as developed in his *Logic*.

For the purpose of understanding Irigaray's relation to Hegel's dialectic, I will focus in part on Hegel's account of the master-slave relation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel's section entitled "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship

and Bondage” has been of enormous influence on feminists, philosophers, and political writers.

The notion of negativity is of central importance in understanding the functioning of Hegel’s dialectic. Negativity is linked to the second step in Hegel’s dialectic, where an idea is seen as contradictory. To this end, it is important to understand aspects of his logic. This chapter will thus also refer to Hegel’s *The Science of Logic*. In this book, Hegel distinguishes between different kinds of contradiction. Hegel discusses three kinds of contradiction in this book, the category of *Being*, the category of *Essence* and the category of the *Concept*. From the perspective of this chapter, the last category is the most important. The category of the *Concept* is a more sophisticated level of contradiction. In this category we have, for example, the notion of Identity that is composed of universality and particularity.

It will also be important to refer to Hegel’s “The True Spirit. The Ethical Order”. I will also briefly refer to some of his letters as well as the posthumously published *Third Jena System Draft Philosophy of Nature and Philosophy of Spirit*, in which Hegel makes rather telling remarks about how women figure in his grand theory. Nonetheless, the aforementioned section in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is fundamentally important for this chapter because Irigaray refers to it directly. In this section of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel addresses the relation between men and women, and importantly, the figure of Antigone from Sophoclean tragedy.

The manner in which the notions of negativity and the concept function within the Hegelian dialectic are very important in the understanding of where Irigaray distances

herself from Hegel. In this sense, both are important in understanding Irigaray's critique of the abstractions that occur within the Hegelian dialectic and her proposal of the image of blood to develop a different relation to nature that is at the basis of the possibility of a subject that does not exclude the feminine.

In analyzing Irigaray's image of blood, I will focus mainly on Irigaray's "The Eternal Irony of the community" in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, "Each Sex Must Have Its Own Rights, Introduction" and "The Universal as Mediation" in *Sexes and Genealogies*, and *I Love to You: Sketch of a possible Felicity in History*. The image of blood is tied to Irigaray's re-reading of Hegel's treatment of the figure of Antigone. The first place Irigaray addresses the figure of Antigone and the image of Blood is "The Eternal Irony of the Community" in *Speculum of the Other Woman*.¹

In "The Eternal Irony of the Community" Irigaray contemplates Hegel's treatment of the tragic figure of Antigone. Irigaray attempts to retrieve Antigone from the position of the 'other' as she is portrayed in Hegel's mediation on the Sophoclean play. Contrary to Simone de Beauvoir's use of Hegel's master-slave dialectic as an exemplar for the male-female relationship, Irigaray does not want to think of the relation between the sexes in terms of masters and slaves. In addition to this, her meditation on Antigone suggests that she does not want to deny woman's otherness without first exploring what positive value may be derived from this.

Irigaray's essay begins with an excerpt from Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* in which Hegel discusses the effusion of blood in man and in woman's menstrual cycle. Irigaray makes clear that Hegel views the difference between the sexes as essential in the

development of Spirit. As will be seen, her image of blood puts into question the logic of Hegel's dialectic that places the male and the female as two sexes that stand in opposition to one another. The image of blood demonstrates that the Hegelian dialectic reduces the two sexes to a unity, a unity that represents only the male. The result is a rift and the core of the nature/spirit relation that, at the cost of woman, censures the evolution of Spirit to a violent abstraction.

I will also examine the importance of the image of blood through Irigaray's revisiting of the problem of the Hegelian dialectic in her essays "Each Sex Must Have Its Own Rights, Introduction" and "The Universal as Mediation" in *Sexes and Genealogies*. In these essays, Irigaray returns to the figure of Antigone and attempts to uncover the distortions resulting from Hegel's exclusion of the feminine from the spiritual and the distortion of nature. Irigaray's meditation on the figure of Antigone also attempts to disrupt the inner workings of the Hegelian dialectic that results in abstraction that does violence to woman's difference. As will be seen, at the core of her critique and her aim to develop upon the Hegelian dialectic, is the notion of nature. The manner in which nature is treated within the Hegelian dialectic is under scrutiny. Irigaray's image of blood is her way of reworking the dialectic by first blocking any attempt of overcoming otherness in Spirit and, second, by returning the idea of the two sexes to the notion of nature.

Discovering what Irigaray means with her image of woman often takes us into language that sounds essentialistic. Irigaray talks about the female body as she attempts to open a discursive space for the elaboration of a female subjectivity and a notion of woman

that is not part and parcel of patriarchy. In this sense, Irigaray does seem to be talking about woman's body or woman's nature, but, in fact, this is not really what she is doing. Her project of re-thinking the notion of woman is more complex. Regarding the charges of essentialism that are often attributed to Irigaray's image of woman, it must be stressed, as Margaret Whitford does, that in Irigaray's work the social and the biological distinctions are often blurred. This however, is a strategy adopted within a particular cultural and historical situation.² Diana Fuss argues that this approach to the problem of essentialism is perhaps the most promising line of argument to follow.³ Fuss suggests that this line of argument, rather than foreclosing the discussion of essentialism before it has even begun, asks a far more difficult question, namely, if Irigaray attempts to speak the female body, what might such strategic excursion into the territory of essentialism allow her to accomplish? In fact, Irigaray never actually states that she knows what woman's essence actually is, nor that there is such a thing. Although Irigaray uses many descriptions, the most powerful of which is the image of the two lips, Fuss stresses that Irigaray insists that 'woman' can never be incorporated into one theory, or defined by any metaphysics.⁴ What Irigaray seeks to do "is not to define a theory of woman, but to secure a place for the feminine within sexual difference."⁵ Fuss thus concludes that Irigaray works towards securing access to a woman's essence without ever prescribing what that essence may be and, likewise, without precluding that a subject may have multiple essences which may even contradict one another.⁶ The issue of essentialism will be discussed in further detail later.

For the purpose of this chapter, I would like to show how the issue of essentialism and the notion of a 'woman's nature' is related to two things, that are also intimately linked in Hegel's thought. These two things are Hegel's concept of negativity, and the relationship Hegel draws between human freedom (or consciousness) and nature. Irigaray's use of apparently essentialist language becomes important in the light of Hegel's concept of negativity. Both play an important role with regards to the issue of corporeality. It will be shown that Irigaray's use of essentialism is an attempt to solve the problem of corporeality that arises in Hegel's concept of Spirit. I will also clarify how Irigaray's image of woman's nature is important as a result of Hegel's view of the relationship between freedom (consciousness) and nature. Hegel maintained that human freedom, exemplified in human consciousness, is opposed yet intimately linked to nature. Ultimately, these two concepts are brought together under Hegel's concept of Spirit.

Explaining Irigaray's image of woman is the aim of this thesis yet, before this can be done, it is necessary to analyze what Hegel's dialectic does first to the notion of physicality and then to the notion of woman. This not only provides us with a better understanding of why Irigaray dedicates so much of her work to rethinking the notion of nature through the image of woman, but likewise clarifies how dialectical thought is central to understanding Irigaray's image of woman.

Desire and The Master-Slave Dialectic

In this section, I will examine Hegel's account of the master-slave relation. I will also explain why this relation has come to be viewed as central to understanding Hegel's

dialectic and his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. “Independence and dependence of self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage” is Hegel’s mythical account of the dialectical unfolding of a history that is the result of the slave’s overcoming of his physical, conceptual and social slavery. Central to this account is the notion of desire. More specifically, it is the desire for recognition that moves history. Hegel places the confrontation of two self-conscious beings as the prerequisite for historical development, or, in other words, the dialectic process of overcoming. Importantly, self-consciousness sees its object only in terms of negativity, or, in other words, only in terms of a thing that can be used, transformed or destroyed. Thus, according to Hegel, it is only in contradiction and dialectical opposition that history and, hence, development and change are possible.

According to Hegel, self-consciousness, or subjectivity, is immediately a consciousness of a lack of something, namely, the object. Ultimately, in Hegel’s view, self-consciousness is consciousness aware of its own unity and purpose. Yet, consciousness also remains divided, insofar as it is isolated from other consciousnesses. In order to demonstrate how individual self-consciousnesses are related to one another he demonstrates, how freedom can both divide but ultimately also unite individuals. Hegel explains this process through a mythical encounter between two self-consciousnesses in his example of the master-slave relation.

Given that Irigaray’s writings focus on thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, and Levi-Strauss, among many others, Irigaray’s understanding of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic is likely influenced by Alexandre Kojève’s reading of Hegel. As Grosz explains, Kojève’s lectures (1932-1939) on Hegel, preserved in his posthumously published book

Introduction to the Reading of Hegel (1969) “had an enormous impact on an entire generation of French intellectuals.”⁷ Among these are many of the writers that Irigaray also analyzes, such as Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, and Levi-Strauss. Kojève’s reading of Hegel centres primarily on Hegel’s *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. As such, this text reads as an account of the dialectical unfolding of a history that is the consequence of the slave’s overcoming of his physical, conceptual and social slavery. Furthermore, the desire that moves history is the desire for recognition. According to Hegel, the precondition for historical development or for dialectical change is made possible through the positing of a self-consciousness being that confronts another self-consciousness fundamentally similar to itself, and distinguished from everything other than itself by a radical ‘negativity’. Kojève claims that, for Hegel, self-consciousness sees its object only in terms of negativity, or, in other words, only in terms of a thing that can be used, transformed or destroyed.⁸ Furthermore, it is only when the object of this self-consciousness is in fact another self-consciousness that history, in the Hegelian sense of dialectic overcoming, begins. Thus, in Hegel’s view, it is only in contradiction and dialectical antagonism that history and consequently, development and change are possible.

According to Hegel, desire is the revelation of an emptiness. It is the most immediate form of self-consciousness. As Kojève suggests, it is through hunger, thirst, and other forms of self feeling that we become self-aware.⁹ This is a form of desire that is natural and not dissimilar to animal desire. Desire only becomes truly human as the desire to be desired. This, however, is still the most elemental form of self-consciousness; it is not yet what Hegel calls objective self-consciousness. The latter is made possible through

the process of the master-slave dialectic, which will be discussed below. As Edward S. Casey and Melvin Woody explain, desire is transcended through labour and history.¹⁰ However, this does not mean that desire is cast off; rather, through the Hegelian dialectic, desire is sublimated.

Unlike Descartes' *cogito*, that is, the self-conscious or self-knowing subject as the origin or guarantor of knowledge, Hegel maintains that every self-consciousness may have subjective knowledge of itself, but objective certainty of self-consciousness is only attained when faced with the other than self. Thus, for Hegel each self-consciousness requires the recognition of the other in order to achieve its self-certainty. More precisely, for self-consciousness to be certain of itself, it must be recognized by another self-consciousness fundamentally the same, yet other than itself. Likewise, this other self-consciousness requires a self-consciousness to recognize it as a subject. Kojève explains that, as the dialectic between the two self-consciousnesses takes place, a fight for recognition transpires, in which the self-consciousness must risk "his life in a fight for the recognition of his human being-for-itself."¹¹ The two self-consciousnesses enter into a relationship which becomes a "life and death struggle." Hans-Georg Gadamer clarifies this point when he claims that "precisely because nothing else which one could hang onto withstands the fear of death, pure being-for-self is raised to the level of consciousness, which is to say that consciousness's actual concern is now for it."¹² Hegel viewed this as a fight for recognition that can only end in the death of one or both of the adversaries. However, if one or both parties perish, their self-consciousness cannot receive the required recognition of the other. Gadamer explains that the reason why self-consciousness must put its life on

the line is not because it is unable to become certain of itself without annihilation of the other, but rather because self-consciousness is unable to achieve true being-for-self without overcoming its attachment to life, in other words, without annihilation of itself as mere life.¹³ According to Hegel, history begins only when one adversary values freedom, autonomy, and recognition over animal life, while the other adversary values life over freedom.

Rather than face death, the self that submits, becomes the slave. The master thus obtains the recognition which Hegel viewed as essential for objective certainty. The slave, on the other hand, in refusing the risk of death, “binds himself completely to the things on which he depends.”¹⁴ Thus, the slave becomes like a thing. Yet, although the master receives recognition from the slave, he remains in a form of dependency on this recognition from the slave. Ironically, however, the slave’s recognition no longer can have value for the master, because the slave, who has become an object, is no longer an Other, and thus can no longer provide recognition.

Kojève concludes that Hegel’s master-slave dialectic demonstrates that “history is the history of the working slave,” because “slavery is also self-consciousness” insofar as the slave recognizes the value of autonomy and human freedom not in himself, but in the Other.¹⁵ The slave can be put to work and slowly may learn self-respect and come to see himself reflected in the work of his hands. Gadamer explains that, because the slave brings forth the products of his work, “consciousness emerges for itself not as an existent thing, but rather as ‘being-for-self for itself.’”¹⁶ Whereas the master, unable to recognize the Other (the slave who has become an object) who recognizes him, finds himself at an

impasse. In other words, the slave must only impose himself on the master to be recognized by him; to achieve this entails transcending himself, and to 'overcome' himself as a Slave. The Slave also is predisposed to seek self-overcoming because the fight for recognition that has made him a Slave pushes him to negating himself, negating a slavish "I."¹⁷ The master, on the other hand, has no desire to "overcome" himself as master, as this would entail becoming a slave. Therefore, as Casey and Woody explain, history is analogous to the of the labour of the slave, insofar as the slave subordinates his own desire to that of the master, and thus sacrifices human desire and pleasure to the fear of death, but finally finds satisfaction by recognising himself in the objects produced by his labour.¹⁸

Elizabeth Grosz clarifies that Kojève's understanding of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic entails that history is the outcome of the slave's attempt "to transcend the ensnarements of that slavery by which he is bound."¹⁹ History therefore is "self-exceeding, self-transforming labour: the overcoming of brute existence, the terror of subjection by the other or master, and the refusal of any idea of freedom and autonomy that is isolated from material self-sustaining and transforming labour, and self-productive social, political and intellectual life."²⁰ Thus, in stressing the master-slave dialectic as the motor of history, Kojève suggests that Hegel's concept of history is transcendence, self-overcoming in an inter-subjective socio-political world.

Hegel's Dialectic

Understanding the implications of Hegel's master-slave dialectic on the concept of woman requires an explanation of Hegel's larger system and his dialectic in general. This will be followed by an analysis of Hegel's concept of negativity and the relationship between

freedom and nature in Hegel's thought. Both of these are related to the difficulty inherent to Hegel's dialectic when it comes to the issue of corporeality. In brief, the 'dialectic' has a long philosophical history deriving from the classical Greek meaning to converse. Throughout the history of philosophy, the dialectic has taken many forms. To mention only a few, for Plato the dialectic was an art of conversation for the correct philosophical method, and for Socrates, as portrayed in Plato's early dialogues, it tended to take on a destructive form, that is, through interrogation, contradictions within successive answers were uncovered. For Hegel, however, dialectic neither involves a dialogue between two thinkers nor between a thinker and a given subject matter. Michael Inwood explains that for Hegel the dialectic "is conceived as the autonomous self-criticism and self-development of the subject-matter, of, [for example], a form of consciousness or a concept."²¹

Kant's dialectic, which is the derivation of antinomies, of two incompatible answers to a question, influenced Hegel's dialectic. Kant, in his dialectic, uses concepts such as 'thesis', 'antithesis', and 'synthesis.' Though often these concepts are also associated with Hegel, Hegel used them only in his account of Kant. Hegel's dialectic, however, also involves three steps, Inwood outlines them as follows:

- (1) One or more concepts or categories are taken as fixed, sharply defined and distinct from each other. This is the stage of Understanding.
- (2) When we reflect on such categories, one or more contradictions emerge from them. This is the stage of dialectic proper, or of dialectical or negative Reason.
- (3) The result of this dialectic is a new, higher category, which embraces the earlier categories and resolves the contradiction involved in them. This is the stage of Speculation or positive reason. [. . .] Hegel suggests this new category is a 'unity of opposites' [. . .].²²

It is important to stress that Hegel viewed the final phase of thought, namely, the stage of speculation, not merely as subjective; rather, this phase is said to 'sublate' the

opposites between subjectivity and objectivity (among any other opposites.) For Hegel, nature does not develop or evolve. He grants that there are changes, but he maintains that what does evolve or develop, both as a whole and in the individual, is Spirit or Mind. Hegel's system, the same triadic process, outlined above, is repeated both in history and in the development of the individual. Inwood explains that this process is said to unite "the identity of the identical with the non-identical," it is to be the overcoming of all alterity in a universal inclusiveness.²³

Negativity

Negativity is associated with the second step in Hegel's dialectic. This concept, as will be discussed later, causes problems when addressing the issue of corporeality. Negativity will also be important for understanding the implications of the master-slave relation on the concept of woman. Before discussing the problems inherent in Hegel's dialectic due to his concept of negativity, an explanation of the concept of negativity within Hegelian dialectic is necessary.

By negation or contradiction, Hegel means a wide variety of relations, such as, difference, opposition, reflection or relation. Negation can thus mean the mere insufficiency of a category or its incoherence. In its strongest form, categories can be shown to be contradictory. Negativity also has several important elements to it in Hegelian theory. In one sense, the negative is viewed as the conceptual complement without which no thought would be possible. In another sense, the negative has a polar character insofar as certain fundamental concepts would be unthinkable without their opposite. At a philosophical level, some examples Hegel discusses are 'good' and 'bad', 'master' and

‘slave’, thought and nature. Finally, according to Hegel, these opposites not only require each other for conceptual purposes, but they also pass into each other.

Interestingly, negativity is seen as ‘bad’ according to Hegel, because, as Marcuse explains, Hegel’s dialectic is characterized by the view that all immediate forms of existence are ‘bad’ insofar as they do not allow things to be what they can be.²⁴ In the Hegelian dialectic, true existence is only achieved when the immediate state is recognized as negative, and the process of overcoming changes things to their potentiality.

In *The Science of Logic*, Hegel distinguishes between different kinds of contradiction. The first kind of contradiction addressed by Hegel is in the category of *Being*. Hegel indicates that opposed pairs of concept may at first appear completely opposed and thus have nothing to do with one another, such as the concepts of Being and Nothing. It is only upon closer analysis that they are shown to be intimately linked.²⁵ In the second category, *Essence*, Hegel explains that opposing pairs immediately imply one another, and thus to define one is to immediately define the other.²⁶ The third category, that of the *Concept*, is a more sophisticated level of contradiction. Here we have concepts such as Identity whose component parts, universality and particularity, are conceptually interrelated.²⁷ This category is more difficult to illustrate because it is truly abstract. In this category, Hegel discusses relations that can only be extricated from one another by a process of abstraction. For example, Hegel shows that one of his most important categories, namely, *individuality*, is arrived at through the apparently opposing pair: *universality* and *particularity*. Whereas the universal indicates likeness, the particular implies unlikeness. Individuality emerges from a unique web of relations, comparisons,

and difference. This will become clearer upon closer examination of the role of negativity within Hegel's thought. As will be seen, in the progression through the stages of Hegel's *Logic*, there is an advancement from levels where knowledge is tied to 'representation', to the realization of truth itself. It is in the Concept that truth moves beyond any involvement with 'representation' and presents itself as pure thought.

Negation and negativity are fundamental to Hegel's thought. In order to understand the role they play in his dialectic, it is necessary to first briefly explain Hegel's interpretation of them since it is novel in a few ways. As outlined below, Inwood suggests that Hegel's interpretation of negativity is novel in several manners.²⁸ For example, if one thing is the negation of another, then the negation is as determinate as what it negates. I will discuss this in more detail later. This interpretation conflicts with the common view of propositional negation, and likewise, as Inwood clarifies, with Kant's doctrine that the negation of a reality " $= 0$."²⁹ In other words, the common view of propositional negation is such that the proposition "the rose is red" is determinate insofar as it differs from its negation "the rose is not red." It is less determinate than the proposition negated by it. In other words, it leaves open the question as to what colour the rose is, whether it even has a colour, or whether there is a rose at all. Nonetheless, Hegel suggests that however undeniably red something may be, it still involves negation, because if it is red, it is not green, or blue, etc. And furthermore, green, blue, etc., negate and limit red just as red negates them. A second interpretation of negation by Hegel is worked out of the standard two-value logic available to Hegel, that is, if something is negated, and the negation is in turn also negated, we return to the starting point, the original affirmation. Hegel, however,

stressed that a different affirmation from the original arose in this situation. For Hegel, it is not simply a return to the original un-negated status since, as Inwood explains, there are stages: for Hegel, the first stage is determinate being in general, not a determinate something.³⁰ The second stage is the bifurcation into a something and its negating other.

The third stage is the something's affirmation of its own intrinsic nature, through the negation of the other. As Inwood explains, this is the something's affirmation "of the fact that it is more than simply a blank space marked off by their other (s)."³¹ These 3 stages, namely, the pattern of simple affirmation, negation, and negation of negation is continually repeated throughout Hegel's thought. Thus, what is the negation of the negation in one application may simply reappear as the affirmation in another.

Dialectic is defined by Hegel as the power of negativity. In fact, Marcuse suggests that the dialectical process in Hegelian theory receives its motive power to overcome negativity.³² Negativity generally involves the opposing of something to its 'other.' Daniel Berthold-Bond elaborates that when applied to epistemology, this is the "pathway of doubt" and "loss of immediate certainty" entailed by the division between subject and object in the course of consciousness's experience of the world.³³ He further clarifies that the concept of negativity, when applied to ontology, is the *Entäußerung* (externalizing) of substance by which it "becomes other" to itself.³⁴ According to Hegel, negativity is externalizing because "what is undifferentiated is lifeless."³⁵ Thus, according to Hegel, it is negativity that accounts for differentiation and, likewise, self-identity without negativity implies the death of being, whether individual or historical.

Negativity, according to Hegel, is also a “making concrete” insofar as self-development is produced by “the dialectical force which deposes [the thing’s] immediacy” and gives it a specific character.”³⁶ Hegel thus endorses Spinoza’s dictum “every determination is a negation.” Sean Sayers suggests that for Hegel, concrete reality is not merely a diversity of different and externally related things.³⁷ For Hegel, in addition to recognizing the positive existence of things, we recognize forces opposing and negating them that lead to development and change. In Hegel’s thought, concrete things are not merely related to each other, they are also significantly in a constant process of conflict and interaction .

As outlined below, Sayers argues that Hegel’s interpretation of contradiction suggests two things.³⁸ In the first case, it stresses that concrete things are not indifferent to one another, but rather in conflict with one another. This is the very basis of the determinateness of concrete things, as mentioned above in Spinoza’s dictum: “all determination is negation.” This, explains Sayers, implies that a “thing is determinate and has its own identity only by maintaining itself distinct from other things, by opposing other things.”³⁹ All determinate and concrete things are in opposition to other things. Inwood clarifies that if we take, for example, the meaning of ‘man’ according to Hegel, its determination varies as it contrasts with ‘beast,’ with ‘animal,’ with ‘God,’ with ‘woman,’ etc.⁴⁰ Furthermore, in Hegel’s *Logic* (“Doctrine of Essences”) the negative and the positive are viewed as the paradigm of opposition. For Hegel, this is a heightened form of negation, where each term is not simply other than the other (here we can take the aforementioned example: green or blue is other than red) but it is in fact its other, that is, green or blue is

red's other.⁴¹ In other words, the relation is what north is to south. Here again, the negative that is supposed to the positive negates the negative as much as the negative negates the positive, and is as negative as positive.

The second thing suggested by Hegel's conception of contradiction is that concrete opposition is not external nor accidental to things, rather, contradiction is essential and necessary and part of their nature. Contradiction in Hegel's system is essential opposition and, more precisely, opposition within a unity. Thus, the dialectical concept of contradiction is that of a concrete unity of opposites.

According to Hegel, while negativity is externalizing, it is also positive because it makes a thing determinate insofar as it individuates it. Hegel's 'determinate negation' gives the thing a content, and by doing so, it actualizes a potentiality through its externalization by negating various other possibilities. As such, it transforms what was merely the abstract nature of the thing into a concrete content.

In Hegel's system, the outcome of a concrete contradiction is the emergence of something determinate, namely, a new thing which is equally contradictory, and hence equally subject to negation, contradiction, and dissolution. The concrete contradiction in things does indeed lead to their dissolution and negation. For Hegel, this negation is not the abstract and absolute negation of formal logic; rather, it is a dialectical and a concrete negation. This is a negation which Hegel calls 'determinate negation,' is central to his dialectic. Hegel's 'determinate negation' is a process by which concrete contradiction in things results in a determinate negation of them. Hegel called this process *aufheben*, it is the stage in which a concept is preserved and maintained.

In Hegel's philosophy, thoughts are derived from each other and thus shown to form a concrete system rather than a discrete and abstract aggregate. Inwood suggests that one of Hegel's reasons for believing that our concepts must be unifiable in this manner is because concepts form the core essence of the human mind, which would lack an appropriate unity if its concepts were merely an aggregate.⁴² In general, this view is that the abstract is an essential element in logic. In other words, we abstract from the perceptible concrete. Here, concepts are seen initially, but not ultimately, as distinct rather than as an undifferentiated mass. Similarly, in the histories of humanity, of art, of religion, and of philosophy, the abstract is an essential phase. Likewise, Inwood suggests that "[i]n modern society, abstract right, abstract principles and abstract individual are an essential feature, along with the concrete riches of personal, customary, and ethical relationships."⁴³

Freedom and Nature

The concepts of freedom and nature are opposites in Hegel's thought yet, like all opposites in his thought, they are also intimately linked. According to Hegel, freedom lies in the identity of the other within oneself. This, furthermore, involves three distinct aspects. Inwood outlines these in the following manner:

- (1) Man makes the other less alien by his practical activities on it, he reforms his society, cultivates nature, etc.
- (2) He discovers that it is not wholly other by his theoretical activities: empirical and philosophical studies of society, nature, etc. reveal that they embody universal thought.
- (3) He makes it less alien by his theoretical activities on it: to reveal the thought involved in one's society, etc., is not only to discover, but to enhance, its affinity to oneself.⁴⁴

Since self-consciousness also consists in seeing the affinity of the other to oneself, as was shown in the master-slave relation, freedom and self-consciousness advance

together. Likewise, nature becomes associated in Hegel's thought with enslavement, and freedom from the constraints of nature is associated with freedom from enslavement. Isaac Balbus explains that, according to Hegel, in using nature, the Enlightened self-consciousness strives to annul its otherness in order to make it an extension of itself.⁴⁵ Since this self cannot see anything in unmodified nature that resembles itself, the only way it may succeed in seeing itself in nature is through the imposition of its own stamp on nature. This means that nature must be rehabilitated as other than what it is so that humans can recognize themselves within it. Balbus points out that although Hegel does not make it explicit, it is not difficult to detect a significant parallel between his analysis of the inherently flawed nature of the struggle for recognition between master and slave and the shortcoming of the struggle for recognition in the process of objectification.⁴⁶ Just as the master desires but cannot achieve recognition from the slave because the slave no longer appears as an autonomous independent self capable of offering recognition to the master, so also the objectifying consciousness is forced to seek recognition from a nature that lacks the independence to provide it. Hegel shows that the only type of recognition that can be achieved via a completely subjugated or 'annihilated' nature is the recognition of precisely the self that we have imposed upon it. Therefore, objectification fails to make possible any identification between humans and nature, and instead only affects the identification of humans with their mirror image.

According to Hegel, in the struggle for recognition, objectification not only fails to conform to the "proper" notion of recognition but it is also self-defeating. For this reason, Hegel assumes that objectification must pass in favour of a higher form of human

consciousness. Balbus calls the objectification that entails the domination of nature the “instrumental mode of symbolization.”⁴⁷ Balbus suggests that Hegel, in recognizing the aforementioned difficulties inherent to this mode of thought, uses a post-instrumental, post-objectifying mode of symbolization.⁴⁸ This is seen in Hegel’s notion of Absolute Knowledge as a prescription for the ultimate stage of human consciousness. Hegel views this as a relationship between humans and nature that respects the ‘individuality’ of nature and does not encroach upon nature’s ‘independence.’ Alfred Schmidt describes this stage as a sublimation “of human purpose and ‘natural’ matter infused with its own form or purpose -- ‘purposeful’ matter with which we purposeful beings can identify – [. . .].”⁴⁹

The problem of Corporeality in Hegel’s Dialectic

The problem Irigaray is concerned with in Hegel’s dialect is related to abstraction. As will be discussed in the section “Irigaray and the Master-Slave Dialectic,” Hegel is unable to think female agency because of the abstractions that occur within his dialectic. Before discussing how Irigaray views these difficulties and her solution to them, it is helpful to examine Adorno’s criticism of Hegelian dialectic in terms of the problem of abstraction. This is a useful analysis because despite Irigaray’s criticism of Adorno, which will be discussed later, there are significant parallels between Adorno’s and Irigaray’s dialectics.

Adorno is first and foremost critical of Hegel’s dialectic because of its third step, namely, the *Aufhebung*, where the negative is negated and opposites are thus reconciled. The problem Adorno reveals in connection with the second step of the Hegelian dialectic is concerned with abstraction. This will be examined in terms of Adorno’s criticism of Hegel’s prioritizing of the Concept. In turn, this will be analyzed more specifically

regarding what Adorno calls Hegel's lack of language, and the relation between the particular and the universal. These two issues are of importance to Irigaray insofar as language becomes linked with questions of corporeality, and the relation between the particular and the universal are essential for thinking about identity. In Irigaray's case, they are important when thinking about the possibility of sexual difference and female agency.

As mentioned above, Hegel views the negative as 'bad' and thus seeks to develop a dialectic wherein the negative was negated and overcome. As discussed above, in the Hegelian dialectic the opposing moments exist in an ongoing conflict. Hegel maintains that within the dialectic the question remains open whether one or the other moment gets the upper hand. Ultimately, however, the dialectic will come to a standstill. Adorno, on the other hand, does not view the negative as 'bad'. On the contrary, he views the negative as something valuable. Adorno's insistence on negativity is intended to avoid repeating in thought the structures of domination and reification that were present in society. Adorno's negative dialectic is proposed to resist reproducing reality and instead allow consciousness to be critical. Adorno thus develops a different kind of dialectic, that is, a negative dialectic. He maintains that the negative remains a constituent part of the dialectic. As Willem van Reijen explains, in Adorno's dialectic, "[t]he conflicting moments of subject and object, nature and history, form and content remain in fluctuation."⁵⁰ Adorno thus suggests that the negative moment in the dialectic, that is, the second aforementioned step in Hegelian dialectic, cannot be overcome. As a result, the negative moment is preserved, preventing everything from becoming identical with itself.

As Christine Battersby explains, rather than emphasising epistemological questions, Adorno's analysis of modernity focuses on the subject/object dualism and the limits of Kantian and post-Kantian ways of thinking about "objects, bodies, and the 'not-I'."⁵¹ Adorno identifies the contemporary problem of philosophy as the delusion of the possibility of questioning the epistemological primacy of the mind, or Spirit, without moreover critically analyzing the historical circumstances within which questions about the subject arise. Battersby stresses that Adorno's method of negative dialectic is based on determining how conceptions of subject and object belong together and change together.⁵² Such a method can provide valuable insight into Irigaray's criticism of Hegel. In addition to this, Battersby stresses that feminist theory cannot secure its goals by privileging an epistemology of the subject, rather than the metaphysics of the object. Instead of address the problem of the subject, feminist theory must examine the problem of the object.⁵³

It has been argued that Hegel solved the problem implicit in the tension between matter and Spirit by postulating matter as one of Spirit's manifestations, albeit an inferior one. In doing so, Hegel overcomes the traditional dualism of Western philosophy. However, Shlomo Avineri points out that, paradoxically, once the Spirit substance of matter was recognized, that is, once matter was shown to be nothing but Spirit in self-alienation, then matter was also rehabilitated in a manner more momentous than anything previously known to Western philosophy.⁵⁴ Avineri explains that from Hegel on, matter can no longer be thought of as the absolute negation of Spirit or as the complete absence of Spirit, but rather its affirmation. As a result of Hegel's phenomenology of Spirit, only the historical manifestation of matter remains significant.⁵⁵

The meaning of Hegel's dialectical reasoning has significant effects, most profoundly regarding the manner in which 'nature' is to be conceived. Since the material world is but a manifestation of Spirit, or in other words, the manifestation of Hegel's 'Idea', one cannot talk about material manifestations except by means of the 'Idea.' A problem that arises consequently is that of abstraction. Hegel's emphasis on the universal's priority over the particular leads Adorno to criticize Hegel for ontologizing contradictions produced by society. Van Reijen clarifies that Hegel's transformation of the particular and the concrete into abstractions "leads to the control of the abstract over the concrete as empty method gains control over the examined subject due to their 'universal validity'."⁵⁶ Since generalities are placed above the individual subject, the control of man is the logical consequence of the control of the abstract.

Seyla Benhabib explains that in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Adorno and Horkheimer address this issue when they argue that the 'Concept' is the very unit of thought in Western tradition that imposes homogeneity upon the heterogeneity of material.⁵⁷ Adorno further develops this view in the *Negative Dialectics*.

Before discussing Adorno's criticism of Hegel's Concept, it is useful to briefly reiterate what Hegel views as the role of the Concept. As mentioned above, Hegel maintains that the Concept is that level of contradiction where the relation between opposites can only be arrived at through a process of abstraction. Marcuse explains that the logical form of the universal is the Concept.⁵⁸ According to Hegel, the truth and essence of things are in their Concept. Thus, in the Concept, the true essence of things may be expressed. This is to be distinguished from the diversity of the phenomenal existence of

things. All that one can express by language, according to Hegel, is a universal. Anthony Wilden explains that according to Hegel, even if one says “this thing here” one is still expressing something by an abstraction, and can thus never reach the “thing-in-itself.”⁵⁹ As discussed above, Hegel maintains that Understanding through its ability toward abstraction, negates the thing-in-itself. Abstraction, then, provides us with a universal essence in the Concept. This has a further implication, as Wilden suggests that “since the named thing is still a universal, so, too, is the *Ich* (I).”⁶⁰

According to Hegel, concepts are not sharply distinct from the ‘I’. More precisely, without concepts, there is no ‘I’ or understanding, and furthermore, ‘I’ could not abstract from sensory data. More importantly for Hegel, however, is his further reason for identifying the ‘I’ with the Concept, namely, the ‘I’ (and Spirit) forms an intimate unity that can only be explained conceptually. Thus, the ‘I’ “is wholly universal or indeterminate.”⁶¹ As a result, the structure of Hegelian ‘I’ mirrors that of the Concept: it is simultaneously universal, particular and individual. The Concept, like the ‘I’ overreaches that which is other than itself.

Adorno’s criticism of the Hegelian Concept with its tendency to impose homogeneity upon the material is developed through his criticism of Hegel’s identity theory. Susan Buck-Morss explains that Adorno draws from Horkheimer’s critical theory and maintains that reason recognizes its own non-identity with social reality. From Walter Benjamin he draws the idea that nature is non-identical with the categorizing consciousness that passes for rationality.⁶²

In *The Negative Dialectics*, Adorno argues that the identity of subject and object is an illusion. In Hegelian dialectic, the identity of subject and object is attained via cognition and does not allow for the qualitative definition of objects independently of the subject.

Adorno writes:

An object can be conceived only by a subject but always remains something other than the subject, whereas the subject by its very nature is from the outset an object as well. Not even as an idea can we conceive a subject that is not an object; but we can conceive of an object that is not a subject. To be an object is part of the meaning of subjectivity; but it is equally part of the meaning of objectivity to be a subject.⁶³

In terms of this criticism, Buck-Morss explains that this identity took several forms. She says: “subjectivity was a box which entrapped the subject on the one hand; on the other, the subject alternatively dominated the object and yielded to it to the point of extinction.”⁶⁴ Buck-Morss explains that Adorno shows that if, in thinking about reality, the object came to dominate the subject, “the result was the reification of consciousness and the passive acceptance of the status quo [. . .].”⁶⁵ Alternatively, as Buck-Morss elaborates, if the subject came to dominate the world, “the result was the domination of nature and the ideological justification of the status quo.”⁶⁶ Adorno’s criticism of Hegel’s dialectic begins with the conceptual mediation of subject and Concept. Peter Schiefelbein explains that Adorno begins with the mediation of subject and Concept and “focuses on the non-identical, the conceptually undefined and unique which traditional philosophy ignores and surpasses as unimportant qualities.”⁶⁷ It is these qualities of the object which provide Adorno with the possibility of conceiving a way out of the methods of conceptual control inherent to Hegel’s dialectic. Adorno’s criticism of Hegel’s identity theory is taken a step

further insofar as he criticizes Hegel for not recognizing the importance of language. He claims that:

So far as Hegel remains an adept of traditional science, Hegel's dialectic was without language which in the simple literal sense of the word 'dialectic' postulates language [. . .]. [Hegel] did not need language in an emphatic sense, since everything, even the speechless and opaque, was to him to be spirit, and spirit would be the context.⁶⁸

Adorno seeks to develop a new form of philosophical interpretation that does not force concepts into certain identities. Thus, Adorno develops a negative materialistic dialectic that is exemplified by a new understanding of language. This new understanding of language, Adorno emphasizes, is already characterized in the literal meaning of dialectic. Adorno writes: "Dialectics would be, in its literal sense, language as organon of thought [...]."⁶⁹

Schiefelbein suggests that in "These Über die Sprache der Philosophen" Adorno developed important philosophical thoughts on language. Perhaps the most important is the view that "all philosophical criticism is nowadays possible as criticism of language."⁷⁰ This thought is not only expanded and revised in Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*, in a sense it also becomes programmatic in this work. Adorno develops this idea insofar as he argues that the possibility of materialistic dialectic hinges on the ability to provide an essential linguistic moment to the dialectic, and thus reintroduces such a moment against the idealistic conceptual function inherent to Hegelian dialectic.

Adorno criticises Hegel's dialectic for its lack of mimetic expressiveness. Susan Buck-Morss explains that, according to Adorno, "mimesis had its origin in primitive magic, in the Shaman's imitation of nature."⁷¹ Adorno suggests that with the disintegration of magic, mimesis survives as a form of artistic representation.⁷² Adorno uses this idea in a

similar manner with language insofar as he maintains that language and thought are driven by the material world. Buck-Morss explains that Adorno accepts Walter Benjamin's view that the development of language is an advanced form of mimesis, namely, "words imitate nature as non representational correspondence."⁷³ There is a transformational character to the mimetic moment in Adorno's theoretical account. Buck-Morss stresses that this is to be taken quite literally, as "the 'inner logic' of objects [. . .] was transformed into words; and conversely, words [. . .] were transformed into 'images'."⁷⁴

In emphasizing the mimetic character of language, Adorno seeks to criticize Hegel's dialectic in terms of how it works toward the identity of subject and Concept. Mimesis creates the possibility of developing philosophical standards from an objective, conceptual definition of the experienced objects themselves rather than have the objects determined by the subject. Adorno stresses the importance of 'concreteness' and argues that the particular must always be grounded in its dialectical, mediated relation to totality (but not the closed system of the Hegelian totality). According to Buck-Morss, for Adorno "the object was thus *more* than itself, and knowledge of it was more than the tautological $A=A$."⁷⁵ The mimetic experience allows one to try to understand one's intellectual structuralization of objects. Schiefelbein explains that the mimetic experience shows that "the transcendence of a single thing which is complexly connected with infinite nature as well as history [. . .] cannot be forced into a final identity with the concept."⁷⁶

Adorno thus stresses that the concepts used in philosophical description reflect the non-identity of Concepts and subjects. This in turn prevents subjects from being open in their own transcendence towards something else. This exposes the fiction of Hegel's

identity of the subject and the Concept. This falsehood, according to Adorno, reveals itself both in Hegel's sublation of the subject under the identity of the Concept, and in the ideological form when historical definitions are brought forward as natural.

Truth as mimetic, linguistic representation means calling things by their right names. Buck-Morss explains that "the name" for Adorno becomes of paramount importance because it paid attention to the object's non-identity insofar as the name identified the object as particular and unique.⁷⁷ In the name, Adorno saw the possibility of using language that imitated nature as opposed to the Hegelian Concept which relegated nature to a subordinate status. For Adorno, the linguistic realm is intertwined with, and infused by a non-identical extralinguistic aspect that is 'always already' and 'not yet'. Romand Coles explains that the non-identical is 'always already' insofar as our linguistic consciousness emerges and is tinted by a "dense and specific corporeality with multiplicitous material relations with the world."⁷⁸ Adorno writes:

The somatic moment as the not purely cognitive part of cognition is irreducible [. . .]. The very fact that the subject's cognitive achievements are somatic in accordance with their own meaning affects not only the basic relation of subject and object but the dignity of physicality.⁷⁹

Adorno stresses that linguistic shading of sensations demonstrates that certain facts cannot be purely moments of cognition. A conscious constitution of the body is, therefore, an illusion.

Coles further explains that, according to Adorno, the non-identical is 'not yet' inasmuch as linguistic thoughts "point to entities which they have not posited, and whose fundamental non-identity cannot be abolished by any further thought processes."⁸⁰ Adorno stresses "[t]here is no Being without entities [. . .]. Without 'something' there is no

thinkable formal logic.”⁸¹ Hegel’s system, with its emphasis on the primacy of the subject is thus idealistically biased.

Adorno’s case for non-identity is of great significance. It implies that the discrepancy between particular and general, and likewise individual and universal, is not merely due to, as Coles suggests, “the diremption of a totality from which reason has separated itself,” but also to “an *ineliminable characteristic* for our inscription in the world”⁸² According to Adorno, the discrepancies we encounter are, in fact, a result of an elemental non-identity between general and particular that simply cannot be overcome.

Hegel’s Spirit is posited and its purpose is to overcome the negative, that is, to overcome nature and corporeality. However, through his criticism of Hegel’s identity theory and the lack of language in Hegelian dialectic, Adorno shows that the attempts to overcome nature and human corporeality in the Concept are not possible. The mimetic nature of language and the somatic moment of language demonstrates that nature is an inalienable part of our existence. Furthermore, Hegel’s dialectic, which does attempt to overcome the natural, and which stipulates that the individual is but abstracted from the universal, cannot take account of human experience in terms of differences that occur precisely because of corporeality. This is indeed a serious criticism, since historically discrimination has occurred precisely because of differences not merely at the level of a person’s ability of conscious thought, but rather because of corporeal differences.

Balbus suggests that, because Hegel posits human history as merely a vehicle for the development of Spirit, he mystifies the crucial problems of the origins and possible transformations of the different modes of symbolization.⁸³ Hegel’s view that

objectification inevitably gives way to Absolute Knowledge is thus of little comfort for those who presently suffer under objectification and who aspire to contribute to the emergence of Spirit.

Balbus draws on Norman Brown's argument in which he claims that while the instrumental mode of symbolization is rooted in a strong denial of death, post-instrumental symbolization can only flourish in the acceptance of death.⁸⁴ That Hegel was indeed aware of this is quite evident insofar as he described Absolute Knowledge as the end of history. However, what Hegel was not, and could not be aware of was the importance of the body. Since Hegel lacked Freud's understanding of "the demands made upon the mind in the consequence of its connection with the body,"⁸⁵ Hegel could not understand that a transformation in the consciousness of death and time demands a transformation of an unconscious that is formed in a struggle between the demands of its mother and the demands of its body. Balbus explains that aggression toward the mother, combined with the hostility that the modern individual feels concerning his mortal body, is the basis of the extroversion of the death instinct in the form of aggression toward nature.⁸⁶ Hegel, however, lacked the conception of the instinctual roots of the instrumental mode of symbolization, and as a consequence, He had no understanding of the instinctual transformation necessary for the post-instrumental mode of symbolization. Therefore, Hegel saw his only option to "spiritualize" the transition from objectification to Absolute Knowledge. It will be important to return to Hegel's notion of nature and how it is affected by his Concept, since it will shed light on how I view the function of Irigaray's image of

blood. Before doing this, however, it is useful to discuss how women figure in Hegel's system.

The Fate of 'Woman' in Hegelian Dialectic

'Woman' in Hegel

Hegel did not explicitly believe that the differences between men and women are naturally defined, however, he viewed men and women as part of the Spirit of people. Hegel makes clear that he views only one set of family relations as well as only one particular division of labour between the sexes as rational. This is the European nuclear family, in which the woman is confined to the private sphere of the family, and man to the public sphere. In this section, I will elucidate Hegel's view on woman through an examination of his views in three distinct, yet related beliefs. The first is exemplified by the place to which he designates her, namely, the family. The second is revealed in the natural inclinations he attributes her, that is, emotive. The third is illustrated in his view about love. This is strongly reinforced in a letter in which Hegel voices his disgust about Caroline Schelling who, like some of the women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century, especially in the Romantic circle, achieved a large degree of social and sexual emancipation. It is natural to ask whether Hegel's views on women were merely a consequence of his conservative times. This is an important question. However, my aim is to ask an additional question: Given Hegel's views on women, does his dialectic stop at women, condemning them to an ahistorical existence, and excluding them from objective self-consciousness, and the World Spirit?

Hegel maintains that the family is the sphere of the woman, and that women should be excluded from activities associated with civil society and likewise the state. Inwood points out that the family, in Hegel's time much as now, meant both "a community of parents and children," and "a wider, blood related 'kinship' group."⁸⁷ Hegel's view on women was shared by most philosophers, both of Hegel's time and earlier. Hegel discusses women and family in two main contexts. Inwood points out that the first place in which Hegel considers women and family is in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* VI A.a. Under the heading of Spirit, Hegel deliberates on Greek ethical life as reflected in Greek tragedy. In particular, Hegel focuses on Sophocles's *Antigone*. As indicated below, Inwood explains that Hegel identifies two laws by which Greek society was governed.⁸⁸ The first of these is the unwritten law of the nether gods, namely, the sacred law of the family which binds the living with the dead, and which prescribes the spiritualization of death through proper funeral rites. Respect for this law, as well as the general safeguarding of the family, is a duty assigned to woman. The second law Hegel identifies as governing Greek society is the public human law, in other words, the law of the state that is decreed by the Olympian gods. This domain is designated to men. For example, in Sophocles's *Antigone*, it is Creon, the ruler, who has forbidden the burial of Antigone's brother Polynices.

The second context in which Hegel addresses women and the family is in the *Philosophy of Right*.⁸⁹ Here, Hegel considers the family as the first, immediate phase of ethical life. The ethical, however, requires that "raw, sensual urges" be sublated into the institution of marriage, and also that the individual be prepared for participation within civil society and the state. In Hegel's view, the family is the sphere of the woman who

“has her substantive destiny in the family, and to be imbued with familial piety is her ethical frame of mind.”⁹⁰ Hegel’s belief that the family is women’s proper place is related to his association of women with feeling, affection, and instinct, rather than reason or understanding. This belief is defended by Hegel due to his view of the so-called natural determinacies of the sexes. He writes:

Thus one sex is mind in its self-diremption into explicit self-subsistence and the knowledge and volition of free universality, i.e. the self-consciousness of conceptual thought and volition of the objective final end. The other sex is mind maintaining itself in the unity as knowledge and volition in the form of concrete individuality and feeling. In relation to externality, the former is powerful and active, the latter passive and subjective. It follows that man has his actual substantive life in the state, in learning, and so forth, as well as in labour and struggle with the external world with himself so that it is only of his diremption that he fights his way to self-subsistent unity with himself. In the family he has a tranquil intuition of this unity, and here he lives a subjective ethical life on the plane of feeling. Woman, on the other hand, has her substantive destiny in the family, and to be imbued with family piety is her ethical frame of mind.⁹¹

According to Hegel, men’s lives are concerned with the state, and with work in the external world. Because man can divide himself from the unity of the family, he is able to objectify the external world and thus conquer it through activity and freedom. Benhabib explains that, in Hegel’s view, women’s lives are limited to the family and, thus, in the “unity and piety characteristic of the private sphere.”⁹² Furthermore, according to Hegel, women are not *individuals* in the same sense that men are, because women are incapable of the spiritual struggle and diremption which explicitly distinguish the lives of men. In Hegel’s treatment of Antigone in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he indicates that for the woman “it is not *this* man, not *this* child, but *man* and *children in general*” that is significant.⁹³ On the other hand, Hegel maintains that man is capable of individuating his desire, and “since he possesses as a citizen the self-conscious power of universality, he

thereby acquires the right of desire and, at the same time, preserves his freedom in regard to it.”⁹⁴

The third aforementioned instance where Hegel’s view of women is exemplified in his views on love. In Hegel’s early writings, such as the *Early Theological Writings*, he was influenced by the romantics’ view of love, for example Friedrich von Schlegel’s novel *Lucinde*. The romantics stressed love rather than civil rights, and believed that marriage loses its meaning when love ends. However, in Hegel’s later writings, such as the *Philosophy of Right*, he subordinates love to rationality. Hegel believes that marriage originates in love but, as a rational social institution, it must “outlast the contingencies of passion.”⁹⁵ This view, along with a strong normative view to its correctness, is reflected in the letters Hegel writes to Immanuel Niethammer before and after the death of Caroline Schelling.

As outlined below, Benhabib relates important aspects about the life of Caroline Schelling and some of the events that preceded the letters that Hegel wrote.⁹⁶ Caroline Schlegel Shelling (born Caroline Albertina Michaelis) was born to a professor of the Old Testament and was brought up in an intellectual environment. In the traditional patterns of her time, at a young age she was married to a country doctor, Georg Böhmer, and moved from Göttingen to Clausthal, a mining village in the Hartz. After her husband’s death in 1788, Caroline returned to Göttingen and met August Wilhelm Schlegel, six years younger than she, who fell in love with her. In 1792, Caroline left Göttingen for Mainz. In the same year, the city fell to the French under Custine; the aristocrats fled and the republic was proclaimed. Caroline stayed and worked with revolutionary circles. In the following

year, the German army retook Mainz and Caroline was arrested and imprisoned. Caroline's brother petitioned for her release, offering his services as an army surgeon in return. Wilhelm August Schlegel also helped to obtain her freedom. After Caroline was freed, she was banned from the Rhenish provinces, including her home town Göttingen. Since Caroline was also pregnant, expecting the child of a French soldier, August Wilhelm arranged for Caroline to be cared for by his brother Friedrich. In 1796, with pressure from her family, Caroline married August Schlegel. Despite bearing a child with him, she never loved him. In 1798, she met Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, and they fell in love. In 1803, Caroline and Schlegel were divorced and a few months later she married Schelling.

Benhabib points out that Hegel lived in the same house as Caroline and Schelling from 1801 to 1803.⁹⁷ He was thus in the presence of a remarkable woman, an intellectual, a revolutionary, a mother, and a lover. This should have provided Hegel with an idea regarding what modernity, the Enlightenment, and the French revolution could mean for women. But Hegel did not approve. In his biography on Hegel, Terry Pinkard notes Hegel's difficult relation toward strong women such as Caroline. He suggests that Hegel not only had a particular dislike for Caroline, but generally "[...] never had an easy time with independent women [...]."⁹⁸

Although officially the relations between Hegel and Caroline were cordial, Hegel made his views of Caroline more open upon the Schelling's departure from Jena. In a letter to Immanuel Niethammer's wife in 1807, Hegel mentioned that the wife of a new friend of his was also a friend of Caroline Schelling. He disdainfully added, "her friendship with Mrs. Schelling might perhaps -- depending on *one's* judgement of the latter -- add some

timidity to one's curiosity to get to know her."⁹⁹ Pinkard notes that Hegel's negative attitude toward Caroline also emerged in some comments he made after her death in a letter to Immanuel Niethammer.¹⁰⁰ Referring to Caroline, Hegel wrote, "a few here have enunciated the hypothesis that the Devil had fetched her."¹⁰¹ Hegel made it quite evident that he shared this low opinion of Caroline, and made his own views rather plain. With reference to Niethammer's wife and Caroline Schelling, he wrote the following:

I kiss a thousand times over the beautiful hands of the best woman. God may and shall preserve her as benefits her merit ten times longer than the woman of whose death we recently learned here [Caroline Schelling.]¹⁰²

For Hegel, Caroline, provided an example of the kinds of changes that were taking place in women's lives at the time, namely, the new possibilities opening for women and the transformations in gender relations. Hegel's views on women cannot merely be attributed to falling prey to the prejudices of his time. Indeed, Hegel's time was revolutionary, even in the circles closest to Hegel. Benhabib points out that it was widely believed that Caroline was the model for the heroine in Friedrich Schlegel's novel *Lucinde*.¹⁰³ As mentioned above, eventually Hegel came to criticize the romantics' conception of love.

Hegel's view on women is most likely due to his bold agenda. As Allen W. Wood suggests, "[f]or Hegel, dialectic or dialectic reason constituted part of an ambitious program to canonize his system of speculative logic [. . .] as the metaphysical basis for philosophical reason in general."¹⁰⁴

Hegel's dialectic, which was part of a much larger system, could not function without the division he makes between the public and the private realm, and between the

respective positions of man and woman within it. It is interesting to note Hegel's characterization of the sexes in a manuscript which he wrote sometime between the summer and fall of 1805. The manuscript in question, known as *Third Jena System Draft Philosophy of Nature and Philosophy of Spirit* and was not published in Hegel's lifetime, is of interest because, as Pinkard suggests, "in it, Hegel suddenly appears as Hegel, almost in his full voice, much as he was to appear for the rest of his life."¹⁰⁵ Hegel's characterization of the sexes in this manuscript is largely consistent with the views he held from youth until death, with very little modification. Hegel describes the differences between the sexes in terms of activity and passivity, knowing and not knowing, animal and plant, and so on. For example, in the margins of the manuscript, Hegel writes: "[t]he man has desires, impulses; the feminine impulse is rather to be only the object of impulse; to *entice*, to awaken impulse and to allow it to satisfy itself in it."¹⁰⁶

The Master-Slave Dialectic Revisited

In the following sections I will return to Hegel's master-slave relation. The first aim is to highlight some of the difficulties that arise with regard to the notion of woman. I maintain that for an understanding of what Irigaray proposes with the image of blood, we have to focus on the difficulties that arise as a result of Hegel's notion of nature. His notion of nature is informed by the function of the Concept in his dialectical thinking. The functioning of the Concept, as will be seen, is responsible for abstractions that do violence to the notion of woman. I will thus be laying the groundwork for demonstrating the problems inherent to Hegel's idea that the concept introduces difference into unitary nature.

The reason for highlighting this is that I believe it is a central part of understanding where Irigaray's image of blood takes her away from the Hegelian dialectic. In the sections on the image of blood, and in more detail in the final chapter, I argue that Irigaray, as a philosopher of nature, believes that philosophy needs to be able to respond to sexual difference in a way that doesn't rely on the Hegelian Concept.

Although Hegel's view of the husband-wife relationship is sometimes associated with his account of the master-slave relation in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Inwood stresses that such an association was wrong.¹⁰⁷ Such a correlation may lead to the belief that Hegel saw the wife as the husband's slave or servant, and perhaps, like the slave, the wife may find fulfillment or liberation in the work she does for her husband. Several reasons lead one to conclude that the association of the husband-wife relation in Hegel's thought is not a form of the master-slave relation. As outlined below, Inwood notes that three important things suggest that Hegel never intended the master-slave relation to be descriptive of the relation between husband and wife.¹⁰⁸ Firstly, in Hegel's day domestic servitude was widespread and, in Hegel's class, women were not expected to work in the house. Secondly, the master-slave relation is a concept that goes back to Aristotle, for whom the husband's rule over the wife was analogous to the rule of a citizen over his fellow citizens. It must be stressed that this kind of rule was quite different from the 'despotic' rule of master over slave. There does not appear to be any evidence in Hegel's writings that his master-slave relation deviates from this tradition. Thirdly, Antigone was viewed by Hegel as the ideal woman, and she was nobody's slave or servant.

Simone de Beauvoir's application of Hegel's master-slave relation to the male-female relation is not a relation that Hegel would have explicitly endorsed. Nonetheless, the manner in which Beauvoir applies this relation provides feminism with a valuable insight into Hegel's dialectic and with options for evaluating women's position in philosophical discourse. Beauvoir made a very important contribution to feminism in her analysis of the master-slave relation. She argued that in patriarchy the subject is masculine. Furthermore, when applied to the male-female relation, Hegel's master-slave relation demonstrates that women occupy the position of the object. Further philosophical contributions can be made by considering Hegel's master-slave relation. This is precisely what Irigaray does, albeit in a different manner than Beauvoir. Irigaray argues that the master-slave dialectic, and the philosophical framework it legitimates gives feminism a strong argument for not limiting itself to the work of changing cultural identifications which define the feminine. Indeed, as Tina Chanter explains, feminism must also question what it means to act as 'woman' in relation to those cultural definitions.¹⁰⁹

Irigaray and Beauvoir on the Master-Slave Dialectic

Before proceeding with examining Irigaray and the master-slave relation, it is useful to briefly delineate Irigaray's position from that of Simone de Beauvoir. Irigaray's position on the Hegelian dialectic and, more precisely, what happens to the notion of woman, is perhaps best expressed by comparing her position to that of Simone de Beauvoir on the notion of subjectivity. Naomi Schor makes a valuable observation when she notes that, despite Beauvoir's and Irigaray's dramatically opposed positions, both feminists share a fundamental grounding conviction that, under the social arrangement known as patriarchy

the subject is exclusively male, and masculinity and subjectivity are coextensive notions.¹¹⁰ It is important to explain the fundamental difference in the theoretical positions of Beauvoir and Irigaray. Understanding how these thinkers diverge helps shed light on what Irigaray suggests the Hegelian dialectic does to the concept of woman.

In particular, Simone de Beauvoir identified two important issues in feminist theory. She pointed to the issue of women's social construction as inferior, and the status of woman as other. It is the former that Beauvoir addressed in her work. Chanter explains that Beauvoir, writing from an existential standpoint, assumed that by adopting a reflective distance upon the defining conditions of one's life, one could rise above and transcend any situation.¹¹¹ This standpoint suggests that the individual should be able to become aware of and objectify the situation she is in. Yet the second important issue Beauvoir identified, namely, woman's status as other, she did not analyze in sufficient detail. Irigaray approaches this project by explicitly rethinking woman as other. Chanter explains that Beauvoir retained the Hegelian idea that "true alterity -- otherness, is that of a consciousness separate from mine and substantially identical with mine."¹¹² This, however, means that Beauvoir's project does not entail thinking woman's otherness from a woman's perspective. The language Beauvoir subscribes to -- such as, overcoming otherness, transcending the in-itself, becoming a subject -- can be compromising for the individuality of women if it is not employed carefully and not put into question at every step. For Irigaray, to simply eliminate the idea of woman's otherness is not to overcome oppression. Rather, in some sense, it is to remain captive to it. Irigaray believes it is necessary to reject the philosophical framework legitimated by the master-slave dialectic,

that is, the male only framework. Thinking about how woman's otherness figures in Irigaray's writings helps shed some light on how the image of blood functions in her writings. A first step in this direction relies on illustrating how Irigaray's position differs from that of Beauvoir.

The aforementioned difference between Beauvoir and Irigaray on the notion of woman as other is explained by Whitford as follows: "when Beauvoir identified woman as Other, she was in Irigarayan terms, pointing to their status as 'other of the same.'"¹¹³ This was the only alternative Beauvoir had envisioned, namely, to argue for sameness: women should accede to the world of men. Beauvoir accepts a basically Hegelian view of transcendence and, thus, does not question the transcendence/immanence split. The difference in Irigaray's project is precisely the manner in which she attempts to think about the image of woman, that is, she conceives of the possibility of an 'other of the other'. In doing so, Whitford suggests that Irigaray recasts the Hegelian problematic altogether.¹¹⁴

It becomes clear that the primary difference between Beauvoir and Irigaray lies in their respective theoretical position toward the universal. Since Beauvoir relies on Hegel's master-slave dialectic, she attributes no importance to the fact that Hegel's concept of the other, as elaborated in the master-slave dialectic, is exclusively male. Because she fails to recognize this, Beauvoir subscribes to a totalizing way of thinking. This is a model from which Irigaray and others distanced themselves, insofar as they examine what it may mean to envision experience from a female perspective. Chanter stresses that because Beauvoir retains the Hegelian idea that "true alterity -- otherness is that of a consciousness separate from mine and yet substantially identical with mine," Beauvoir "does not carry out her

project of thinking woman as other from a woman's point of view."¹¹⁵ Schor clarifies that in Beauvoir's theorizing the subject is the familiar Hegelian subject of existential ethics, "a heroic figure locked in a life and death struggle with the not-self, chiefly the environment and the other."¹¹⁶ For Beauvoir, subjectivity is activity. Schor explains that it "is activity, a restless projection into the future, a glorious surpassing of the iterativity of everyday life."¹¹⁷ Transcendence is open to the male subject, but the fall from transcendence to immanence is women's lot. Beauvoir's theory of subjectivity reinstates the most traditional allotment of Western metaphysics where positivity lines up with activity, while passivity, and with it, femininity, are lined up with negativity. Nonetheless, Beauvoir does view liberation for women as possible. Liberation consists in emerging from "the dark cave of immanence to the light of transcendence."¹¹⁸

Irigaray's position fundamentally differs insofar as she is concerned with the radical reconceptualization of the (male) subject that characterizes post-Sartrean French thought. Irigaray's subject is a diminished subject that bears little resemblance to the sovereign all purposeful subject of existential philosophy. What is crucial for understanding Irigaray's position is that the main attribute of the subject is not activity, as it is for Beauvoir; rather, for Irigaray, the subject's main attribute is language. Schor elaborates that for Irigaray "the *homo faber* that serves as Beauvoir's mover gives way to *homo parlans*."¹¹⁹ Schor explains that Irigaray's subject is thus a speaking subject. To be more precise, it is a pronoun, the first person singular "I."¹²⁰ Furthermore, it must be noted that this pronoun, under the current so-called patriarchal social arrangements, is preempted by men.

For Irigaray, if women are to acquire subjectivity, they must become speaking subjects in their own right. It is precisely at this juncture that the major difference between Beauvoir and Irigaray emerges. Taking from Anthony Appiah the notion of the “classic dialectic,” Schor explains that “whereas for Beauvoir the goal is for women to share fully in the privileges of the transcendental subject, for Irigaray the goal is for women to achieve subjectivity without merging tracelessly into the putative indifference of the shifter.”¹²¹ What requires stressing here is the question of what is at stake for these two feminist discourses. It is not the status of difference which is at stake, but, rather, the status of the universal. More precisely, when Irigaray projects women as speaking a sexually marked language, she is far less concerned with theorizing female specificity than with demystifying the oppressive fiction of a universal subject. Irigaray stresses that *parler femme* is above all not to speak universal. As will be seen, the notion of universality is tied to the notion of the unity of nature. In other words, the Hegelian universal (male) subject is theoretically dependent on the flawed notion of a unitary (female) nature.

To clarify Irigaray’s position with regard to the dialectic, and what this dialectic does to the notion of woman, the role played by the concept of the other needs to be explained. Otherness in Beauvoir’s system is absolute negativity. Irigaray’s project is diametrically opposed to Beauvoir’s. However, it must be viewed as its necessary corollary. In other words, while Beauvoir lays bare the mechanism of othering, Irigaray reveals the mechanisms of what may be called ‘saming.’ As a result of this theoretical difference, Schor claims the following:

If othering involves attributing to the objectified other a difference that serves to legitimate her oppression, saming denies the objectified other the right to her

difference, submitting the other to the laws of the phallic specificity. If othering assumes that the other is knowable, saming precludes any knowledge of the other in her otherness. If exposing the logic of othering -- whether it be women, Jews, or other victims of demeaning stereotyping -- is a necessary step in achieving equality, saming is a necessary step in toppling the universal from his/(her) pedestal.¹²²

Irigaray's position suggests a different conception of the self-other relationship from that of Beauvoir. It is useful to explain this difference because it helps highlight how differently 'woman' figures within Irigaray's theorizing as opposed to how she figures in the theories of those who embrace a Hegelian universalization of the individual.

In an interview, Irigaray stresses that woman's access to subjectivity has been systematically limited and for this reason she argues that it is necessary for women to define a new female subjective identity.¹²³ Throughout her works, Irigaray specifies the female as other, and in doing so she maintains that because women's exploitation is based upon sexual difference, the solution can only come through sexual difference. Chanter explains that there is, as Irigaray calls it, a "double gesture" involved.¹²⁴ In addressing the issue of sexual difference, we need to both interpret and to deny that sexual difference should lead to exploitation. It is precisely because sexual difference has been used in the past to exploit, that Irigaray seeks to reinvent the notion of sexual difference to free it from male history and, ultimately, to read it positively in order to give rise to a new image of woman and the possibility of female subjectivity free of the exploitations of patriarchal discourse. As will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Lacan Irigaray maintains that difference is not dealt with in a positive manner in masculine theory. In other words, the female sex is not viewed positively. As discussed above and as will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Irigaray philosophy's of nature, the feminine is dealt with in

Hegelian theory as either the necessary other or at best something that is overcome in the development of Spirit. A similar move is made in Lacanian theory, where the female is placed as the opposite of the masculine. In this sense Irigaray often refers to the problem of sexual difference as a problem of sexual indifference.

Irigaray and the Master-Slave Dialectic:

Irigaray has always been a serious reader of Hegel. She often addresses Hegel in stylistically different modes as seen in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, in “An Ethics of Sexual Difference” in the book by the same title, certain essays in *Sexes and Genealogies*, and in *I Love to You*. Nonetheless, in all of these she is questioning the concept of the Hegelian negative. In a sense, as Gail Schwab suggests, these works are to Hegel what the “Blind Spot” is to Freud.¹²⁵ In other words, in the same manner as Irigaray demonstrates that in Freudian theory woman is the lack upon which man’s identity is built, for Hegel woman is the necessary negation, the otherness from which (masculine) self-consciousness or Spirit returns to itself from Being-Other.

In understanding Irigaray’s criticism of Hegel, it must be kept in mind that Irigaray, like many other French thinkers, is reading Hegel after Lacan. In Irigaray’s case this is of special importance for two reasons. Firstly, Irigaray, as a psychoanalyst, often uses these theories in her philosophical criticisms. Secondly, in her ‘dialogue’ with Hegel in *Speculum*, Lacan, though not directly named, is clearly there as she engages with his theories alongside those of Hegel.

Irigaray perceives the abstraction in dialectical reason proposed by Hegel as problematic. Hegel’s master-slave relation, the motor of his dialectic of history, gives way

to world Spirit. But if the concrete material is merely a manifestation of Spirit, or the universal, and the latter is in Hegel's dialectic, the place in which opposites are reconciled, then Irigaray maintains that woman's difference cannot be represented within the Idea or Spirit. Likewise woman, as woman, cannot accede to subjectivity. The reasons for this are twofold and closely linked. Firstly, as Chanter observes, in Hegel's master-slave dialectic, there is no mention of woman; both master and slave are men.¹²⁶ Since the dialectic takes place between two male selves, it is an exclusively male model. Secondly, as Mary O'Brian explains, Hegel's master and slave are inaugurating human history and transcendence of nature in conditions under which the institution of patriarchy is already established.¹²⁷ Pheng Cheah and Elizabeth Grosz suggest that, according to Irigaray, the establishment of patriarchy "is co-extensive with the Human subject's disavowal of his indebtedness to nature and to his loss of respect of the nature in him."¹²⁸ The reduction of nature as brute object to be overcome and dominated is a foundational axiom of Western philosophy. Cheah and Grosz suggest that this "leads Hegel to characterize dialectical development as the estrangement of the individual from nature."¹²⁹

The two aforementioned reasons combined, namely, that the dialectic takes place between two male selves, and the fact that patriarchy is already established, entail that Hegel's conception of the master-slave dialectic, when applied to the male-female relationship, is fundamentally irreversible. Thus, woman remains the other, the object, and cannot, as woman, accede to universal self-consciousness, nor to subjectivity.

Irigaray addresses the problem inherent to the Hegelian dialectic through the figure of Antigone. Below, I will examine how she engages with Hegel based on Hegel's

treatment of Antigone. Hegel deals with the figure of Antigone in several subsections of a chapter entitled “The *true* Spirit. The Ethical Order.” In this part of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel shifts from analyzing subjective spirit in the chapters on self consciousness and reason. He turns to an analysis of the realm of objective Spirit. In a section of this chapter entitled “The ethical world. Human and Divine Law: Man and Woman” Hegel discusses how the substance of Spirit as consciousness is divided into the antithesis of individuality and universality. Furthermore, in dealing with ethical issues, there is the duality of individuality and of universality. Antigone appears in the context of Hegel’s account of Spirit in his discussion of the ethical life of the Greek world. In this context, Hegel explains that this form of Spirit is characterized by an ethical life of which it is not self-consciously self-determining. Rather, ethical life is determined by divine and human law. Divine law, for instance, requires that the dead be given a proper burial and ceremony. Human law, on the other hand, is linked with the power of the city and the ability of its people to create and maintain a self-legislating group. Hegel maintains that each of these laws, while they may be experienced as distinct, are in fact maintained by one another. Importantly, and as the title of this section suggests, these two realms of obligation are linked to a division of labor between women and men. Hegel explains that while men are associated with the city and human law, “woman is associated with these household gods [Penates] and beholds in them both substance and her particular individuality [. . .].”¹³⁰ Furthermore, Hegel characterizes the family, woman’s place, as the unconscious that stands opposed to the Universal Spirit.

This distinction between divine and human law and women and men's duty has an important implication. In discussing Antigone's actions in her defiance of Creon's ruling which forbade the burial of her brother, Hegel maintains that Antigone's actions are not self-conscious. He explains that "the feminine, in the form of the sister, has the highest *intuitive* awareness of what is ethical. She does not attain *consciousness* of it [. . .] because the law of the family [. . .] is not exposed to the daylight of consciousness, but remains an inner feeling and the divine element that is exempt from an existence in the real world"¹³¹ In other words, women, because they are confined to the realm of the family, are incapable of objective ethical self-consciousness.

In this section, in addition to the distinctive obligations of women and men, Hegel suggests that women are incapable of desire. Hegel explains that "[woman's] vocation as an individual and in her pleasure, her interest is centered on the universal and remains alien to the particularity of desire [. . .]."¹³² Man, on the other hand, is capable of leaving the realm of the family and taking part as a citizen. As a citizen he partakes in the realm of human law and thus processes the self-conscious power of universality. Man is thus capable of desire.

By treating the figure of Antigone in several of her works, Irigaray addresses the problems inherent to Hegel's dialectic.¹³³ The first of these appears in "The Eternal Irony of the community", *Speculum of the Other Woman*. As mentioned above, in this chapter of *Speculum*, Irigaray begins with a passage from Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* in which Hegel discusses the effusion of blood in man, and in woman's menstrual cycle. In this essay, Irigaray reads Hegel as giving an account of Antigone as a woman who is the

substance that feeds and sustains the human community and yet cannot be recuperated within it. In Hegel's meditation on Antigone, he gives an account of the triumph of human law and masculine authority. Hegel recognizes that Antigone, as woman, evades full capitulation to masculine authority. Irigaray appears to accept the ethical nature of the realm of divine law as it is developed in Hegel's account. Yet Irigaray's re-reading of the story of Antigone is heavily influenced by Hegel's account that appears to link the contrast between divine and human law with the contrast between natural or unconscious being and spiritual or conscious being. The divine law that is entrenched in 'earth' and 'blood' enables the transformation of nature into spirit. Furthermore, it allows for the transformation of contingent being to ethical being. Human law thus remains tied to the non-spiritual world. Human law, however, is concerned with the transformation of material nature for the development of Spirit and consciousness. Irigaray underscores Hegel's masculine view of the overcoming of otherness (and woman) as well as his denial of a proper place for woman in Spirit. She does so by questioning his dialectic that places the difference between the sexes as essential in the development of Spirit. I maintain that at the basis of this is an inherent critique of Hegel's notion of nature and the function of the Concept. I believe that Irigaray's image of blood is a way in which she questions Hegel's treatment of nature that is also contingent upon the function of the Concept.

It is thus helpful to examine the manner in which Irigaray employs the image of blood in this essay and elsewhere when addressing Hegel. Irigaray begins to make her case against Hegel by pointing to another important passage. The passage in question is related to Hegel's meditation on the relationship between Antigone and her brother. Hegel

describes the brother-sister relationship as representing the male-female relationship in its purest form. Hegel writes:

They are the same blood which has, however, in them reached a state of equilibrium. Therefore, they do not desire one another [. . .] they are free individualities in regard to each other.¹³⁴

In pointing to this passage, Irigaray wants to put into question the notion of ‘sameness’. Irigaray questions what Hegel means when he claims that Antigone and her brother are of the “same blood.” In doing so, Irigaray questions whether this means that they share in the blood supplied by the same mother, or whether they share in the same sperm.¹³⁵ Through these questions, Irigaray opens a division between “sang-rouge” (red blood), which is to represent matrilineal descent, and “sang-blanc” (white-blood), representing patrilineity.

The play on words which Irigaray uses here is important. As Whitford explains, the French “sang-blanc” is a homophone for “semblant,” which in English means the “the appearance” or the equation of “the appearance” with the “other of the same.”¹³⁶ What Irigaray is trying to show here is that ‘red-blood’ is opposed to ‘white-blood,’ and that the maternal genealogy is opposed to the semblance. It is interesting to note Whitford’s observation that “Sang,” the French word for blood, is also a semi-homophone of ‘sens,’ which translates into English as “meaning.”¹³⁷ With this example, Irigaray shows that red-blood and likewise matrilineage cannot be recuperated into the masculine economy. As we shall discover, Irigaray is also much showing more concerning Hegel’s dialectic.

As discussed below, Christine Battersby claims that Irigaray exploits the problem of what it means to be of the “same blood” and, in doing so, questions the sense of equilibrium and individuality.¹³⁸ Irigaray questions the blood lines, the paths of desire, and

the whole equilibrium of Hegel's 'spiritualized' nature. In doing so, Battersby suggests that "civil (patrilineal) society and (male) universals and individuality are also put into question."¹³⁹

Irigaray's essay "An Ethics of Sexual Difference" in her book by the same title, returns to Hegel's treatment of Antigone. In this essay, Irigaray meditates on the problem of sexual difference by returning to the relation between Antigone and Polynices. She suggests that an ethical imperative should require revisiting the role historically allotted to women. She maintains, however, that philosophy and discourse have not evolved quickly enough to respond to this need. Irigaray turns to look at developments in science and at the same time underscores the limitations of the notion of the subject. Irigaray asks:

[m]ust we assume that the Copernican revolution has occurred but that the epistemological subject has yet to act on it and move beyond it? The discourse of the subject has been altered but finds itself even more disturbed by this revolution than the language of the world which preceded it.¹⁴⁰

Revealingly, Irigaray does not only speak about philosophy but also about the physical sciences, the biological sciences, the linguistic sciences and psychoanalytical sciences. Irigaray points out that underlying all these forms of inquiry is the belief in so-called objectivity. In this essay, she puts into question the very idea of objectivity in the sciences. At the basis of this questioning is Irigaray's view that the subject cannot be objective because firstly, it is masculine, and secondly, it has a skewed relation to nature. It is the second of these observations that I find of particular importance and I believe constitutes the basis of the first. Irigaray explains that the scientist stands in front of the world "[m]anipulating nature, exploiting it, but forgetting that he too is *in* nature."¹⁴¹

In this essay, Irigaray points to a forgotten debt to the maternal, and the natural which is at the root of the problem of the masculine subject. There has been a lot written on the topic of the debt to the maternal. For the purpose of the interest at hand, however, I believe this debt to the maternal, and the natural may be seen as a way of recalling that theorization must respect what is given in nature. In other words, in order to avoid doing violence in thought, thought must be guided by what is given in nature. As Irigaray points out “[l]anguage, however formal it may be, feeds on blood, on flesh, on material elements. Who and what has nourished language?”¹⁴²

In the introductory essay of *Sexes and Genealogies*, Irigaray returns again to the figure of Antigone. Irigaray claims that Hegel pointed out something very important with regard to the relationship between the sexes.¹⁴³ However, this important point is lost in the implications of his view on the Spirit of people. This very important relation between the sexes is found in Hegel’s treatment of the figure of Antigone when he explains that the woman who respects the blood tie with the mother is excluded from the *polis*. Irigaray explains that:

*In these analyses devoted to the relation of family to State, Hegel explains that the daughter who remains faithful to the laws regarding her mother must be excluded from the polis [cité], from society [. . .]. The figure of this daughter is represented by Antigone. [...].*¹⁴⁴

She adds, furthermore, that patriarchy forbids the daughter to respect the blood ties to the mother. Irigaray declares:

With the installation of patriarchy, the daughter is separated from her mother and more generally from her family. She is transplanted into the genealogy of the husband, she has to live with him, she has to bear his name, likewise his children.¹⁴⁵

According to Irigaray, the result of this is that male and female genealogies have been collapsed into one. Irigaray argues that once the genealogy has been reduced to the other's, it becomes very difficult to define two different genders. She explains that man takes his orientation from his relation to his father in terms of his name and his property. Woman submits to her husband and to reproduction. Irigaray claims that "gender as sexuality is never sublimated. *Gender is confused with species* [Irigaray's italics.]"¹⁴⁶ Consequently, gender becomes human race, or human nature, as it is defined in patriarchal culture.

In her essay "The Universal as Mediation," Irigaray argues that Hegel's confusion between the ideal and the historical, for which he is sometimes criticized, is made possible due to an "incorrect analysis of the living community."¹⁴⁷ Under patriarchy, it is the male gender that binds and unites the members of the human race. Irigaray stresses that "[w]oman must leave her family, her home, her name, to take the name of her husband. Even the child of her flesh will bear the name of her husband's genealogy."¹⁴⁸ For Hegel, the patriarchal family is an intermediate institution, the elementary social community that links each person to civil society. The building of the human race thus forgets the female gender as a part of its history. The question thus arises: How can the human race be properly conceived when no thought has been given to sexual difference? Irigaray suggests that the reason why absolute Spirit and its expression do not coincide can be explained at least partially by an inaccurate analysis of the human race as a unit.

What may be concluded here is that Hegel's master-slave dialectic, which takes place between two men, under the conditions of patriarchy, cannot provide a model of Spirit for woman, as woman. Hegel himself acknowledges that in a patriarchal society

access to the polis is only achieved by obeying the rules of the (masculine) state. This point becomes clearer when linked to the other aforementioned difficulty inherent to Hegel's master-slave relation, namely, that in patriarchal societies, woman is in the position of the 'other' or the object.

Rosi Braidotti explains that Irigaray evaluates women's 'otherness' not merely as something that has not yet been represented, but rather as something that has always been and will always remain unrepresentable within the Hegelian framework.¹⁴⁹ Braidotti argues that this is because "women as other remain in excess of or outside the phallogentric framework that conflates the masculine with the (false) universalist position."¹⁵⁰ This means that the relation between subject and object is not a reversible relationship. Instead, the two poles of the apparent opposition remain in an asymmetrical relationship. Irigaray's writings seek to demonstrate that historical reality confirms that there is no symmetry between the sexes and that the existing asymmetry has been organized hierarchically to favor the masculine. Since in patriarchy woman has always been in the position of the 'other,' and since Hegel's master-slave dialectic works within a framework with only the masculine represented in the universal, woman cannot take the position of the subject. She forever remains in the position of the 'other.'

Whitford claims that a precipitate political involvement is always in danger of reproducing the same structure.¹⁵¹ In some sense, Irigaray's feminism is not primarily a political question of emancipation. Rather, Irigaray's work is linked to symbolic change, though it must be stressed that the two are not mutually exclusive, since the first can be a precondition for the second and vice-versa. The symbolic is put before the political in

order to avoid the simple reproduction of the status quo. What is often definitive of other independence movements is that they may potentially fall into the same game. More precisely, Whitford says it is a reproduction of the master-slave relation, in reversible relationship, namely one in which each adversary can potentially occupy the position of the other.¹⁵² However, what is of importance for Irigaray is specifically the male-female relationship, and the fact that it is a relationship that is essentially not reversible because one can never take the position of the other, neither ethically nor symbolically.

Blood: Toward Rethinking Nature

In the following section, I will begin by examining how Irigaray makes changes to the functioning of the Hegelian dialectic. The changes include removing the third step of the dialectic, namely, Hegel's *Aufhebung*. This, in turn, implies that Irigaray's views the need to keep the dialectic in motion, like Adorno had suggested in his *Negative Dialectics*. Finally, I will begin to explore how the image of blood functions against the Hegelian dialectic. As will be seen, the dominant interpretations of this image suggest that it provides the possibility of reconstructing a feminine identity that is not constrained by masculine theory. Although I do not disagree with these interpretations, I believe that Irigaray is demonstrating something more with the image of blood. This something more, as will be seen, is tied to the notion of nature inherent to the Hegelian dialectic and the function of the Concept. The image of blood is intended to show that dialectical thought must include a notion of nature that respects the two-sexes in the pre-given. I will return to this in the final chapter because I believe that in order to appreciate the function of the image, we must also understand how the notion of images functions in the Marxist and

Lacanian dialectic and furthermore, that Irigaray is employing a plurality of methods with the images in order to address the problem of the unity of nature in Hegelian thought.

In *This Sex*, Irigaray suggests that something positive will come from “jamming the theoretical machinery of patriarchy.”¹⁵³ This “something positive” can be discovered in the image of red blood. Her image of red blood opens the possibility of a new kind of dialectic. How this image of red blood can function requires a re-evaluation of the functioning of the dialectic. The dialectic depicts reality as a development based on two conflicting moments. Each of the two moments in the dialectic is in an ongoing conflict because it bears the contradiction to the other in itself and contradicts the other. This conflict exists in theory as well as in reality. In the Hegelian dialectic, the possibility always remains open that one or the other moment gets the upper hand, but ultimately, the dialectic will come to a standstill. As Marcuse relates, this is important for Hegel because “the dialectic receives its motive power from the pressure to overcome negativity.”¹⁵⁴ Consequently, something exists only insofar as it integrates its otherness with its own proper being. According to Hegel, the existence of things comes about through what he calls the ‘negation of negation’. Marcuse explains that “the first negation is the otherness in which it turns, and the second is the incorporation of this other into its own self.”¹⁵⁵

Irigaray, on the other hand, subscribes to a view similar to the one held by Adorno. Adorno maintains that the conflicting moments of the dialectic, and thus between subject and object, nature and history, as well as other opposing moments, remain in fluctuation. Willem van Reijen explains that this means that the “negative remains a constituting moment of the fluctuation and prevents everything from becoming ‘itself’ – totally

identical to itself.”¹⁵⁶ Likewise, Irigaray maintains that no Hegelian *Aufhebung* is possible. Irigaray’s similarity to Adorno, however, is limited to the methodological belief that no negation of negation is possible. Irigaray remains critical of Adorno for not recognizing that sexual difference rules out all forms of totality.¹⁵⁷ As will be seen, Irigaray takes this impossibility of a Hegelian *Aufhebung* one step further insofar as she questions the possibility of a singular nature.

It has been argued that Irigaray’s image of woman’s red blood as opposed to man’s white blood can be used as a conceptual tool to open a space for thinking female subjectivity. While I do not disagree with such an interpretation, I think a lot can be learned from Irigaray if we interpret the image as a way in which Irigaray rethinks the notion of nature in Hegelian theory. When Irigaray speaks of women’s red blood she is, in a sense, talking about women’s nature but, in another sense, she is not; rather, she is suggesting a different conceptual space in which to think about woman. As mentioned, I do not disagree that the image provides the possibility to redress the problem of woman’s subjectivity in patriarchy. Therefore, what I am proposing does not go against interpretations which suggest that the conceptual distinction in blood is intended to think female genealogy against the Hegelian dialectic. Rather, I believe that something more can be learned from Irigaray’s image of blood when she is viewed as a philosopher of nature. In other words, I think strength can be added to Irigaray’s image by viewing it as a manner of questioning the notion of nature inherent to Hegelian thought.

In addition to the dominant interpretations of Irigaray’s image of blood, I would like to show how this image may be viewed as a tool for rethinking the notion of nature in

Hegelian thought. This requires looking at what Irigaray's rehabilitation of the negative within the dialectic and also at her claim that nature is always male and female. It is true, as the dominant interpretations suggests, that the result is the possibility of rethinking female subjectivity in a manner beyond the confines of patriarchy that traditionally confine woman to the position of nature and as the permanent position of the other of subjectivity. However, there is something else at the basis of this. Understanding how Irigaray's image of red blood can keep the dialectic in motion and thus provide a step in the rethinking of the notion of nature depends upon two important elements. Firstly, it must be understood that Irigaray, similar to Lacan, uses Freud against Hegel. Secondly, the image must be interpreted as Irigaray's suggestion of a respect of what is given in nature. In other words, nature must be viewed as both male and female. Similar to Lacan's criticism of Hegel, Irigaray firmly holds that the subject cannot overcome the body. In Lacanian theory, as will be elaborated in the chapter on Lacan, the mirror stage introduces a split in the subject between conscious and unconscious aspects. Although the mirror may provide an apparent unified reflection of the self, Lacan stresses that any unified concept of the self is an illusion. This split is intensified, and the subject is further alienated in the Symbolic due to the mediating properties language has on the subject. Irigaray thus concludes, as Lacan does, that Hegel's world Spirit cannot overcome the body, and thus cannot fully overcome nature in thought. In addition to this, Irigaray builds on Adorno's notion of the negative dialectic, suggesting that nature is sexed.

Irigaray takes Lacanian split subject one step further when she develops on Adorno's notion of the negative dialectic. In *I love to You*, Irigaray points out that "all the

speculation about overcoming the natural in the universal forgets that nature is not *one* [Irigaray's italics]."¹⁵⁸ She stresses that nature is always two, it is always male and female. This implies a difference in bodies as well, insofar as they are the 'natural' part of men and women. This 'natural' part of men and women implies that we must think of them as sexed bodies; there are always two: male and female. In this sense, Irigaray is calling for a respect for what is given in nature.

This has implications for how Hegel's notion of the Concept is to function. In Hegelian theory, the Concept is viewed as introducing difference into nature, but according to Irigaray's view, there is already difference in nature. In this sense, Irigaray is showing that any theorizing about identity must take into account certain limitations. Irigaray argues that recognizing one's own identity as sexed is already overcoming of instinctual and egological immediacy by the recognition of the negative in the self. She thus argues that the acknowledgement that "I am sexed" implies that "I am not all."¹⁵⁹

According to Irigaray, the idea that "I am not all" implies that "I am man or woman. I am not simply a subject, I belong to a gender. I am objectively limited by this belonging."¹⁶⁰ The claim that "I am not all" because "I am sexed" thus limits all individuals in their relations with all others. One example in which Irigaray attempts to achieve this is in her image of red blood. When she asks Hegel whether Antigone and her brother are of the same blood because they share in the blood of the mother or the father, she opens a division between red blood and white blood. In doing so, Irigaray can use red blood and white blood as moments in the dialectic. This means that being of red blood or being of white blood implies "I am not all." Consequently the masculine genealogy itself,

and likewise the feminine genealogy itself, is “not all.” Together, they are two but neither alone can be sublated into Spirit as Hegel envisioned. If red blood represents the genealogy of the feminine and white blood the genealogy of the masculine, this means that each subject takes gender as a reference point and recognizes his or her limits within gender. One of the values posed by the limits within each gender is that it provides new ways to think subjectivity. Schwab explains this when she writes that:

[. . .] each subject carries within her – or himself the universal of gender and the particular of his or her own experience; the activity or subjectivity of his or her own individual *pour soi*, and the passivity or objectivity of belonging to a gender, the relation to nature and materiality through gender, along with the possibility of creating cultural and spiritual mediations appropriate within the limitations of gender.¹⁶¹

In opening a division between red blood and white blood, Irigaray stresses the importance of the sexed body in forming subjective identity. Some interpretations of Irigaray’s image of blood suggest that she opens the possibility for women to achieve subjectivity as women, not as defective men in a monological system. This is because the division in blood which represents a difference in man’s and woman’s nature entails the impossibility of a Hegelian negation of negation or, in other words, the incorporation of the other into itself.

In addition to this, something more may be learned by Irigaray’s image when it is stressed that the image of blood also shows that there is no such thing as ‘nature’ as a singular entity. As Irigaray observes, “in this sense a kind of negative does exist in the natural.”¹⁶² Some interpretations of this have suggested that the division between red blood and white blood not only makes possible a real sexual difference between the male and the female, it also forces the male to take responsibility for his own corporeality. In

doing so, woman as woman does not have to align with nature, the unconscious, or the body. There is, however, more to be learned from Irigaray's image of blood.

Such an interpretation has been valuable, because there is the necessity of a universalization of the singular in order to establish an ethics. However, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak stresses, although one may wish not to be excluded from the universal, if there is only the universal of the masculine, it cannot be inclusive of differences.¹⁶³ Irigaray is acutely aware of this difficulty. Within her project, Irigaray suggests that universality's claims are built on the generality of what is, in fact, a duality. The acknowledgment of this paradigm of the two undermines masculine predominance on the one hand while, on the other hand, compels us philosophically to rethink universality. The challenge Irigaray proposes is to rethink universality on the basis of a new conception of man and woman. In this new conception, the one is radically other to the other in a particularly crucial respect. More precisely, in Irigaray's case the crucial respect is sexual difference. In terms of Irigaray's project of rethinking the image of woman, Spivak claims that: "[i]f Derrida had dared to think minimal idealization, Irigaray dares minimal alterity."¹⁶⁴ What is hoped to be established through this project is that each "is a same-sexed ethical universal, operating in a social cooperation that must conventionally assume others to be collectivities of othered selves."¹⁶⁵ Irigaray thus has an ethical base for rewriting gendered selves or, in other words, of rethinking the notion of woman.

However, there is something more fundamental implied by Irigaray's use of this image. As discussed above, Irigaray's reworking of the dialectic is based on two important things that are demonstrated in her image of blood. Firstly, the distinction of blood

prohibits a Hegelian *Aufhebung*, secondly, it suggests that a distinction already exists in nature, that is, nature is already at least two since it contains male and female. While I do not disagree that this may form a foundation for building a feminine specific identity, I think there is more at stake with the image. The image, insofar as it is related to the notion of nature, is an invitation to rethink the notion of nature. In stating that nature is not one, Irigaray is pointing to a fundamental problem at the core of the Hegelian dialectic. The problem with the Hegelian dialectic is not primarily that Spirit is masculine, however, it is a problem nonetheless. Rather, this problem is an effect of something more fundamental. The solution lies in the question of why it is masculine. The obvious answer is that nature is viewed as feminine. But this is only part of the answer. I maintain that Irigaray's image of blood suggests that the problem lies in the notion of nature employed in Hegelian thought. When Irigaray claims that nature is not one, and that it is both male and female, she is pointing out that the Hegelian dialectic is based on the view that nature is a whole, a totality. Furthermore, in the Hegelian system, it is the Concept that is seen to introduce difference into nature. Irigaray views this notion of nature as problematic and at the source of the flawed Hegelian notion of identity. The image of blood is intended to show that nature is already differentiated. The image is thus intended to change the way we think about nature and avoid the Hegelian move where difference is only introduced by means of the Concept.

I will return to Irigaray's image of blood in the final chapter where I will highlight how the image is on one level intended to put forth a sexed nature challenging Hegel's unitary nature. However, the implications of Irigrsy's use of the image are far greater. This

will only become more evident after looking at how the images of the couple and the lips function in the Marxist and Lacanian dialectics. An understanding of these is important for a clearer idea of how Irigaray employs images to develop a way of thinking about the possibilities of introducing difference into nature through a combination of disciplines.

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NOTES

¹ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 214-226.

² Margaret Whitford, "Luce Irigaray and the Female Imaginary: Speaking as a Woman." *Radical Philosophy*. 43 (1986): 3-8; 3. See also Paul Smith, "Men in Feminism: Men and Feminist Theory" (33-40); Stephen Heath, "Men in Feminism: Men and Feminist Theory" (41-46); Cary Nelson, "Men in Feminism: The Materiality of Discourse" (153-172); Rosi Braidotti, "Envy: or With My Brains and Your Looks" (233-241), all in Jardine and Smith, eds. *Men in Feminism* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987.)

³ Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism Nature and Difference* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989) 58.

⁴ Fuss, "Essentially Speaking" 72.

⁵ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) 123; cited in Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, 72.

⁶ Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, 72

⁷ Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 4.

⁸ Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1969) 10.

⁹ Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 3.

¹⁰ Edward S. Casey and Melvin J. Woody "Hegel, Heidegger, Lacan: The Dialectic of Desire" *Interpreting Lacan*, eds. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983) 75-112; 105.

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¹² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic Five Hermeneutical Studies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976) 69.

¹³ Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, 66.

¹⁴ Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 17.

¹⁵ Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 20-21.

¹⁶ Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, 70.

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¹⁸ Casey and Woody "Hegel, Heidegger, Lacan", 105.

¹⁹ Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, 4.

- ²⁰ Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* 4.
- ²¹ Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford and Cambridge (Mass.): Blackwell Publishers, 1992) 81.
- ²² Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* 81-82.
- ²³ Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 80.
- ²⁴ Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* 2nd edition with supplementary chapter (New York: Humanities Press, 1954) 66.
- ²⁵ W. T. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel: A Systematic Exposition* (New York: Dover, 1955) 134-136.
- ²⁶ Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, 175, 180.
- ²⁷ Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, 121-225.
- ²⁸ Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 200.
- ²⁹ See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan, 1929) A167; B209.
- ³⁰ Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 200.
- ³¹ Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 200.
- ³² Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, 66.
- ³³ Daniel Berthold-Bond, *Hegel's Grand Synthesis: A Study of Being, Thought, and History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989) 83.
- ³⁴ Berthold-Bond, *Hegel's Grand Synthesis*, 83.
- ³⁵ See G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. 3 vols., trans. Clarke Butler and Christine Seilere (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. Cited in Daniel Berthold-Bond, *Hegel's Grand Synthesis*, 83.
- ³⁶ G.W.F Hegel (1975) *Hegel's Logic*. § 293; cited in Berthold-Bond (1989: 84).
- ³⁷ Sean Sayers and Richard Norman, *Hegel, Marx, and Dialectic: A Debate* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980) 7.
- ³⁸ Sayers and Norman, *Hegel, Marx, and Dialectic* 8.
- ³⁹ Sayers and Norman, *Hegel, Marx, and Dialectic* 8.
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- ⁴¹ Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 202.
- ⁴² Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 30.

- ⁴³ Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 31.
- ⁴⁴ Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 112.
- ⁴⁵ Issac D. Balbus, *Marxism and Domination: A Neo-Hegelian, Feminist, Psychoanalytic Theory of Sexual, Political, and Technological Liberation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) 280.
- ⁴⁶ Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 280.
- ⁴⁷ Balbus, *Marxism and Domination*, 264.
- ⁴⁸ Balbus, *Marxism and Domination*, 288.
- ⁴⁹ Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx* (London: New Left Books, 1971) 104; cited in Issac Balbus, *Marxism and Domination*, 288
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- ⁵⁷ Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 208.
- ⁵⁸ Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, 125.
- ⁵⁹ Anthony Wilden, "Lacan and the discourse of the Other," Jacques Lacan, *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, translated with notes and commentary by Anthony Wilden (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1968) 194.
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- ⁶¹ Wilden, "Lacan and the discourse of the Other," 194-195.
- ⁶² Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectics: Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977) 189.
- ⁶³ Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973) 183.
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- ⁶⁵ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectics*, 1.
- ⁶⁶ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectics*, 1.
- ⁶⁷ Peter Schiefelbein, "Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*" trans. Dieter Engelbrecht, *Adorno: An Introduction*. ed. Willem van Reijen (Philadelphia: Pennbridge Books, 1992) 62.
- ⁶⁸ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 163.
- ⁶⁹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 174.
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- ⁷⁹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 193-194.
- ⁸⁰ Coles, *Self/Power/Other* 30.
- ⁸¹ Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 135.
- ⁸² Coles, *Self/Power/Other* 30.
- ⁸³ Balbus, *Marxism and Domination*, 290.
- ⁸⁴ Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 299. See Norman Brown, *Life Against Death* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959) 104.
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- ⁹⁸ Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 112.
- ⁹⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Letters*, trans. Clarke Butler and Christine Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 132. Cited in Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* 112.
- ¹⁰⁰ Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* 113.
- ¹⁰¹ Hegel, *The Letters*, 205. Cited in Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* 113.
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- ¹⁰⁴ Allen W. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 416.
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- ¹⁰⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-1806) with commentary*, trans. Leo Rauch (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983.) Cited in Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* 191.
- ¹⁰⁷ Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 99.
- ¹⁰⁸ Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 99.
- ¹⁰⁹ Tina Chanter *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995) 74.

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- ¹¹⁰ Naomi Schor, "This Essentialism Which is Not One: Coming to Grips With Irigaray" *Engaging With Irigaray: Feminists Philosophy and Modern European Thought* eds. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor, and Margaret Whitword (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 57-78; 62.
- ¹¹¹ Chanter, *Ethics of Eros*, 49.
- ¹¹² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshey (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) 158. Cited in Chanter, *Ethics of Eros*, 75.
- ¹¹³ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 211 note 18.
- ¹¹⁴ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 211 note 18.
- ¹¹⁵ Chanter, *Ethics of Eros*, 75. See Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 158.
- ¹¹⁶ Schor, "This Essentialism Which is Not One" 63.
- ¹¹⁷ Schor, "This Essentialism Which is Not One" 63.
- ¹¹⁸ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 787.
- ¹¹⁹ Schor, "This Essentialism Which is Not One", 64.
- ¹²⁰ Schor, "This Essentialism Which is Not One", 64.
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- ¹²⁹ Cheah and Grosz "Of Being Two", 9.
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- ¹³¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 274.
- ¹³² G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, 276.

¹³³ The figure of Antigone has been a source of many feminist writings. Most recently, Judith Butler in her book *Antigone's Claim Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000) redefines Antigone's legacy and rethinks her significance. In this book, Butler examines whether Antigone, who has been viewed as a feminist icon of defiance, really does escape from the forms of power which she opposed. Butler argues persuasively that Antigone actually proves to be a more irresolute figure for feminism than may have been appreciated. Several articles address the figure of Antigone in *Feminist Interpretations of G. W. F. Hegel* ed. Patricia Jagentowicz Killa (University Park, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) Of particular interest is Patricia Mills, "Introduction," of the same volume, 1-24. Of interest as well is Carol Jacobs, "Dusting Antigone," *MLN* 5 (1996) 890-917. Jacobs contends with Irigaray's reading of Antigone and argues for the impossibility of representation denoted by the figure of Antigone. For the purpose of this chapter, it is not necessary to engage with these problems. As will be seen, in this chapter I highlight Irigaray's dialectic method through her use of the image of blood. In this sense I am more concerned with subject/object relations than with the actual figure of Antigone. Cited in Butler, *Antigone's Claim* 83-84 note 3.

¹³⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977) §457. Cited in Christine Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 113.

¹³⁵ Luce Irigaray *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) 216.

¹³⁶ Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 118.

¹³⁷ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 211 note 17.

¹³⁸ Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman*, 113.

¹³⁹ Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman*, 113.

¹⁴⁰ Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1993)125.

¹⁴¹ Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 125.

¹⁴² Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 127.

¹⁴³ Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 1.

¹⁴⁴ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 2.

¹⁴⁶ Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Irigaray, "The Universal as Mediation" in *Sexes and Genealogies*, 135.

¹⁴⁸ Irigaray, "The Universal as Mediation", 136.

¹⁴⁹ Rosi Braidotti *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 160.

¹⁵⁰ Braidotti *Nomadic Subjects* 160.

¹⁵¹ Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 183.

¹⁵² Whitford, *Luce Irigaray*, 184.

¹⁵³ Irigaray, *This Sex*, 78.

¹⁵⁴ Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, 66.

¹⁵⁵ Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, 133.

¹⁵⁶ van Reijen, *Adorno*, 39.

¹⁵⁷ Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History* trans. Alison Martin (New York and London: Routledge, 1996) 106.

¹⁵⁸ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 35.

¹⁵⁹ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 51. Martin's translation reads "I am not everything," I have modified the translation to more truly convey the meaning at hand.

¹⁶⁰ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 106. See also Penelope Deutscher, *A Politics of Impossible Difference*. In chapter 5 entitled "Sexuate Genres", Deutscher argues that Irigaray's position is characterized by an attempt to imagine a culture in which sexed subjects do not appropriate the other. Furthermore, she maintains that in Irigaray's position the other remains someone who is always "not me" and "not mine". Deutscher emphasizes that this has cultural implications as well as gender ones. In her analysis of identity theories, which span the works of Freud, Lacan and Merleau-Ponty, Deutscher maintains that Irigaray tries to imagine a culture in which there is mediation between subjects instead of a culture of appropriation.

¹⁶¹ Schwab "Sexual Difference as Model," 82.

¹⁶² Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 35.

¹⁶³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "French Feminism Revisited: Ethics and Politics" *Feminists Theorize the Political* eds. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 54-85; 75.

¹⁶⁴ Spivak, "French Feminism Revisited," 75-76.

¹⁶⁵ Spivak, "French Feminism Revisited" 76.

CHAPTER TWO

Use/Exchange, Nature/Culture: Woman in Marxist Theory

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first main section addresses Irigaray's indebtedness to Marx insofar as she employs a Marxist analysis of commodity function to demonstrate a similar logic underlying patriarchy. The second deals with what Irigaray views as the limitations of Marxist theory; I address what Irigaray implicitly views as an inherent problem with this system. Marx is very indebted to Hegelian philosophy in his theory of labor. Although Marx was critical of Hegel's idealist account and the abstractions inherent to his account of the development of Spirit, Marx retained and developed central aspects of the Hegelian dialectic. Irigaray does agree with and sees value in certain aspects of the Marxist account insofar as Marx redeploys Hegel to develop a materialist dialectic. Yet she is also critical of Marx who, despite expounding a materialist account, appears to fall back into a problem that she also sees in Hegel. The problem in question has to do with how the notion of nature is treated in the dialectic. Irigaray maintains that Marx also has a unitary notion of nature and thus retains a problematic aspect of Hegelianism. The image of the couple will be used to explore how Irigaray attempts to address the notion of unitary nature. Much like the image of blood in the chapter on Hegel, and as will be addressed in more detail in the final chapter, the image is intended to retain a dual sexed nature.

Irigaray's relation to Marx is typically complex. The complexity we see in her relation to Hegel, and we will see with Lacan in the next chapter, also characterizes her

approach to Marx. On one level there is a theoretical indebtedness to Marx; on the other level, there is deviation and criticism. This chapter will focus mainly on two of Irigaray's essays: "Women on the Market" from *This Sex Which is not One* and "Introducing Love Between Us" in *I love to You*. The former essay was originally published in French in 1977 and the latter was originally published in 1995. Although I will focus mainly on these two works, I will make reference to several of her other works and interviews in which she briefly refers to Marx.

The two aforementioned essays are works in which Irigaray explicitly engages Marx and they are separated by several years. Irigaray's theoretical involvement with Marx, however, appears to span her works in one way or another. It appears that, in her essay "Women on the Market," Irigaray establishes herself as a kind of Marxist thinker. To what extent she is a Marxist thinker will be elaborated below. In her later essay "Introducing Love Between Us," Irigaray points to the limits of Marx's theory. It is within these works that I will attempt to unearth Irigaray's debt to and deviation from Marx. A few things are important to emphasize here. Irigaray is to some extent a Marxist thinker and this is often reflected in many of her works where she does not explicitly engage with or mention Marx. For example, *This Sex*, which was originally published in French in 1985, is just one example in which she employs Marxist theory to interrogate Lacan. This will become clearer in the third chapter on Lacan. As will be seen, Irigaray brings to this work what she had theoretically begun to develop in "Women in the Market," namely, a Marxist analysis of 'economy' in the broad sense.

In “Women on the Market,” Irigaray concentrates on the concept of exchange. In doing so, she draws a parallel between women in patriarchal societies and commodities in capitalism. By drawing this parallel, Irigaray remains very close to Marx’s method. Nonetheless, there is an implicit criticism of Marx for his failure to recognize that the oppression of women cannot be resolved through a change of economic systems alone. In her essay “Introducing Love Between us,” she states explicitly what may appear to have been merely implicit in “Women on the Market,” that is, the more or less exclusive interest of modern political theory in production and economic relations obscures the domain of symbolic relations and relations of exchange. To some extent, Irigaray argues along lines similar to other twentieth-century thinkers such as Brecht, Althusser, Adorno and Horkheimer in launching an attack on a certain reductionist Marxism. However, Irigaray’s method is particular in that her thesis always returns to the problem of sexual difference. I will address this problem in a manner similar to the one employed in the chapter on Hegel. In other words, I will turn to her use of the image, in this case the image of the couple, to argue that Irigaray points to a problem in Marx’s notion of labor which is at the center of a problem with his dialectic thought.

The first part of this chapter will deal with the analogy between Marx’s account of commodities in capitalist societies and Irigaray’s account of women in patriarchal societies. The aim of this is twofold: firstly, to demonstrate Irigaray’s theoretical indebtedness to Marx; and secondly, to demonstrate that Irigaray is showing far more than a mere analogy between women and commodities. In fact, Irigaray is making evident that much more is at stake.

Although I will employ several of Marx's works in this section, I will mainly refer to two important sections his works. The first is part 1 of *Capital*, entitled "Commodities and Money." There are several sub-sections within this work that are relevant to Irigaray's writing on Marx. Marx's account of value and the genesis of the money form at the beginning of *Capital* are of central importance for understanding Irigaray's analogy between women and commodities. In this work, Marx delineates the difference between use-value and exchange-value and also explains how the notion of general equivalence arises and how money becomes the measure for all commodities. The second relevant work is Marx's treatment of labor in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. In this section Marx examines the production process. It is argued that production does not only produce commodities but also the dehumanized worker. Marx explains that the capitalist form of production separates production from use. This form of production leads to man's alienation.

Although there has been a lot written on Irigaray's analogy between women and commodities, it is important to revisit it. My aim in returning to this analogy is to firstly expand upon what Irigaray writes in order to demonstrate the extent to which a certain kind of thinking underlies various disciplines. Secondly, it allows me to set the groundwork to ask a more important question, namely, why does this analogy work? The second part of this chapter will focus mainly on Irigaray's essay "Introducing Love Between Us" in *I love to You*. In this work Irigaray returns to Marx in the question of why, after identifying the exploitation of man as man's exploitation of woman, did Marx not devote his life to solving this problem? The reason he does not, according to Irigaray, has to do with a

problem inherent to the Hegelian dialectic, a problem that, as will be seen, also plagues Marx's dialectic. As explained earlier, the problem in Hegel's dialectic has to do with the idea of a singular nature. This problem is repeated in Marx's dialectic in his account of labor. This is of significance for understanding the way in which nature is to be conceived and, by extension, 'woman's nature'.

In this part of the chapter I will deal with the implication of Irigaray's analogy between women and commodities. This is an implicit criticism Irigaray makes of Marx. To understand Irigaray's criticism, we must ask the following question: Why does the analogy between women and commodities work? More specifically, what does the possibility of such an analogy entail when seeking solutions for the oppression of women in patriarchal society? It appears that Irigaray's analogy suggests that, while Marx's method is indeed valuable, it falls short of providing a solution for the problems facing women precisely because his method is not sensitive to sexual difference. The shortcoming becomes evident insofar as Marx does not address the oppositional structures between use and exchange and, by extension, those between nature and culture. As a result of this, Irigaray criticizes Marx's work for "the inadequacy of its theory and practice as regards alienation in sexual difference."¹ Through an analysis of Irigaray's image of the couple, I seek to demonstrate that Marx, like Hegel, retains a notion of nature which is unitary. As a result, Irigaray's treatment of Marx parallels her argument that Hegel's dialectic stops at woman, and her charge that Lacan's mirror does not reflect woman's difference. On the one hand, the image of the couple is intended to demonstrate that Marx's theory does not provide a future solution for the problem of alienation specific to

women. On the other hand, the image is also her way of rethinking the dialectic in such a way that this problem may be addressed. In other words, the couple, like the image of blood is Irigaray's manner of keeping the two-ness of sexed nature alive.

Women in Patriarchy: An Analogy to Commodities in Capitalism

In the first part of this chapter I will focus on Irigaray's analogy between women and commodities. I will employ Jean-Joseph Goux's *Symbolic Economies* to help contextualize and explain what Irigaray attempts to achieve in her essay on commodities and women. I shall point out how Irigaray's method highlights the structural continuity between the discourses of psychoanalysis and Marxism. Such a methodology draws a connection between social and psychological analyses with the notion of economy. I will also employ Marx's account of the genesis of the money form in *Capital* for a better understanding of the analogy. The first half of the chapter will focus mainly on the analogy which Irigaray draws. This will set the framework for the second half of the chapter in which I will examine where and why Irigaray deviates from Marx.

In her essay "Women in the market" Irigaray employs Marxist theory to develop an analogy between women in patriarchal society and commodities in capitalism. She agrees with Marx's criticism of the analysis of commodities as the elementary form of capitalist wealth. However, in developing her analogy, she stresses that there is another similar system that predates and is probably a requirement for capitalism. It is also independent on it. She is referring to the subjugation of women as a commodity to men. She is critical of Marx, not for being unaware of this problem but, rather, for not engaging this problem. As much as Irigaray shares Marx's need for a faith in 'natural' objects, 'matter on its own

terms,' she maintains that Marx fails to recognize the importance of sexed nature. This criticism becomes evident in the development of her argument. However, it is already present in the opening of her essay "Women on the Market" when she examines Levi-Strauss's claim that women are scarce commodities because of the deep polygamous tendency in men. Irigaray questions whether women too have a tendency toward polygamy, and concludes that the question of polygamy fails to explain the problem of the status of women as commodities in patriarchal societies.² She problematizes this issue by asking why men are not objects of exchange among women, thus stressing the importance of examining the problem in terms of sexed bodies. This sets the framework for her essay. In order to achieve her aim, Irigaray applies Marx's analysis of commodities in capitalist societies to Levi-Strauss's understanding of the paternal exchange of women. What becomes evident is that Marx's analysis of commodities in capitalist societies is, in fact, a description of women's exploitation in patriarchal societies.

In "Women on the Market," Irigaray is directly dealing with the question of exchange. Similar to Juliet Mitchell, Irigaray maintains that women's sexual identity is determined by their use as exchange objects. In this sense, Irigaray is building on the existing feminist tradition, but, as will be seen in the final chapter, she goes beyond this to extend the feminist critique of Marx by bringing in the poststructuralist theories of sign and subjectivity. Through a reading of Marx's *Capital*, Lévi-Strauss's *Elementary Structures of Kinship*, and Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, she traces the Symbolic structure underlying all forms of exchange. Much like Jean-Joseph Goux, Irigaray projects Marx's theory of commodity production onto Lévi-Strauss's interpretation of the patriarchal

exchange of women and vice-versa. According to Marx and Lévi-Strauss, when analyzing exchange relations, the object that is exchanged is less important than the meaning the exchanged object signifies. Elizabeth Grosz explains that what is exchanged for them is 'signs'. Furthermore, this associates Marx and Lévi-Strauss with Lacan and Saussure, as they too are concerned with the exchanges of meaning.³ More precisely, Lacan is concerned with the substitution of one object of desire with another, and Saussure with linguistic exchange. In drawing an analogy between women and commodities, Irigaray is exploiting the similarities linking Marx's commodities, Lévi-Strauss's family names, Lacan's notion of desire, and Saussure's signs. This is evident when Irigaray writes the following:

Marx's analysis of commodities as the elemental form of capitalist wealth can thus be understood as an interpretation of the status of woman in so-called patriarchal societies. The organization of such societies, and operation of symbolic systems on which this organization is based – a symbolic system whose instrument and representative is the proper name: the name of the father, the name of God – contains in a nuclear form the developments that Marx defines as characteristic of a capitalist regime: the substitution of 'nature' to a 'labor' on the part of men who thus constitute 'nature' as use value and exchange value; the division of labor among private producer-owners who exchange their women-commodities among producers and exploiters or exploits of the social order; the standardization of women according to proper names that determine their equivalences; a tendency to accumulate wealth, that is, a tendency for the representatives of most 'proper' names – the leaders – to capitalize more women than the others; a progression of the social work of the symbolic toward greater and greater abstraction [. . .].⁴

As Grosz explains, each of these models of symbolic exchange, "where 'sisters' are exchanged for 'wives', where commodities are exchanged for money, where one sign is exchanged for another and one desire (for the mother) for another – presumes the fundamental likeness or similarity of exchanging subjects, and basic commensurability of

exchanged objects.”⁵ There is homogeneity on two levels, one in the identity of the subject, the other in the identity of the object.

Irigaray finds that women’s sexual identity is determined by their utilization as exchange objects. Women’s bodies are sexualized by means of the end to the Oedipus structure. As such, they are part of the nature or ‘matter’ acted upon by the male subject. Irigaray writes:

[...] just as commodities, despite their resistance, become more or less autonomous repositories for the value of human work, so, as mirrors of and for man, women more or less unwittingly come to represent the danger of a misappropriation of masculine power: the phallic mirage [...].⁶

In grasping woman’s identity as the product of this (masculine) labor, it is assumed to be the objectification of men’s needs and desires. As Dorothy Leland explains, Irigaray finds that feminine sexuality, that is, ‘normal’ feminine sexuality as described by psychoanalytic theory, resembles a commodity in several main aspects.⁷ For example, Irigaray claims that:

[...] just as nature has to be subjected to man in order to become a commodity, so, it appears, does ‘the development of a normal woman.’ A development that amounts, for the feminine, to subordinate to the forms and laws of masculine activity.⁸

Irigaray furthers this point in the following declaration:

[...] just as a commodity finds the expression of its value in an equivalent[...] that necessarily remains external to it, so woman derives her price from her relation to the male sex, constituted as a transcendental value: the phallus. . .uprooted from their ‘nature’, they no longer relate to each other except in terms of what they represent in men’s desire.⁹

As a result of being like a commodity, woman is excluded from being a subject in exchanges. Irigaray explains, “all the systems of exchange that organize patriarchal societies and all the modalities of productive work that are recognized, valued, and

rewarded in these societies are men's business. The production of women, signs, and commodities is always referred back to men."¹⁰ Similarly, in "Commodities Among Themselves," Irigaray claims that "[t]he exchange upon which patriarchal societies are based take place exclusively among men. Women signs, commodities, and currency always pass from one man to another."¹¹ The exchanges that Irigaray has in mind here are economic, sexual, and linguistic. As the exchanges take place only between men, Grosz suggests that they are "governed and regulated according to a libidinal economy appropriate only to male sexuality," and "as such there is no position for woman as woman."¹²

As discussed above, Irigaray is using the notion of exchange associatively as well as with reference to the specific conceptual systems from which they are taken. Underlying this method is her view that certain presuppositions are embedded in western thought in general. Whitford explains:

The implicit juxtaposition of one conceptual system with another, brought about by the mobile signifier (for example, exchange), is intended to shed light both on the imaginary of the system in its specificity, and also on what it shares with other systems which go to make up 'the symbolic order'.¹³

The notion of exchange plays an important role in various conceptual systems. Indeed, anthropology is one of them. In Marcel Mauss's influential essay "Essay on the Gift," he forwards the theory that exchange relations were already a mode of social organization before official traders or currency. In these societies, exchange took place in the form of the gift. In *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Lévi-Strauss argues in parallel fashion that women are exchanged in kinship systems. Working on the idea of exchange in anthropological systems, Irigaray claims that women are necessary

commodities in systems of exchange in kinship systems.¹⁴ However, while addressing this, she makes use of Marx, in addition to the systems of Freud and Lacan. She appears to use Marx's account of the genesis of money in order to make sense of exchange relation and the notion of value. She refers to Freud's 'anal economy', a system wherein the series of symbolic equation between penis, feces, baby, and gift is characterized by the common characteristic of the possibility that they can be detached from the giver (or at least the possibility can be imagined). As such, each of these may be circulated from person to person. Irigaray also makes use of Lacan's system wherein the Phallus plays a central role in linguistic exchange. Finally, it can be said that Irigaray also interrogates philosophy as conceptual system wherein a standard of 'Truth' is sought as a norm against which all else may be measured. Thus, as Whitford explains, every time Irigaray uses the terms "economy, currency, exchange, gold, standard," she conjures numerous associations. She states:

They call up whole sets of association [...] in an inextricable network in which language, patriarchal kinship systems, economic systems, and philosophical systems are all interwoven and interdependent: more or less the whole field of the symbolic is evoked each time.¹⁵

Irigaray often blurs the boundary between one field of inquiry and another. This is intended to show how, despite the different objects of inquiry each field of study may undertake, there remains a certain homogeneity or a parallel logic of exchange underlying each of these systems. As I shall indicate later, this can be seen in Irigaray's employment of images. The images are intended to address the notion of a unity nature underlying each of these systems.

Irigaray's analogy between women and commodities is based upon a similar argument that Jean-Joseph Goux makes. By examining the central features it relies upon one can attain a better understanding of Irigaray's analogy. These features include the logic of the general equivalent and the manner in which the Phallus is the general equivalent of objects in patriarchal societies.

Beyond Economic: Symbolic Economies

Understanding how Irigaray's analogy between women and commodities functions and what its implications are requires looking more in depth at how this analogy works. According to Whitford, one writer Irigaray appears to draw on is Jean-Joseph Goux.¹⁶ There is a theoretical similarity between Goux and Irigaray. As is reflected in his book *Symbolic Economies* and his essay on Irigaray, he is a writer with parallel concerns.¹⁷ Both Irigaray's and Goux's texts were written in the early 1970s. The tendency in French thought at this time was to emphasize the structural continuity between the discourses of psychoanalysis and Marxism. In this sense, a connection can be drawn between social and psychological analyses with the notion of economy. In addition to this, Goux has written on Irigaray and there is a clear similarity in their method.¹⁸ I believe that insight into Irigaray can be gained by bringing Goux's *Symbolic Economies* to Irigaray's discussion of Marx.¹⁹

In Goux's interpretation of Marx, exchange is privileged over production, and social relations are privileged over relations between things. In reading Marx as such, Goux addresses the symbolic function as a structuring mode in many levels of reality, such as economic, political, philosophical, etc. Whitford stresses that any materialist account of

Irigaray should examine her work in light of Goux's arguments, "particularly the idea that symbolic functions are mapped on the bodies of men and women (the raw material)."²⁰ Interestingly, Whitford notes that, although there has been a little work on the issue, "the question of Irigaray and materialism still awaits through elucidation, which will take into account the fact that 'materialism' is a political term, over which there is contest for rights and possession."²¹

Irigaray's argument that women in patriarchal societies function like commodities in capitalism, can be clarified through Goux's analysis of symbolic economies. In his reading of Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Goux claims that he became convinced "that certain categories of semiotics, linguistics, and structural psychoanalysis overlapped those already in place in the economic domain [. . .]."²² Goux is working on an idea similar to the structural parallels between money and language that Saussure sketches on the basis of the notion of value. Goux however, takes this line of reasoning further by conceiving these connections in terms of the phenomenon of exchange. His reason for such an approach lies in the fact that semiotics, economics and psychoanalysis all emphasize the question of substitution and its correlative, namely, value. Goux explains that, in his critique of structuralism, Derrida demonstrated that each signifying event is essentially a substitute for the signifier and likewise for the ideal form of the signifier.²³

Goux's observation is intended to go further than Marcel Mauss's intuition which is resonated in Lévi-Strauss's famous introduction that "exchange is the common denominator of a large number of apparently heterogeneous activities."²⁴ Much like

Mauss, Goux invokes exchange as a unifying concept but, under Goux's analysis, the concept is radicalized insofar as it is scrutinized to discover its relation to the operation of substitution. Goux explains that by the operation of substitution one is to understand the following:

[...] metasocial aspect of symbolic function, to what can be designated from different angles as the 'in place of', 'stand in', or 'supplement', the constant that is set apart, equivalence posited despite difference, the maintenance of an ideality throughout changes in materiality, etc.²⁵

Importantly, according to Goux, "it is always through replacement that values are created."²⁶ With this notion of substitution, Goux was able to show the importance of the function of exchange not just in the social sciences but, likewise, in philosophical concepts and questions such as ideality, sameness, and essence. In addition to this, it becomes evident that a similar structure underlies all social exchanges. This means that if we seek to make changes in society, examining the underlying exchange function is essential.

With this radicalized conception of exchange, Goux analyses certain concepts in political economy with the aim of establishing parallels between quantitative and qualitative logics of value. Marx's infamous account of the genesis of money at the beginning of *Capital* provides Goux with a coherent basis for this generalization. Indeed, Marx's account was so articulate that Goux maintains "that Marx's analysis held the lineaments of a general and elementary logic of exchange which far exceeded the sphere of economic value for which it was initially produced."²⁷ This point is important regarding Irigaray's analogy. As will be seen, Irigaray's account of women's position of patriarchal societies runs parallel to Marx's account of commodities. More precisely, Irigaray employs

the logic of the general equivalent in Marx's account of the genesis of money and the underlying logic of value.

On the basis of quantitative value, one can axiomatically reconstruct the sequential logic of value forms. When abstracted, this process may also provide a scheme for the constitution of qualitative values. Goux makes use of the notion of 'general equivalent' in his analysis. This notion is core to Goux's analysis and is a methodological extension of the Aristotelian formula for a standard measure, namely, a notion "which, by making things commensurable, renders it possible to make them equal."²⁸ The aim of Goux's analysis is to demonstrate that the notion of the general equivalent, while having its source in economic theories concerning exchange-values, is also significant in the elucidation of our cultural institution as a whole.

The general equivalent applies firstly to all money. In this sense, what at the outset began as a commodity among many comes to be placed in a privileged position. In this exclusive position, it serves as a measure of the values of all other commodities. An object that holds such a privileged position and an ideal standard external to exchange are required for comparison. Comparison, and the possibility to discern an abstract value notwithstanding perceptible differences, is indispensable for the possibility of equitable exchange.

In reading Marx's account of the genesis of money, Goux uncovers a structural logic of the general equivalent, a logic that he methodologically extends to non-economic domains where substitutions define qualitative value. This expansion brings Goux to show that the promotion of general equivalents is seen in the father's position of the privileged

subject, the Phallus' elevated rank of the privileged object, and language's privileged position as a phonetic signifier. In other words, the Father is the general equivalent of subjects, the Phallus is the general equivalent of objects, and language the general equivalent of signs. Furthermore, all are structurally homologous to the accession of a unique element, such as gold, as the general equivalent of products. Importantly, Goux demonstrates what previously may have been conceived as separate issues, namely, phallocentrism in the case of Freud and Lacan, logocentrism as addressed by Derrida, and the rule of exchange by monetary medium as in the case of Marx, can in fact be conceived as part of a unified process. Indeed, as Goux explains "[q]uestions such as those of the third, of the Other, of the exclusion of the One measure, found their structuring place in the logic of exchange."²⁹

Goux maintains that it is increasingly clear that what Marx designated as idealism and what Hegel labelled Western Metaphysics are, in fact, modes of thinking that were established through the circulation of general equivalents. Indeed, these seem to indicate two sides in a dispute of the hegemonic system underlying the logic of general equivalents. Goux argues that "only a fourfold challenge, aimed at phallocentrism, logocentrism, patricentrism, and monetarocentrism, could bring about an exit from metaphysics, where such an exit to be realized, or even realizable."³⁰ In order to surpass these modes of thought, the dominant notion of value must be challenged.

One important aspect that becomes evident in analyzing these modes of thought is the that this metaphysical hegemony is masculinist. Goux writes:

The sexual implications of the genesis of value forms are inherent in the investments to which the symbolic scission, as previously defined, perhaps originally gave rise.

For if the scission effected by the symbolic function allows a constant value to be postulated in spite of difference and an ideality to be maintained throughout changes in materiality (an operation without which there would be no meaning, or exchangeable value), this same schism is at the source of the sexual divide.³¹

The philosophical imaginary of difference in procreation and production is reflected therein. In other words, while the father supplies the form, the mother provides the material matter. Indeed, Plato and Aristotle repeat this metaphorical archaeology in their belief that form (paternal) is invariant while matter (maternal) is the relative receptacle devoid of any determination and subject to the imprint of form. The difficulty arising from the manner in which value operates in the logic of general equivalents is not only idealism, but paternalism as well.

Marx sought to overthrow metaphysics through invoking a manner of signification that was not paternal, that is, by appealing to matter. Indeed, matter and nature have always had a maternal semantic history. In fact, it is an attempt to reverse the general equivalents that led Marx to revalorize matter. However, Goux questions whether Marx's materialist direction may not simply be a reversal that leaves the oppositional structures intact,³² in other words, turning Hegel on his head. It appears that Marx's materialism is a strategy that challenges the logic of general equivalents but does so by reinstating what the metaphysics of value and idea were supposed to eliminate in their development. Furthermore, it should be stressed that matter restored through materialism can also be possessed and subordinated. These issues will be addressed in the second part of this chapter. They are problems within Marx's account that lead Irigaray to conclude that Marx is unable to think about alienation from a gendered perspective.

The aforementioned difficulty in Marx leads Goux to concern himself with what may constitute not a simple reversal but, instead, a transcendence of the hegemonic logic of money, father, Phallus, etc. He maintains that the problem must be sought through resolving the hierarchical oppositions opened by the logic of general equivalence. In this sense, it is very similar to what Irigaray is proposing. Indeed, Irigaray does not seek to undo masculine paradigms in order to replace them with feminine ones; instead she seeks ways in which to overcome the logic of the 'one' and replace it with a different paradigm. As discussed in the previous chapter, Irigaray queries social relations by a re-examination of the notion of nature. In this analysis, she stressed the need to recognize nature as not only female, but always already both male and female. This was of central importance for understanding Irigaray's criticism of Hegel; it will likewise be important for understanding her critique of Marx. Before proceeding to this, however, it is necessary to first look at what the logic of equivalence does to notions of value.

Money: Value via Equivalence

Marx was the first to lay the foundation of a science of values. Goux attempts to show how Marx's account of the genesis of the money form is indeed the story of a universal process. This is the same thing that Irigaray does in her essay "Women on the Market" when she draws an analogy between women and commodities. It is very helpful to examine Marx's account of the genesis of money because it is about far more than simply money. It is an account of how value is established and of the structural logic of the general equivalent. Value and general equivalence are important concepts beyond their economic significance. I will demonstrate how the logic underlying value established via general equivalence in

Marx's account of the genesis of money, is isomorphically an account of the position of women in patriarchal society. Importantly, the logic of equivalence that Marx delineates in his account of the genesis of money is likewise an account of the inherent abstraction within this form of reasoning. Similar to the criticism Irigaray makes of Hegel with regard to his dialectic, Irigaray is critical of Marx for not recognizing the abstractions that occur within his own dialectical method. This, as will be seen, is related to how the notion of nature figures in his theory.

It will be helpful to outline the history of money as Marx has in *Capital*. Marx develops this in Part 1 of *Capital* entitled "Commodities and Money. In this chapter, Marx first explains the notion of value by distinguishing between use-value and exchange-value. Secondly, through an analysis of the genesis of the money form, he explains the function of value through the notion of general equivalence. An understanding of how value functions within this system is essential for drawing analogies with other systems wherein exchange takes place. Tracing the genesis of the monetary form and understanding the underlying exchange relations is best done by examining the process of the different forms of value that have given rise to the current position of money. In tracing the genesis of money, Marx discusses four different types of value. These are the elementary or accidental form of value, the total or extended form of value, the generalized form of value and finally, the money form of value.³³

The first phase of Marx's account of the genesis of money is the elementary or accidental form of value. At this stage, there are already two poles of value to be distinguished, that is, the relative and the equivalent. According to Marx, the elementary

form of value is where the “whole mystery of the form of value lies hidden [...]”³⁴ Marx uses an example of two qualitatively different use values, a coat and linen. Marx discusses the example of the coat and the linen *Capital* part I chapter 1 (2), entitled “The Two-Fold Character of the Labor Embodied in Commodities.”³⁵ Using this example, Marx explains that the commodity’s value is found in another. He suggests that:

[...] two different kinds of commodities (in our example the linen and the coat), evidently play two different parts. The linen expresses its value in the coat; the coat serves as the material in which that value is expressed. The former plays the active, the latter a passive, part. The value of the linen is represented as relative value, or appears in relative form. The coat officiates as equivalent, or appears in equivalent form.³⁶

In this relation, the value of the linen is a relative form of value, while the coat is the equivalent form. Significantly, the two forms of value are intimately connected. More precisely, these two forms of value, while being mutually exclusive, are also mutually dependent and indispensable elements in the expression of value. Goux explains that the relation between the relative and the equivalent forms is indeed “none other than a specular relation, a mirroring.”³⁷ Marx describes the mirroring relation between the two forms of value as follows: “the bodily form of commodity B becomes the value-form of commodity A, or the body of commodity B acts as a mirror to the value of commodity A.”³⁸

Revealingly, Marx suggests the following:

In a sort of way, it is with man as with commodities. Since he comes into the world neither with a looking glass in his hand nor as a Fichtean philosopher, to whom ‘I am I’ is sufficient, man first sees and recognises himself in other men. Peter only establishes his own identity as a man by first comparing himself with Paul as being of like kind. And thereby Paul, just as he stands in his Pauline personality, becomes to Peter the type of the genus homo.³⁹

In order to sum up the relation between relative and equivalent value, it is important to note how the commodity that serves as equivalent does not express its own value but rather that of another. More importantly, however, it must be stressed that the relation of mirroring between the relative and equivalent forms shares an isomorphism with Hegel's account of recognition. It also shares this with accounts of the basis for ego formation in psychoanalytic theory. It must be emphasized that this homology did not escape Marx. In speaking of Marx's account of the relation between the relative and equivalent forms of value, Goux explains that this relationship is one that "has precisely the same structure as the *specular relationship with the other* [Goux's italics]."⁴⁰ This is a central element in understanding Irigaray's analogy of women and commodities as well as understanding why she views Marx as limited when it comes to the issue of improving the situation of women. For the moment, it is important to note and keep in mind this isomorphism. It will be elaborated on later. For now, it is necessary to return to the other form of value in Marx's account of the genesis of money.

The next step in Marx's analysis of the genesis of money is the total or expanded form of value. The form of value arises with the realization that each commodity can in fact be positioned into multiple relative and equivalent value form relations. Thus Marx suggests "20 yards of linen = 1 coat or = 10 lbs. Tea or = 40 lbs coffee or = 1 quarter corn or – 2 ounces gold [...]."⁴¹ As such, the value of a single commodity, in this example linen, can now be expressed in countless other commodities. In other words, every other commodity may be a mirror for the value of linen.

It is interesting to note that this second phase in the genesis of money can be used to draw an analogy with human relations. Indeed, Marx suggests that “[t]he linen by virtue of its value, now stands in a social relation, no longer with only one kind of commodity, but with the whole world of commodities. As a commodity, it is a citizen of that world.”⁴²

Such value relations can be mapped onto social relations. Goux writes:

[J]ust as the relationship between child (relative form) and mother (equivalent form) soon extends to a constellation of certain other individuals (brothers, sisters, father, etc.) and as the subject – a newcomer to the human commerce – gradually reflects his value (his soul) in the body of numerous similar beings, so the total (or extended) value form brings the commodity “into a social relation, not simply with one other commodity of a different kind, but with the world of commodities in general.”⁴³

Much like the isomorphism noted above between relative and equivalent value and the accounts of ego formation, the similarity noted between commodities in the extended value form and human relations is an important one. It will be dealt with in more detail later. Before proceeding to the third phase of this genesis, it is important to highlight some difficulties Marx notes with the second phase. It is these difficulties that appear to bring us to the third phase.

Marx observes several defects inherent to the extended form of value. For example, the relative expression of value is incomplete because the series representing it remains open. It becomes evident that the expanded relative value form is, in fact, simply the aggregate of the elementary relative equations. Marx refers back to the chain of values expressed in the expanded form, and suggests of the elements within this chain that, “[e]ach of these implies the corresponding inverted equation,” namely, “1 coat = 20 yards of linen. 10 lbs. Of tea = 20 yards of linen.”⁴⁴

Once again, a parallel can be drawn between commodity relations in the extended form of value and human relations. Goux explains this as follows:

In parallel fashion we see the child leave behind the dyadic relationship, a simple specular relationship in which he was the signified of the primordial other, in order to accede to the world of diverse others, each of whom reflects a particular determination back to him. What is he, this being who is always relative to others as different as they are numerous? [...] even as he appeals to the specular image of one of these others, he himself also plays the role of the mirror.⁴⁵

I will return to this parallel relation in more detail later. For the moment, let it suffice to say that the logic behind the above-mentioned social relations seems to suggest that it would be enough if all commodities (persons) had their value expressed in one single commodity which is taken as a universal equivalent. Marx suggests this with regard to commodities. In addition to this, while contemplating the defects inherent in the second phase in the genesis of money, he suggests that the third phase is foreshadowed. The logic behind the extended form of value emerges in the fact that when exchanges take place, they are done in the expression of a third commodity. More precisely, when someone exchanges his linen or any other commodity, the value of the linen is expressed in a series of other commodities. It appears to follow that all the people who exchange their commodities for the linen actually express the value of their various commodities in the linen. Viewed as such, the linen is the one and the same third commodity

The third phase in the genesis of money noted by Marx is the general form of value. In this phase, all commodities express their value in terms of one commodity and they do so in a uniform manner. With a general form of value, when all commodities are evaluated in terms of a single equivalent, it becomes possible to express their value in terms of other commodities.

Importantly, when a single commodity is converted into a general equivalent, it is excluded from the rest and, as Marx notes, “[t]he bodily form of [the equivalent] is now the form assumed in common by the values of all commodities, it therefore becomes directly exchangeable with all and every of them.”⁴⁶ This equivalent has no relative form of value in common with other commodities. In the transition from this third stage of the genesis of money to its final stage, Marx explains that “[it] becomes the social function of that commodity, and consequently its social monopoly to play within the world of commodities the part of the universal equivalent.”⁴⁷

The introduction of a universal equivalent changes the world of commodities. Goux explains that “[b]y exchanging [the commodities’] intricate mutual dependencies for a simple relationship to a single equivalent, by expressing their value in a single mirror, they acquire a determination that is both social and autonomous.”⁴⁸

The fourth and final stage in Marx’s analysis is the money form of value. At this stage, all commodities are related to this universal equivalent (historically gold, and now money). Money, as the universal equivalent, has a ‘social monopoly’ over all other commodities. In the world of commodities, money thus becomes centered around what bestows value on each and every commodity. It is important to stress here that gold and now money must transcend its commodity status in order to be established as a general equivalent (and then the universal equivalent).

In the genesis of the money form, and Marx’s analysis of value therein, it is of crucial importance to emphasize the manner in which the universal equivalent stands to all

other commodities. As Marx explains, it is important to note the following about the universal equivalent:

[. . .] if a commodity be found to have assumed the universal equivalent form, this is only because and in so far as it has been excluded from the rest of the commodities as their equivalent [...]. And from the moment that this exclusion becomes finally restricted to one particular commodity, from that moment only, the general form of relative value of commodities obtains real consistence and general social validity.⁴⁹

Before proceeding to draw parallels between the notion of value in Marx's account of the genesis of the money form and notions of value in psychoanalytic theory, it is useful to note that the universal equivalent stands in a double relationship with the world of objects it governs. In the first instance, it has a privileged relationship over all over commodities, it determines their values, and, in the second instance, the universal equivalent stands in a correlated relationship of exclusion. Furthermore, as a universal equivalent, money is established through an abstraction. More precisely, via abstraction, money, as a universal equivalent, sets a value on commodities or on labor as a commodity. For example, insofar as money represents labor, money is the social expression of abstract labor. Similarly, with a gold currency, the labor embedded in gold is taken as the social expression of abstract labor.

Marx's account of the genesis of money is important because it is an account of (exchange) value and an account of the hierarchy opened by the logic of general equivalence. In addition to this, it makes evident the abstractions that result from this form of logic. In tracing the genesis of money, four distinct phases can be distinguished. Throughout this process there is a progression toward the monetary system, as we know it. It is a progression from the elementary value relationship between two commodities to

complex relations between many commodities. As this process develops, a select few become privileged within the transaction and, finally, there emerges an exceptional 'commodity' wherein all value is to find its expression. This is indeed the history of the genesis of money that Marx traces in the first fifty pages of *Capital*. Goux suggests that it is in fact more than this, and thus views it as an "exemplary *analysis* constituting the 'uphill start' of a universal science [Goux's italics]." ⁵⁰ In other words, Marx did not merely analyze the exchange of commodities. He set in place the possibility of analyzing many other forms of evaluations, and social substitutions. Marx's analysis can be applied in such a way as to demonstrate that the institution of the Father, the Phallus, and Language are all major 'signs' that regulate their respective 'markets.'

It is not possible within the scope of this thesis to expand on all the economies Goux draws on. Since this thesis thus far has dealt with Irigaray's reading of Hegel and will address Lacan in the next chapter, I will expand on how idealism and psychoanalysis both establish similar exchange economies as Marx outlines in his analysis of the genesis of money. I believe that what Goux uncovers here is immensely helpful in understanding why Irigaray makes the analogy between women and commodities and, likewise, why, although she views Marx's analysis as being of great theoretical value, she still maintains that there is a problem inherent to the Marxist dialectic. This problem, which will be expanded on later, has to do with how the notion of how nature is viewed by Marx. Furthermore, Irigaray's image of the couple will be shown to be a response to this unitary notion of nature.

Before proceeding to an analysis of the exchange-values and functions within idealist philosophy and in psychoanalytic theory, it is interesting to note that there is a history to the debate around symbolic exchange and money. For instance, in *The Philosophy of Money*, Georg Simmel seeks to construct a philosophy of money as opposed to an economics of money. As such, Karl Joël notes that “money became a symbol of the world, an image of exchange as a whole, of infinite interrelationship which ultimately extended itself into the dominant principle of a world view.”⁵¹ Indeed, in Simmel’s analyses it is much more. Bottomore and Frisby explain:

[...] money is simply a means, a material or an example for the presentation of relations which exists between the most superficial, ‘realistic’, and fortuitous phenomena and the most idealized powers of existence, the most profound currents of individual life and history.⁵²

Bottomore and Frisby explain, “the fact that two people exchange their products is by no means simply an economic fact.”⁵³ It is an object of philosophical study in which the preconditions can be examined in non-economic concepts. Similarly, as such, its consequences for non-economic values and relationships may also be examined.

Through a particular type of analysis, Simmel sought to:

construct a new story beneath historical materialism such that the explanatory value of the incorporation of economic life into the causes of intellectual culture is preserved, while these economic forms themselves are recognized as the result of more profound valuations and currents of psychological or even metaphysical preconditions.⁵⁴

At the same time, Simmel’s analysis was a methodological attempt to come to terms with the historical materialism of contemporary Marxists.

Intriguingly, in his review, Goldscheid suggests that *The Philosophy of Money* “forms a very interesting correlate to Marx’s *Capital* [...] in fact some of the passages of

The Philosophy of Money read like a translation of Marx's economic discussions into the language of psychology."⁵⁵ While it is true that Simmel's work could not have been written if Marx's work did not precede it, it must be emphasized that Simmel's book contains a supplementation to Marx's work.⁵⁶

As mentioned above, the way in which exchange-values function in psychoanalytic theory are important for understanding Irigaray's analogy between women and commodities. In the following section, I will discuss the similarities in the functions of monetary forms and the Phallus. I will illustrate how both hold a privileged position within an exchange system.

Gold and the Phallus, Value via Equivalence

In "Women on the Market" Irigaray maintains that the Phallus plays the same role in object relations under patriarchy as the money form does in the world of commodities. She makes this argument through a close reading of Marx's account of commodities production and value in *Capital*. The four phases outlined by Marx, that is, the elementary, the extended, the generalized, and the money forms, have given an explanation of how a commodity, such as gold, has ascended to a sovereign position over other commodities. The position held by gold endows it with a centralizing function which, according to Goux, obeys "a rigorous formal necessity, doubtless universally characteristic of the symbolic order."⁵⁷ More precisely, it may be said that it is a formal necessity within a particular system and time period. Importantly, however, this necessity appears to transpire across the whole system. Indeed, Irigaray, much like Goux, maintains that every single major symbol shares

an isomorphism with the phases of the monetary form. Goux explains this relation when he writes:

There exists a scientific system of 'metaphors', a regulated process of equivalents and substitution which *cuts across* the separate registers of the general social body. The principle axis here is none other than the *paternal metaphor* (money, phallus, language, monarch), the central and centralizing metaphor that anchors all other metaphors, the fulcrum of all symbolic legislation, the locus of the *standard* and of unity, totemically implanted in the center of the tribal space [Goux's italics].⁵⁸

Understanding why Irigaray draws an analogy between women and commodities can be made clearer by looking at how the Phallus plays a parallel role to money (or gold), that is, the role of the general equivalent. The parallel in these theoretical models is important for understanding Irigaray's analogy between women and commodities.

It is essential to look at the genesis of the phallic form and how its privileged position is established in a manner parallel to the money form. The phases that progressively structure the world of objects, even prior to the establishment of the Phallus as the signifier of 'desire', can be said to be parallel to the establishment of a general equivalent as Marx outlines in his analysis of the genesis of the money form. The Phallus, like gold, is promoted to a position above all others and, at the same time, gives up its position among other objects. As Lacan states, "[...] the Phallus is not a phantasy, if by that we mean an imaginary effect. Nor is it as such an object (part-, internal, good, bad, etc.) in the sense that this term tends to accentuate the reality pertaining in a relation."⁵⁹ Parallel to a general equivalent in the economic sense, the Phallus cannot enter into a relationship with other objects that set a price upon it. As Goux explains, the Phallus "is the general equivalent, the standard, and unit(y) for all objects of drive – for all objects, as

these acquire relative value only through the Phallus.”⁶⁰ Thus, the Phallus transcends its position as a part object in the same manner as gold transcends its status as a commodity.

It is the same process that commands the accession of the Phallus and gold to a sovereign position. There is a parallel process at work, a structuring principle with distinct phases. In the case of commodities, gold is the general equivalent, and in the case of objects, the Phallus is the general equivalent. Goux claims that, when addressing this parallel, it becomes evident that we are speaking of “a *logic of the symbolization process*, that is, a logic of the successive forms taken by the exchange of vital activities in all spheres of social activities [...] [t]his logic enables us to conceive *the dialectic of history* [Goux’s italics].”⁶¹ As already discussed above, the analysis of value can only be undertaken once an equivalent has been established. This process begins with the first substitute.

Irigaray’s analogy between women and commodities is based upon exposing the logic of general equivalence and recognition of the Phallus as the general equivalent of objects. In making the analogy between women and commodities, Irigaray calls attention to a master term that is responsible for ensuring the identities. As already discussed, for Marx, this master term or the ‘general equivalent’ has a privileged position. All commodities have their value measured by the general equivalent. For Lévi-Strauss and likewise Lacan, the ‘Name-of-the-Father’, plays the role of general equivalent. In Lacanian theory, the master signifier, the Phallus, is the general equivalent. Irigaray’s analogy between women and commodities is intended to show that there are symbolic structures underlying society. These symbolic structures exclude woman and have her stand as the

valueless condition for value. Irigaray notes, “starting with the simplest relation of equivalence between commodities, starting with the possible exchange of women, the entire enigma of the money form – of phallic function – is implied.”⁶²

Value (Exchange) and the Symbolic

Goux suggests that the theoretical numismatics detailed by Marx locate the three orders that are central to Lacan’s restructuring of the Freudian field, namely, the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.⁶³ As sketched below, Lacan’s three orders appear to correspond to the three sections of Marx’s chapter on the circulation of commodities in *Capital*. The three orders in Lacan’s account of psychic development can be mapped onto the three sections in Marx’s account of the circulation of commodities.

According to Marx, when in the position of general equivalent, the money form or a precious metal such as gold has three major functions. Firstly, it operates as a ‘measure of values’. As such, it plays into the Imaginary in Lacan’s registers. Importantly, as Marx explains, “the expression of the value of commodities in gold is a merely ideal act, we may thus use for this purpose imaginary or ideal money [or imaginary gold],” and furthermore “when [. . .] money [or gold] serves as a measure of value, it is employed only as imaginary or ideal money [or gold].”⁶⁴ Secondly, gold operates as the ‘circulating medium’. As such, it plays a similar role to that of Lacan’s Symbolic order. More precisely, it is an instrument that can be replaced by another symbol, even a ‘worthless’ one such as paper. This is so as long as, according to Marx, “it function exclusively as coin, or as a circulating medium and nothing else.”⁶⁵ In this sense, money has a purely functional mediating purpose, and this role is a symbolic one. Thirdly, gold has a function that may be related within what Lacan

describes as the Real. Here, Marx explains that there are times when gold “has to be present in its own golden person. It is then the money-commodity, neither merely ideal, as in its function of a measure of value, nor capable of being represented, as in its function of circulating medium.”⁶⁶ This is gold’s means of payment. In this case, the image of gold is not enough; rather, it must itself be present.

This points to an interesting aspect of the general equivalent, namely, in order for money to function as a general equivalent, it must have neither use value nor exchange-value, it must rather be the measure of value of all other commodities and, thus, also to the production process. Furthermore, money also requires a physical presence if it is to act as the universal value. In other words, money, as a universal equivalent, must be able to be converted into something more real, such as gold.

As suggested above, a similar argument can be made about the Phallus in Lacanian theory. The role of the Phallus will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. For now, it is sufficient to simply repeat what was already stated above, namely, that the Phallus “is the general equivalent, the standard, and unit(y) for all objects of drive – for all objects, as these acquire relative value only through the Phallus.”⁶⁷ Likewise, the Phallus has its place in the three registers. In order to function as a general equivalent, it too must be able to be present in physical form. What becomes interesting is critically rethinking the function of the general equivalent with regard to woman’s body. The system of exchange of women, as described by Lévi-Strauss, is also an account of how women become symbolized. A critical deconstruction of the symbolic promise of women as commodities, however, suggests that the physical presence of woman is too real or, in the Hegelian sense, too

negative. In other words, the process of symbolization abstracts from woman in order to create a woman/commodity suitable for exchange. This is possible only through the process of abstraction. Upon deconstruction of this symbolic process, it becomes evident that this woman/commodity is, in fact, not real; rather it is a construction. Irigaray makes this suggestion:

Just as in commodities, natural utility is overridden by the exchange function, so the properties of a woman's body have to be suppressed and subordinated to the exigencies of its transformation into an object of circulation among men.⁶⁸

Irigaray proposed the following as an explanation:

By submitting women's bodies to a general equivalent, to a transcendent, supernatural value, men have drawn the social structure into an ever greater process of abstraction, to point where they themselves are produced in it as pure concepts: having surmounted all their 'perceptible' qualities as individual differences, they are finally reduced to the average productivity of their labor. The power of this practical economy of the metaphysical comes from the fact that 'physiological' energy is transformed into abstract value without the mediation of an intelligible elaboration.⁶⁹

The implications of this passage become clearer when thought of through a re-analysis of the process of abstraction implied by the money form. In re-examining the passage from the elementary form to the universal form of value, a process of abstraction through universalization, we discover something more: There is a movement of sublimation in the idealization of currency. Marx describes these two processes as follows:

[J]ust as the exchange value of commodities is crystallized by their process of exchange into gold money, so is gold money *sublimated* in its currency into its own symbol first in the form of worn coin, then in the form of subsidiary metal currency, and finally in the form of a worthless token, paper, mere *sign of value*.⁷⁰

The course of sublimation and idealization inherent in the process of exchange, that is, in the dialectical logic of the development of social exchange, can be related to the history of philosophical idealism. Goux explains that the "increasingly arbitrary medium

of exchange, whether economic or signifying, tends to make *matter* indifferent. The logic of exchange ends with the *indifferentiation* of matter.”⁷¹ Furthermore, as Goux notes, “[t]he indifferentiation of matter reflects not only a marked increase in domination by the conscious, by abstract and universal rationality, but also (at least in the first stage) an effacement of history.”⁷² Whether economic or otherwise, there is a similarity between the different forms of exchange. They share a dialectical logic of symbolization that associates them with historical erasures.

Marx makes a brief acknowledgement that matter is not indifferent. Goux points to a little known remark made by Marx in his 1857-1858 notes for his critique of political economy where Marx challenges the “*absolute* arbitrariness of both monetary signs *and* written signs. . . to maintain the irreducible historicity of monetary signs, however abstract.”⁷³ Marx writes:

The material in which this symbol is expressed is by no means a matter of indifference, even though it manifests itself in many different historical forms. In the development of society, not only the symbol but likewise the material corresponding to the symbol are worked out – a material from which society later tries to disengage itself; if symbol is not to be arbitrary, certain conditions are demanded of the material in which it is to be represented. The symbols for words, for example the alphabet etc., have an analogous history.”⁷⁴

The manner in which society views this material, however, is not taken up in sufficient detail by Marx. Furthermore, his account of labor suggest that nature is not differentiated until it is subjected to labor. As will be elaborated in the rest of the chapter, this is the very basis of Irigaray’s criticism of the limits of Marx’s theory. The image of the couple is intended to address this problem. I intend to show here and in more detail in the

final chapter, the image of the couple is intended to bring the two-ness of sexed nature to the foreground.

Irigaray maintains that the notion of nature needs to be rethought. This concern is based in the belief that nature has a history. This rethinking calls into question the model of construction whereby the social acts upon the natural to endow it with limits and meanings. Connected with the view that the natural is constructed is the idea that, in itself, it has no value and, concurrently, that it acquires value only once it assumes a social character.

The Limits of Marx

In drawing a parallel between women and commodities, Irigaray is not only using Marxist theory, she is also interrogating its limits. The second part of this chapter addresses what Irigaray appears to view as the limitations of Marx's theory. As I mentioned earlier, Marx's materialist direction may simply be a reversal that leaves the oppositional structures intact. In this sense, although Marx's dialectic is particular insofar as it turns Hegel's on its head, it has a similar structure to that of Hegel's. As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, Marx's materialism is a strategy that challenges the logic of general equivalents. Irigaray uses the Marxist account of general equivalents to demonstrate how women in patriarchal societies figure as commodities. The mere fact that this analogy can be made points toward a limitation in Marx's theory. In looking forward to a future economic system whereby production is based on use rather than exchange, Marx reinstates what the metaphysics of value and idea were supposed to eliminate in its development. In addition to this, it must be highlighted that matter restored through materialism can also be

possessed and subordinated. Thus woman, insofar as she is also a body, may still be subject to the metaphysics of value under the current ideology. The reason this occurs within Marxist theory is because Marx retains the notion of unitary nature from the Hegelian dialectic, and theorizes labor as that which gives value to nature.

Although Irigaray does not explicitly state it, this concern was already present in her essay “Women on the Market,” and is repeated over and over in various forms in her later interviews and books. In her writings, she repeatedly states that a change in symbolic relations is required in order to change the position of women. In an interview entitled “Women’s Exile,” Irigaray claims that when Marx speaks of the exchange-value of commodities “one could use his analysis to speculate whether the constitution of not only a specific society, but society in general is not grounded – in the patriarchal system – on the fact that women act as commodities exchanged between men and groups of men.”⁷⁵ In another interview entitled “Language, Persephone and Sacrifice,” Irigaray claims “contrary to the implications of Marxism, [and] in order to change the economic structure it is necessary to change the structure of language.”⁷⁶ Similarly, in her book *Thinking the Difference*, Irigaray suggests that women must concern themselves with “interpreting their situation or status not only in economic but also in symbolic terms,” indeed, “[u]nless they realize that they are members of two groups – women and units of the contemporary world – they risk losing everything [...]”⁷⁷

Irigaray notes, “Marx [...] was very concerned with social economy but little with the culture of nature, except in its transformation into useful goods, at which point it disappears as a natural phenomenon.”⁷⁸ Here, she is stressing the shortcoming in Marx

where there is a lot of concern about social justice but a lack of recognition in the necessary natural roots for its survival. Irigaray elaborates that “[t]his is particularly obvious for women as reproducers, for raw materials, for arable soil, but it is true of any body.”⁷⁹ She argues that what is consistently forgotten in patriarchal culture is that no society can exist without its constituent bodies. She suggests that this is forgotten due to this culture’s male subjective economy.

Irigaray is countering the more or less exclusive interest in production and economic relations reflected in modern political theory. According to Irigaray, this bias obscures the domain of symbolic relations and relations of exchange. Irigaray warns that if civil and political participation is constructed only in economic terms, it overlooks the symbolic organization of power and, as a result, it is at risk of being too narrow. To this end, in her book *Je, tu, nous*, Irigaray maintains that Marx’s theory is “not adequate, because [it] remains bound to a patriarchal mythology which hardly ever questions itself as such.”⁸⁰

Kathryn Bond Stockton explains that Irigaray protests against Marx’s labor theory of value since, with its focus on work for wages, it privileges the analysis of men’s exploitation.⁸¹ As Irigaray views it, women are not only those who possess no property but, further, those who are themselves possessed. In taking into consideration whatever economic and political changes have taken place, Irigaray notes that “women, on the whole, continue to reproduce and bring up children, make the food, and service men.”⁸² In doing so, women continue to ensure the social basis which makes possible exchanges between men. In producing children and reproducing the labor force, women continue to

mediate the exchange between men. Irigaray explains that “women’s bodies constitute the infrastructure of our society; they reproduce the forces of production without being recognized as a force of production.”⁸³

Thus far, I have focused on clarifying Irigaray’s analogy between women and commodities. In order to achieve this parallel, Irigaray has used Marxist analysis. This part of Irigaray’s feminist critique is built upon existing feminist tradition. In addition to this, however, Irigaray extends the feminist critique of Marx. In the remaining parts of this chapter, I will show how Irigaray extends the critique of Marx in the poststructuralist theories of sign and subjectivity. I will return to this issue in the final chapter to expand upon it and to explain in more detail how and why the images Irigaray employs are intended to change the notion of a unitary nature to a sexed nature.

However, before dealing with this aspect of Irigaray’s theory, it is helpful to return to the master-slave dialectic and Marx’s account of labor. This detour is necessary in order to highlight the centrality of the category of labor in Marx’s theory and the role it plays, much like the master-slave dialectic in Hegel, in the establishment of the subject. This is important since it directly ties in with the problem of the notion of nature when addressing the issue of woman. As will be seen, the dichotomy between use value and exchange-value regarding woman in patriarchal society can be seen to proceed parallel to the dichotomy of nature and culture. The reason for analyzing Marx’s account of labor is thus twofold. In the first place, this is done in order to determine an account of the subject therein; in the second place, in order to highlight the limitations of this view due to the underlying notion of a unity of nature.

Marx on Labor

It will be helpful to make explicit some of the central issues surrounding Marx's position on labor. The purpose of this is to highlight exactly where, according to Irigaray, some of the difficulties with Marxist theory arise. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the difficulty lies in Marx's account insofar as it retains a notion of nature that is singular. The issues surrounding Marx's account of labor, as elaborated below, is important because through it we can discern an account of the human subject. This, in turn, is important because it is related to how Marx envisions addressing the problem of alienation.

As discussed in the chapter on Hegel, the master-slave dialectic represents the struggle for recognition. Ultimately, this dialectic, the history of the slave's attempt to overcome otherness, is representative of human history. In this scheme, recognition is open only for the slave and not the master. This is due to the fact that the slave labors for his master whereas the master merely consumes the fruits of this labor. The slave gains a sense of mastery by working the world and forming objects since this work provides him with an awareness of, as Hegel describes "having and being a mind of his own."⁸⁴ This is achieved through labor that transforms nature into an extension of the self, and a projection of free thought. Through this process the slave comes to recognize his independent existence.

The general point here is that according to Hegel, labor is more than a mere means for survival; it is the medium for the development of human self-consciousness. However, Balbus stresses that labor, or what Hegel calls 'objectification', is only one mode of the struggle for recognition.⁸⁵ Furthermore, it is not the primordial condition; rather, it emerges from a prior condition, that is, the master-slave relation itself. In other words, the

attempts to secure recognition by means of the production of objects are a response to the failure of recognition between two subjects. For Hegel, it is thus important to stress that domination precedes objectification.

Marx takes up Hegel's concept of labor and develops it beyond the limits envisioned by Hegel. As Balbus clarifies, the movement from Hegel to Marx "is a movement in which one particular mode of production becomes synonymous with that struggle itself: the struggle for recognition becomes production." Furthermore, as described below, production becomes in Marx what it was not in Hegel, namely, "primordial, exhaustive and unalienated."⁸⁶

According to Marx, labor is primordial because nothing is historically or logically prior to productive activity. The centrality of the concept of production lies in the idea that humans only become human once they begin to produce. In *The German Ideology*, Marx writes:

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence [...]. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life [italics in original text].⁸⁷

Human history thus begins with productive activity because it is necessary for the physical reproduction of the species and its role in the satisfaction of further needs to sustain the development of the species.

Significantly, the primordial character of Marx's notion of productivity is the rejection of Hegel's argument that domination precedes objectification. As Balbus suggests, since objectification is from the outset necessary for the survival of the species, or

as Marx describes, co-extensive with human existence, there are no prior forms of the struggle for recognition from which objectification may be drawn.⁸⁸ Thus, whereas in Hegel intersubjectivity precedes objectification, in Marx the opposite is the case. For Marx, objectification is the source of intersubjectivity. In this sense, objectification is the source of intersubjectivity since in order to produce, humans must enter into relations with one another.

Marx's concept of productivity, as mentioned above, is also exhaustive. In this sense, production is conceived not only as an irreducible form of the struggle for recognition but also the essential form of this struggle. This characteristic of Marx's concept of production is described by Marcuse when he suggests that labor is "the essence of man."⁸⁹ On the one hand, Marx agrees with Hegel that human identity is constituted through the activity of transforming nature. On the other hand, however, Marx distances himself from Hegel insofar as this activity of transforming is seen as objectification. Marx states:

This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of individuals. Rather, it is a definite form of activity of these individuals [...].a definite *mode of life* [...]. What they are therefore, coincides with their production, both in *what* they produce and with *how* they produce.⁹⁰

By treating production as the form of the struggle for recognition, Marx transforms the notion of production as the mode of human self-genesis. Similar to Hegel, Marx viewed human nature as defined and redefined through a struggle to surmount the otherness of their environment in order to make it an extension of themselves. However, in contrast to Hegel, this environment, or otherness, is nature. Thus, human history, according to Marx,

becomes the history of objectification. The struggle for recognition, in Marx's view, is the struggle to master and transform nature.

Problems with Marx's account of labor

In assessing Irigaray's critique of the limits of Marx's theory, it will be helpful to turn to other feminist criticisms of Marx. These criticisms have to do with his theory of labor. It is not a criticism that Irigaray directly makes, but it is in line with her reproach that Marx is not sufficiently self-critical because he fails to see that he is still working in a system that is already patriarchal. Indeed, it is precisely this problem that allows Irigaray to formulate her particular analogy. The criticism of Marx's theory of labor reflects Irigaray's concern that merely changing the economic situation does not entail emancipation for women, precisely because the problem is more complex. As outlined above, the problem is likewise entrenched at the very basis of society, at the level of symbolization. As I shall show later, these criticism will be helpful in understanding how Irigaray's image of the couple is a response to the limitations of Marxist thought. The problem has to do with Marx's notion of nature that arises from his account of labor. In effect, Marx appears to retain a problematic aspect of Hegelianism.

The Marxist category of labor is embedded within an account of identity, desire, knowledge, subjectivity and gender. Through an analysis of Marx's central concept -- that is, labor -- his account of the collective construction of our subjectivity, our world, as well as our knowledge of self and other emerges. The importance of this analysis lies in a closer look at the so-called universal subjectivity produced by the Marxist labor process. Hillary Manette Klein argues that the seemingly universal subjectivity engendered in the Marxist

process is necessarily a male one.⁹¹ It has often been argued that Marx's theory of labor, and thus his account of subjectivity is embedded within an Enlightenment tradition of discourse that equates women with nature. This tradition, as argued in the chapter on Hegel, is a masculinist discourse that equates women with the "raw materials" upon which masculine identity depends and is created. Thus in Marxist theory, similar to the arguments laid out in the previous chapter on Hegel and next chapter on Lacan, there is no place for an autonomous female subject. In Marx, the female figures only as a resource for the production of male identity. In examining Marx's account of labor, however, I will build on existing feminist critique. I will argue that the shortcoming in his account of labor is not simply the idea that women are equated with nature. I will demonstrate that Irigaray's image of the couple is intended to underscore the Hegelian notion of unitary nature that is retained in the Marxist account of labor.

Marx defines the relation between 'nature' and labor as a marriage in which nature is the "helpmate" to laboring man. Marx characterizes the product of the prolific union of nature and labor as 'value'. In other words, according to Marx, labor is the force that works on nature to produce 'value.' Thus, it is through labor that man transforms nature from a force against which he stands powerless to a resource he can control and appropriate. In addition, it is through this process that his identity is constructed. Marx writes:

Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms, legs and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own needs.⁹²

The transformation of Nature from active to passive is thus achieved through labor. As Klein explains, labor “inserts itself between nature’s omnipotence, on the one hand, and docility, on the other, to produce a natural man and a humanized nature.”⁹³ It is through labor that Nature is transformed from alien to ally and man’s original unity with nature is mediated and controlled. Revealingly, Marx forwards a conception of labor as the process by which an “all powerful” nature is transformed into a controllable, passive resource.

It is important to note here that in Enlightenment thought the corresponding dichotomies of nature/culture and active/passive are superimposed with gender meanings. There are two senses in which women are viewed as falling on the side of nature. In the first instance, L. J. Jordanova clarifies that “[w]omen were [...] conceptualized as dangerous because less amenable to the guiding light of reason [...]” and, secondly, that they “are so clearly subsumed under nature’s laws, expressed for example in the menstrual cycle, that their states of minds and body can be read by the trained person.”⁹⁴ As a result, women’s bodies are viewed as passive texts upon which nature’s rules are written and may be read. Klein thus explains that under this view, “[w]omen themselves thus become a natural resource in the production of masculine expertise about nature [...]” and, furthermore, that “[t]he passivity of women and nature alike [...] is achieved through science and the progressive instrumental control of nature.”⁹⁵

In addition to this, Marx’s conception of the central role of labor in the production of the subject poses problems for contemporary feminist theory. As a true Enlightenment thinker, Marx forwards a theory of the birth of human consciousness. Marx achieves this through a narrative revolving around his central category of labor. It is through labor,

namely, the process whereby man interacts with nature to produce items for use, that the human is constructed as a subject. For the purpose of clarification, when speaking of the human subject being constructed as a subject in Marxist terms, it is not necessarily to be understood as the production of an “ego,” nor the domination of the self over the world. Rather, it is to bring to the forefront the subject’s construction by social structures into which he is born and over which he has no control. For the purpose at hand, these structures are those of language, representation and gender.

Klein writes: “Marx theorizes the production for use as unalienated reproduction of the laboring subject in the produced object. This is a process through which the subject is made present to itself in the unproblematic form of a use value that represents it and with which it identifies as its mirror image”⁹⁶ It is important to stress here that Marx is able to overlook language and gender constructions because, in his view, reality is given as use value. As previously noted, Irigaray, on the other hand, declares that use value is caught within the dominant ideology and thus is already determined by patriarchy. This difficulty will be addressed in more detail below. For now, it is sufficient to note this shortcoming within the Marxist account.

In Marx’s theorizing, labor is the process that brings together action, knowledge and its objects. This is achieved in such a manner that, as Klein clarifies, “man, in his efforts to meet his needs, labors to both ‘disclose and create’ the world in which he lives and, as a consequence, comes to know.”⁹⁷ It is important to note that, throughout Marx’s works, labor is posited as a general activity of ahistorical content that cuts across the various historically specific forms it may take. I will clarify what is distinct about

Irigaray's critique of Marx's account of labor later. In order to have a better understanding of how Irigaray's image functions, it is useful to look at certain implications of Marx's account of labor. A closer examination of Marx's account of labor will reveal his anthropology of the formation of the human subject.

The Marxist Subject

An analysis of the notion of the subject in Marx's theory is essential for understanding Irigaray's critique. As will be discussed in more detail below, Irigaray maintains that Marx fails to provide a theoretical account in which women's emancipation is possible because he does not address the dialectic structure of the subject as sexed subject.

Although Marx develops the notion of labor throughout his works, perhaps the most extensive articulation on the subject is found in *Capital*. Marx writes:

The labor process [...] is human action with a view to the production of use values, appropriation of natural substances to human requirements; it is the necessary condition for effecting exchange of matter between man and Nature; it is the everlasting Nature-imposed condition of human existence, and therefore is independent of every social phase of that existence, or rather, is common to every such phase.⁹⁸

In Marxist terms, labor is the universal production of use values. As such, labor's product is an object that has its meaning and value at the moment of consumption, as a sign of the subject's aim. In this sense, it fills the space put forward by need. Marx writes:

But coats and linen, like every other element of material wealth that is not the spontaneous produce of Nature, must invariably owe their existence to a special production activity, exercised with a definite aim, an activity that appropriates particular nature-given materials to particular human needs. So far, therefore as labor is a creator of use value, is useful labor, it is a necessary condition, independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and Nature, and therefore no life.⁹⁹

It is important to note that, despite labor's historically mutable forms, Marx does offer a stable content in face of historical change. Although he may refer to this stable content in various ways throughout his works, there remains a constant. The fundamental components of nature, need, aim, object, and activity remain constants. Klein notes that in "*The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* it is called 'conscious life activity'" and in the "*Grundrisse*, 'living labor capacity,'" similarly, in "*The German Ideology* it is 'conscious labor,'" and finally in "*Capital*, 'labor in a form that stamps it as exclusively human'."¹⁰⁰

Marx's account of the production of use values can be viewed as a theory of the subject. This point may be argued, not because Marx's account is one for the production of useful objects that meet human 'needs', but rather because it is an account that involves the construction of the subject as a subject of representation and a subject of desire. Indeed, according to Marx, what distinguishes man from animal is the former's characteristically human ability to represent the object of desire conceptually.

Klein suggests that labor is a signifying process that "represents desire at two levels: the subjective level and the objective level of the manifestation of this object as use value."¹⁰¹ The product resulting from labor reflects the subject's ability to transform a mental representation of a desired object onto a material manifestation thereof. Thus labor reproduces and represents desire in its objective material form, and consumption does so in subjective fashion.

As discussed in the chapter on Hegel and as will be seen in the following chapter on Lacan, desire is different from need since the latter is sometimes associated with animal

existence. For the purpose at hand, desire revolves around representation. Much like Hegel, Marx distinguished between desire and need. In the *German Ideology*, his discussion of the birth of consciousness, he makes a clear distinction between animal instinct and human instinct. In *The German Ideology*, Marx describes human instinct as “conscious.”¹⁰² More precisely, human ‘need’ is never immediately experienced; it is always mediated representationally. Klein elaborates that human desire, according to Marx, is “the mental representation of the need that exists only in the ‘imagination of the laborer’.”¹⁰³ Desire is thus the human capacity to conceptually represent an object of need. Hence, Klein claims that “[t]he use value is thus an objective, material representation of a subjective, ideal representation: it is the representation of a representation; that is, it is the representation of desire.”¹⁰⁴

In Marxist theory, labor becomes a signifying activity. Use values represent desire as a product as well as a cause of this activity. As suggested above, the labor process gives rise to an object that has an ‘objectivity’ that refers to an objective embodiment of the subject’s desire as well as to its material existence. Labor thus offers the human subject the possibility of representing himself as a subject in the form of use values that represent his desire. Irigaray is not only using desire, but also language as a category for interrogating use value. She writes: “contrary to the implications of Marxism [...] in order to change the economic structure it is necessary to change the structure of language.”¹⁰⁵

Marx’s view on the role of nature in this process is important. According to Jordanova “[f]or Marx, nature is the quintessential object of knowledge and desire in relation to which the laborer stands as a knowing and desiring subject.”¹⁰⁶ The laborer is

able to use nature in order to produce use values that are not solely representations of the object of desire, but also objective embodiments of the subject's desire.

The Marxist category of labor has further implications when analyzed in semiotic terms. Labor may be viewed as an infinite process of signification. Recalling Saussure's relation between the signifier and the signified, one can read labor as creating a material use value which stands as the signifier. Furthermore, this is constructed according to the determination of the mental representation of a need that stands for the signified. Klein claims that in Marxist theory, labor suggests "the progressive appropriation of nature as semiotic and literal resource for laboring man's authorship of the world."¹⁰⁷ Indeed, through labor, an object is produced wherein the subject can achieve self knowledge insofar as the subject can 'see' himself in what he has produced. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx writes:

The object of labor, is, therefore the *objectification of man's species-life of man*, for he reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he has created.¹⁰⁸

Labor is thus a process of self objectification insofar as the use values created reflect the subject's ability to transform imagined desire into a material object. Labor gives rise to a world of use values that mirror the subject. Use values are objects that find their value not solely in use but in their power to operate as bona fide self-representations of the laborer's subjectivity and desire. Marx's view of nature is revealed in this process. Nature, that with which the subject was originally merged yet which is experienced as radically 'other,' is transformed through the process of labor into something familiar. As Klein describes, labor's ability to transform nature into use values that reflect the subject's desire

suggests, that, in Marxist theory, “[t]he nature at the origin of the labor process is an ‘unassailable force’, the nature at its telos is a mirror– a metaphor [owed] to Marx himself”¹⁰⁹

According to Klein, the Marxist labor process gives rise to the subject of representation and desire. To understand the shortcoming of this Marxist category with regard to feminist concerns, it is helpful to draw analogies between the Marxist category and the Lacanian account of the construction of the subject. This is very important because Irigaray’s criticism of the limits of Marxist theory has to do with the dialectic structure of the subject.

In psychoanalytic theory, the father is the authority figure who disrupts the mother/infant dyad. For boys, identification with the abstraction ‘father’ holds the promise of autonomy from the mother and eventually phallic power as well. In Marxist theory, the subject must similarly differentiate himself from a body of matter and identify with an abstraction, namely, the “associated producers.” Marx’s account of labor describes a process by which the realm of Freedom is extracted from that of Necessity. It is a clear account of labor as a collective endeavoring for the transcendence of an immanent nature. In *Capital*, volume three, Marx makes the following claim:

In fact, the realm of freedom actually begins where labor which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things, it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. Just as the savage must wrestle with Nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all social formations and under all possible modes of production. With his development this realm of physical necessity expands and as a result of his wants; but, at the same time the forces of production which satisfy these wants also increases. Freedom in this field can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of

Nature; and achieving with this the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favorable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of Freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with the realm of Necessity as its basic prerequisite.¹¹⁰

There is an important similarity between the Marxist account and psychoanalytic theory that emerges. In her essay “Women on the Market,” Irigaray exploits this similarity in several places. Klein points out that in psychoanalytic theory, the subject requires the body of the pre-oedipal mother as the motor for differentiation.¹¹¹ In Marx’s theory, the Freedom of the laboring subject depends upon Necessity as the basis for the representation and reproduction of the self in the form of use values. As will be outlined in the chapter on Lacan, upon accession to the Symbolic, the realm of culture, woman as an autonomous subject is obliterated. Similarly, in Marxist theory, upon reaching the realm of freedom, nature as autonomous is likewise obliterated.

Since Marx’s notion of labor has been discussed in terms of giving rise to the subject of representation or desire, it is useful to turn to Lacan as he addressed the role of representation in the construction of the subject. As will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on Lacan, the infant’s entry into language and culture coincides with the intervention of the symbolic father who separates the infant/mother dyad. Lacan’s pun, *Nom-du-Père*, refers to the ‘no’ and/or the ‘name’ of the father whose prohibition coincides with the child entry into language. This process indicates the necessity of the merged subject to disengage from the plenitude of the mother/infant dyad as well as to objectify one’s being in a name.

In order to understand how the Marxist category of woman fails to offer women the ability to objectify their desire as women, it is useful to draw an analogy of this account with Lacan's account of the creation of the subject. In Lacan's account, representation of the subject in language, recognition of phallic value and its consequence, that is, identification with an abstract paternal function, come together and create the moment of separation from the mother. This leads to the transformation of nature into culture, the phallic mother into the castrated woman, unity into difference, in the infant into a member of the linguistic community. Marx's account of the creation of the autonomous subject through the fashioning of self-representations embodied in use values has parallels with Lacan's account of the production of the subject through entry into language. In Lacan's account, representation of language, recognition of phallic value, and the identification with the father run parallel with Marx's account of the creation of use values, the recognition of the value of autonomy from, as well as control over threatening nature, and the identification with the "associated producers".

In both Lacanian and Marxist theory, there is a notion of an original unity out of which difference is produced. Both theories depend upon a narrative of increasing domination over nature (or the mother). Klein clarifies that "[t]he construction of difference from unity, of subject as different from the maternal body and as sovereign producer of both value and signs, turns on a phallic/castrated economy."¹¹² There is an analogy in the structure of the arguments in Lacan and Hegel. This analogy is based on the notion of the universal equivalent as discussed earlier in Goux's account of symbolic economies. The analogy is as follows: While the Phallus stands for value in Lacanian

theory, production of value stands in an analogous position in Marxist theory. In Lacan, the Phallus produces the masculine self as 'difference' and, similarly, in Marx, the production of value produces the (masculine) self as different from nature. In both theorists we, discover this self that is able to craft the mirror of the self in objects and in words.

Irigaray exploits the similarities on this front between Marx and Lacan regarding commodities and women. She suggests "just as a commodity has no mirror it can use to reflect itself, so woman serves as a reflection [...] of and for man, but lacks specific qualities of her own. Her value-invested form amounts to what man inscribes on its matter: that is, her body [...]."¹¹³ Christine Di Stefano argues that Marx's theory "is profoundly embedded within the masculine horizon of meaning and sensibility. As such, it is not merely inadequate; rather, it is part and parcel of a misogynous configuration of values, earnings, and practices to which feminism is opposed."¹¹⁴ Nancy Hartsock suggests that a difficulty with Marx's procedure lies in his failure to address the specificity of women's labor.¹¹⁵ The lack of this recognition has serious implications for Marx's account of 'human' labor. Indeed, in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels engage the history of the division of labor and place the first instance of the division of labor within the family. Interestingly, this division of labor is categorized as 'natural' by Marx and Engels. Yet, "adding insult to injury" as Di Stefano suggests, "they dismiss the significance of the familial sexual division of labor by stating that a 'real' division only emerges with the (presumably distinct and subsequent) distinction between manual and mental labor"¹¹⁶

One would think that the first materialist premise of human existence would be found in the phenomenon of birth, that is, as Di Stefano indicates “to acknowledge that some woman has ‘labored’ to bring me into the world.”¹¹⁷ However, reproduction only enters as the third premise of history according to Marx and Engels. This appears to give rise to a rather distorted analysis of the process of history making, namely, the view of an already born and nurtured human being. It is not necessary to focus more on the distinctions of gender-specific labor because Irigaray’s view on this will be discussed in more detail later. For the moment, it is more important to address the implications of this lack of recognition.

The first implication of not recognizing gender specific forms of labor lies in the resulting “gender biased account of social production and an incomplete account of the life process of human beings.”¹¹⁸ More importantly, the failure to include reproductive labor is not merely a question of a nominal exclusion that could be remedied by the inclusion of this form of labor into Marxist theory. The problem is more deeply rooted, and is perhaps most evident in Marx’s analogy of the architect and the bee in *Capital*. Marx discusses the example of the architect and the bee in *Capital* part III chapter 7 (1) entitled “The Labour-Process or the Production of Use values.” In this example, Marx distinguishes between the architect who builds purposefully and the bee that cannot help what it is doing. Marx’s famous question in this section is: “[W]hat distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees [?]” His answer is that even the worst architect proceeds according to an abstract plan. In this comparison, the architect measures not just the building but, similarly, himself. Building, insofar as it is a process of making an object and rendering it visible, is

‘objectification’ of the architect’s self. As discussed earlier in this chapter, according to Marx, a person can only know himself through objectification of his work or, in other words, only by seeing the products of his labor reappear as objects in the world. The bee, on the other hand, has no possibility to see itself in the object of its labor. Thus, while the bee will build nothing other than the hive, the architect can build and become virtually anything. Self-conscious objectified labor is what Marx identifies as the core of “distinct human species being.”

Although Marx’s example of the architect and the bee stresses the self-conscious element of human labor, it becomes problematic when it posits an idealized image of unalienated labor freed from the realm of what Marx calls “necessity.” Since in Marx’s view necessity must be moderated in order for ‘human’ history to thrive, Di Stefano concludes that in Marxist theory “[n]ature and human history are thus, in a significant sense, opposed.”¹¹⁹ In addition to this view of nature, Marx also tends to repeat the view that the feminine is tied to nature while the masculine is capable of transforming and emancipating himself from this real of necessity. In *Capital*, Marx sympathetically quotes William Petty’s analogy. He writes “[a]s William Petty puts it, labor is the father of the material world and the earth is its mother.”¹²⁰ It thus appears that in Marx’s example the bee is to be viewed as female and the architect as male. What would thus follow would be the view that men alone are capable of self-conscious or objectified labor.

Marx’s failure to accommodate reproductive labor into his theory is clearly problematic since human productive labor, as Marx views it, has reproductive labor as a preexisting condition. Marx’s shortcoming here is in his failure to fully recognize human’s

natural embeddedness as physical. In a sense, this can be said to be similar to Hegel's dialectic view of the overcoming of nature. Marx's emphasis on man's self-creative abilities denies man's natural embeddedness and, as a result, gives rise to resentment toward nature. In placing man and nature at odds, Marx posits the utopian anticipation of a state of post-embeddedness. Post-embeddedness is described favorably by Jeremy Shapiro as a state where "the individual has ceased to become the object of uncontrolled forces and is instead entirely self-created, ceaselessly going beyond its own limitations by means of its creativity, and continuously participating in the movement of its own becoming."¹²¹ Such a position tends to repeat the view that masculine identity is produced out of opposition to the maternal world. Indeed, as Silvia Bovenschen explains, "[t]he biological-natural moments of human existence only appear to have been fully expunged from masculine everyday life: that relationship to inner nature which has not yet been mastered is projected onto women [...]."¹²² From Irigaray's point of view, this will be important because we must remember that both men and women have their respective bodies, and are thus both embedded in nature.

As will I will elaborate in the chapter on Lacan, the threat to (masculine) identity is not castration, *per se*, but the threat of the lack of identity posed by maternal engulfment. Thus, an important aspect of masculine development is the negative articulation of masculine selfhood in face of the posited maternal-feminine presence.

Marx's theoretical framework is limited because it is unable to properly account for gender-specific experience and knowledge. This shortcoming necessarily has an impact on the very substance of its interpretative value. Di Stefano remarks:

Marx's epistemological commitment to the arena of 'production' commits him to an ontological reality which is detectably masculine, not merely male. As such it lacks a reflexive appreciation of its own material and ideological roots which, within the Marxist view, is the prerequisite of a genuinely rigorous critical theory.¹²³

From Use/Exchange to Nature Culture

Similar to Marx, Irigaray relies heavily on many dichotomies. In the first part of this chapter, I examined the problem surrounding women and exchange in patriarchal society. Irigaray also views the manner in which women are 'used' in patriarchal societies as problematic. An analysis of how 'use' appears problematic allows Irigaray to draw out the similarity between the dichotomies of use/exchange and nature/culture

Woman's Use Value

Irigaray argues that women's reproductive use value (reproducing children and the labor force) and women's constitution as exchange-value underwrite the symbolic order as such.¹²⁴ In this statement, it becomes evident that Irigaray clearly views use value as something that has already been appropriated by patriarchal systems.

As argued in the first part of this chapter, due to patriarchy, women are object of exchange. It would logically follow that if the exchange function in our society is patriarchal then the manner in which woman is 'used' is problematic as well. From a dialectical point of view, we can only access the use value of something via its exchange value. In this sense, due to the fact that woman's (exchange) value is already caught within patriarchal structures, any notion of woman's use would be likewise caught in the dominant ideology.

It is interesting to note that, in *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx uses the metaphor ‘the Lord of commodities’ for gold. Furthermore, in his *Grundrisse*, Marx describes how money changes “from its servile role in which it appears as mere medium of circulation [...] into the lord and god of the world of commodities. It represents the divine existence of commodities, while they represent its earthly form.”¹²⁵

Goux suggests that, by doing so, Marx already notes a theological character in the monetary system and hints at “how the other world is but the hypostatized world of general equivalents.”¹²⁶ Interestingly, Irigaray has an essay entitled “Women, the Sacred, Money.” In addition to this, however, it is worthy to note that in the process of economic exchange described by Marx, there appears to be a scission between two worlds. Goux explains that this scission divides the material world of commodities and the ideal world of value and money.¹²⁷ This process is not unlike the process realized in Plato’s idealist philosophy where the world is divided between the tangible and the intelligible. More precisely, in the economic process described by Marx, we discover a schism between matter and idea, or between matter and value. This process thus implied a difference between the commodity as body and the commodity as value. As discussed above, Marx distinguished between relative and equivalent value and emphasizes that this is indeed where the “whole mystery of the form of value lies hidden [...]”¹²⁸ Goux explains: “[t]he source of ‘idealization’ must be sought in the very possibility of equating two different things, in their evaluation in terms of a common measure, which effaces nonpertinent differences [...]”¹²⁹ In *Grundrisse*, Marx makes this argument: “[a] product posited as exchange value is in its essence no longer a simple thing; it is posited in a quality differing from its natural quality;

it is posited as a *relation*, more precisely as a relation in general, not to one commodity but to every commodity, to every possible product.”¹³⁰

Irigaray also argues that woman's price is not determined by her use value yet woman's body is the material support for that price.¹³¹ In other words, in terms of its use value, that is, for reproduction, woman's body is the material support for her exchange value. Furthermore, while making the distinction between use value and exchange value, Irigaray argues that woman is subject to a schism that divides her into categories of usefulness and exchange value. As a result of this division, Irigaray suggests that as mother, woman remains on the side of reproductive nature. But here woman, as mother, is only use value for she cannot be exchange value without being a threat to the social order. As mother, woman is reproductive use value. Furthermore, she is also private property since she is marked by the name of the father. Irigaray claims that, as natural value, mother must be barred from exchange because she is essential to society for reproduction.

Further evidence that the use value Irigaray addresses is involved in the patriarchal order is in Irigaray's claim that women are no longer in the natural order, and not yet in the social order.¹³² In this sense, woman as use value and exchange value has been appropriated by the masculine as reproductive private property. As such woman's nature is determined by masculine need. In other words, woman is estranged from nature insofar as her use-value is determined by the masculine. Furthermore, Irigaray maintains that because woman is not a participant in social exchanges, she is not yet in the social.

Irigaray explains that since women are uprooted from their 'nature', they no longer relate to each other except in terms of what they represent in men's desire and according to

the 'forms' that this imposes on them.¹³³ The transformation of the natural into the social does not take place for women, except to the extent that they function as components of private property, or as commodities. This is true only insofar as they are use-value to men and exchange value for men.¹³⁴

With this analysis in mind, however, it must be stressed yet again that Irigaray is trained in the dialectic method, and thus knows that she cannot access use-value except by means of exchange value. Irigaray is thus not proposing to subvert exchange value for use-value. More precisely, Irigaray would certainly maintain that a woman's use-value is not her own. Much like exchange value, it is already embedded within the patriarchal system. In order to clarify this view, it is useful to examine another dichotomy that functions analogously, namely, nature/culture. However, before addressing this dichotomy, it is useful to outline Marx's account of alienation. The reason for this is twofold. In the first place, Marx's account of alienation is an account of people's relation to the world. In this sense, it is an account of the human's position in the nature/culture divide. In the second place, Marx's account of alienation is important because it is an account of what occurs within certain modes of production. His solution to the problem of alienation is central to understanding what Irigaray views as the limits of Marxist theory. The importance of the notion of alienation in this respect has to do with the dichotomies of use/exchange and nature/culture. As will be seen, Marx views the problem of man's alienation in capitalist society as grounded in the mediation through exchange. Irigaray views the problem of woman's alienation from her natural self in patriarchal culture precisely as the predicament of being grounded in the mediation of patriarchal culture.

Alienation

The topic of alienation is important for understanding the limitations Irigaray notices in Marxist theory. As mentioned earlier, Irigaray maintains that Marx's account is unable to deal with alienation in sexual difference. This, as will be seen, is tied to the problem in Marxist theory that proposes prioritizing use-value without addressing the oppositional structures that are already in place.

In Marx's view, alienation is a separation between what a person is and what that person could become if the current society did not prevent human beings from full self-development. His view of socialism was intended to be a future form of society in which each person has the ability to express his capacity in and through his work, and, as such, advance as a fully developed human individual. Paul Craig Roberts and Matthew A. Stevenson detect the source of Marxist interpretation to be in exchange or the commodity mode of production.¹³⁵ The prevalent interpretation of Marxist alienation has a slightly different emphasis insofar as it finds the source of alienation in the division of labor.

Tom Rockmore describes the prevalent interpretation of Marxist alienation wherein the source is the division of labor.¹³⁶ According to his interpretation, the structure of society after the industrial revolution, known as capitalism, is witness to a means of production that does not belong to society as a whole, but rather to a few individuals. In society as such, according to Marx, human value is calculated quantitatively in economic terms. More precisely, human value is determined by each individual's contribution to the economic process. As Rockmore explains, in Marx's view, everything, "including the social relations between individuals, the system of laws in force, the way that we understand our world and ourselves, ultimately rests on the institution of private property,

or of private ownership of the means of production.”¹³⁷ Capitalism, according to Marx, gives rise to a division of labor where some people work for others in order to meet their minimal needs. Marx suggests that the result of this division of labor is that both the workers and those who own the means of production do not fulfill their capacities as beings in their activities.

As previously mentioned, Roberts and Stevenson’s interpretation emphasizes the commodity mode of production as the source of alienation. This is not contradictory to the prevalent interpretation, indeed, it should be viewed as encompassing it. According to Marx, the division of labor in capitalist society arises due to the purchase and sale of the products of different branches of industry. More precisely, it is the production for the market that creates the division of labor. It thus follows that alienation is, in fact, brought about by (production for) exchange.

In the *Manuscripts* as well as in *Capital*, Marx argues that alienation occurs when persons are mutually independent and engage in market exchange or are subject to such exchanges. In these works, Marx makes clear that alienation is a result of the very act of production, and this act is that of producing commodities.

In the *Manuscripts*, Marx underlines that the dehumanization of the worker arises due to commodity production. Marx writes:

Production does not produce man only as a commodity, *the human commodity*, man in the form of a *commodity*; it also produces him as a *mentally* and physically *dehumanized* being [...]. Immorality, malformation, stupidity of workers and capitalists [...]. Its product is the *self-conscious* and *self-acting commodity*[...]the *human commodity* [...]. [Marx’s emphasis.]¹³⁸

For Marx, as Roberts and Stevenson explain, alienation is a consequence of objective economic conditions. More precisely, they are due to the separation of production from use.¹³⁹ This form of production, one that is separated from use, is, in fact, what Marx characterizes as the commodity mode of production. Furthermore, when Marx equates the commodity mode of production with man's alienation, he is comparing man to a past state as well as a future one. In neither pre-capitalist systems nor in what Marx envisions as post-capitalist systems is production separated from use. In pre and post-capitalist systems, production is directly associated with friendly relations between men and community control over economic life. It must be highlighted, however, that the basis for production for use in pre- and post-capitalist systems is different. Roberts and Stevenson clarify that in pre-capitalist systems "conviviality is rooted in community tradition and ritual; in post-capitalist systems it is rooted in a scientific consciousness."¹⁴⁰ It is important to note that, since Marx views economic life as controlling human consciousness, he maintains that society can only have control over itself if it is in control of its economic life.

The notion of alienation that Marx develops in *Capital* is the same as the one he develops in *The Manuscripts*. This is evident in the following excerpt from the *Manuscripts*:

We now have to grasp the essential connection between private property, greed, the separation of labour, capital and landed property, exchange and competition, value and the devaluation [*Entwertung*] of man, monopoly and competition, etc. [...] the connection between this entire system of estrangement [*Entfremdrung*] and the money system.¹⁴¹

As outlined below, Marx distinguishes between four kinds of alienation, all due to the institution of private property.¹⁴² The first form of alienation arises from work. This kind

of alienation, according to Marx, is not observable from those views of political economics that focus only on the relation between worker and work. The second kind of alienation arises in the relation between the worker and the product of his labor. Work, as Marx notes, is not voluntary; rather, it is necessary for our own sustainment, to meet our minimal needs. In order to survive, we are required to work. Work, therefore, does not in itself satisfy a need; it is rather the means to satisfy our needs. The third form of alienation is each individual's alienation from the human species. It is worth briefly mentioning that Marx's notion of the human species is not without its controversy. Some interpreters suggest that Marx later altogether gives up the idea of a human species that is construed as a fixed essence of human being.¹⁴³ Other interpreters view Marx as closer to Aristotle in viewing the human being as a social being. The fourth kind of alienation is that of one human being from other human beings. Marx notes that the economic pressures of modern society have the propensity to turn each person against all others.

The fourth characteristic noted above, namely, man's alienation from other men, is, according to Marx, a direct consequence of the other three. Marx declares that "[w]hat is true of man's relationship to his labour, to the product of his labour and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men, and to the labour and the object of the labour of other men."¹⁴⁴

In *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx addresses the characteristics of labor that produce commodities. In his analysis, Marx discovers that the labor that produces commodities is a labor lacking in any quality. Roberts and Stevenson explain that this arises because the "individuality of labour is lost, and the specific forms of

labour are lost because of their abstraction into money.”¹⁴⁵ It must be stressed here that a labor that produces commodities creates exchange values for the employer, rather than creating use-values for the laborer.

Furthermore, these characteristics of labor that produce commodities are, in fact, uncovered in the antitheses and contradictions outlined by Marx in *Capital*. In discussing these characteristics of commodities, Marx claims commodities are the following:

[...] the antithesis [between] use-value and [exchange] value; the contradiction that private labour is bound to manifest itself as direct social labor, that a particularized concrete kind of labor has to pass for abstract human labor; the contradiction between the personification of objects and the representation of persons by things.¹⁴⁶

Alienation, as Marx analyses it in the *Manuscripts*, in *Capital*, and in *A Contribution*, indicates that it is imminent in the nature of commodities. Furthermore, man’s alienation in all its forms is evident in the contradictions between use-value and exchange value. In addition to this, man’s alienation is manifest in the contradictions between individual and social labor, in particular between concrete labor and abstract general labor. Ultimately, man’s alienation is apparent in the personification of objects and the ‘thingafication’ of persons. Roberts and Stevenson suggest that the alienation as characterized in all the above contradictions are “inherent features of commodity production.”¹⁴⁷ Marx states the relationship between alienation and economics several times in the *Manuscripts*. This is evident in the following:

It is hardly necessary to assure the reader who is familiar with political economy that I arrived at my conclusions through an entirely empirical analysis based on an exhaustive critical study of political economy [...].
We have started from the premise of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws [...].

We started out from an economic fact, the estrangement of the worker and of his production. We have this fact conceptual form: *estranged, alienated*, labour. We have analysed this concept, and in so doing merely analysed an economic fact [...]. [...] political economy has merely formulated the laws of estranged labour.¹⁴⁸

It is important to stress here that Marx views post-capitalist systems as a return to the pre-capitalist system in one very important aspect, namely, production for use as opposed to production for exchange as in the commodity mode of production. This is an a central element in understanding Irigaray's critique of Marx.

The problem of alienation is an economic issue Marx characterizes as the commodity mode of production. Irigaray is critical of Marxist theory because she views it as focusing on production and economic relations at the cost of examining the underlying domain of symbolic relations and relations of exchange. As a result, Marx leaves the oppositional structures intact. Marx's failure can be clarified through an analysis of how the relation between use and exchange mirrors that of nature and culture. This becomes related to Irigaray's claim that Western patriarchal society is based on binary oppositions that must be addressed if woman is to be freed from subjugation. In the sections below, I will elucidate the oppositional structures that must be addressed.

Nature/Culture:

Central to Irigaray's criticism of Marx's dialectic is the manner in which the notion of 'nature' is deployed. We have seen how Irigaray's works point to a metonymical chain associated with a series of concepts: nature, earth, mother, body, matter, etc. Irigaray's work seeks to demonstrate that, within Western patriarchal culture, these concepts have been appropriated and employed in order to establish a binary system of representation. This system of representation establishes a masculine culture at the cost of the other.

The dialectic method informs us that we cannot speak about nature except by means of culture. Irigaray maintains that in patriarchal societies, the idea of woman has been appropriated and constructed under masculine ideology. Jean Baudrillard explains that “[t]he emergence of the phallus as the general equivalent of sexuality, combined with the emergence of sexuality as the general equivalent of the virtualities of symbolic exchange, delineates the emergence of a *political economy of the body* which is established on the ruins of the body’s symbolic economy.”¹⁴⁹ As a result, any idea of a woman’s nature is likewise constructed. The concept of nature is thus always already socially mediated.

In order to demonstrate the limitations of Marxist theory when it comes to the problem of women in patriarchal societies, it is necessary to highlight why simply changing the economy based exchange to that of use is insufficient. In order to achieve this, Irigaray draws the parallels between the use/exchange and the nature/culture divide. Irigaray addresses the natural/alienated opposition when she suggests that “*A commodity -- a woman -- is divided into two irreconcilable ‘bodies’*: her natural’ body and her socially valued, exchangeable body, which is a particularly mimetic expression of masculine values. [Irigaray’s italics].”¹⁵⁰ Irigaray claims that women are subject to a schism that divides them into categories of usefulness and exchange value. In other words, they are divided into “matter-body and envelope that is precious but impenetrable, ungraspable, and not susceptible to appropriation by women themselves; into private use and social use.”¹⁵¹

Understanding how Irigaray views woman as divided into use-value and exchange value can be examined by viewing Marx’s dichotomy of use/exchange as parallel to the

dichotomy between nature/culture. To this end, the following suggestion by Baudrillard is revealing:

Products have become commodities: use-value and exchange-value. Intended on the one hand for the abstract finality of the 'needs' that they 'satisfy', and on the other hand to the structural form that governs their production and exchange [...].

The body and sexuality is reduced, *in its current mode of 'liberation'*, to use value (the satisfaction of 'sexual needs') and exchange-value (the play and calculation of the erotic signs governed by the circulation of models).¹⁵²

Here, Baudrillard moves away from the realm of political economy and into a world dominated by the code of sign-exchange. Underlying this view is the idea that codes thus constitute the primary organizing principle of the social entity. He maintains that Marxist theory can only become useful for the revolutionary critic when it is turned inside out through the logic of reversibility and simulation. By this he means that we have to turn to an analysis of the production of signs, and realize that signs alone constitute "the purest and most illegible form of domination [. . .]. A symbolic violence is everywhere inscribed in signs [. . .]."¹⁵³ This is helpful for understanding Irigaray's deviation from Marx. When Irigaray speaks about the division of women's bodies into use-value and exchange value, she is changing the focus of critique from the mode of production to a focus on the code of production. Irigaray is arguing that a change in economic situation alone is not sufficient. We must take into account a masculine history that overlays 'woman's body' with layers of symbolic meanings.

Irigaray's criticism of Marx requires a closer examination of what she means when she says that women are alienated from their natural bodies and their socially constructed bodies. A closer examination of the role of nature in the Marxist dialectic will be helpful. Indeed, Marx maintained that nature separate from society has no meaning because the

nature that pre-dated society no longer exists. In this view, nature is a historical product. Neil Smith clarifies that even if one were to posit nature as external to society, one would still be entering into a certain relation with nature.¹⁵⁴ The distinction prior and non-prior, that is, between socially mediated and non-mediated nature is meaningful only if a distinction is already made between human beings and nature. In discussing the relation between nature and society, Alfred Schmidt suggests that Marx's concept of nature should be viewed as a dialectic of subject and object. Schmidt explains:

Man forms the connecting link between labor and the object of labor. Nature is the Subject-Object of labor. Its dialectic consists in this: that men change their own nature as they progressively deprive external nature of its strangeness and externality, as they mediate nature through themselves, and as they make nature itself work for their own purposes.¹⁵⁵

Schmidt clarifies that "[s]ince the relationship between man and nature is the precondition for the relation between man and man, the dialectic of the labor-process as a natural process broadens out to become the dialectic of human history in general."¹⁵⁶ Schmidt clarifies that in Marxist theory "[p]roduction is always social. It is always 'the appropriation of nature by the individual within and *through the mediation of* a definite form of society [...].[Schmidt's emphasis]"¹⁵⁷

Irigaray's concern for how the notion of nature is employed is related to its historical ties to a dichotomy where nature and the feminine are at one pole while culture and the masculine are at the other. Irigaray explains:

The society as we know it, our own culture, is based upon the exchange of women. Without the exchange of women, we are told, we would fall back into the anarchy . . . of the natural world, the randomness. . . of the animal kingdom.¹⁵⁸

Gertrude Postl notes that this statement clearly indicates “what has been lost due to the exchange-economy, namely, the natural world.”¹⁵⁹ In order to understand what Irigaray’s aim is in re-examining the notion of nature, it is useful to examine the Marxist idea of first and second nature.

Domination of Thought: First and Second Nature

The dialectical character of nature as discussed above is one important aspect of the concept of nature. A further important aspect of this concept is a result of its dialectic character. More precisely, it has to do with the conceptual distinction between first and second nature. This distinction is crucial for understanding why Irigaray criticizes Marx’s inability to think of the importance of sexual difference. The reason is due to the fact that the distinction between first and second nature arises from a dominating manner of thinking about nature.

Irigaray employs Marx to criticize extreme goal driven desire. This has to do with the telos of masculine capitalism that, in turn, has to do with accumulation. Accumulation, in the Marxist account, creates a nature that is only good for one thing, that is, being transformed into wealth. The analogy that Irigaray proposes with woman is that man uses woman in ways that destroy her woman-ness. In other words, it produces a woman who can be used for masculine purposes. This analogy hinges upon an analogy between Marx’s view that capitalism is an improper or destructive manner of using nature and Irigaray’s view that patriarchy is established through a destructive way of reasoning about nature.

Indeed, as Cheah and Grosz clarify, “Irigaray regards the uncontrollable forms of alienation and abstraction in the Marxist account of the development of global capital – the

genesis of the money form and of commodity fetishism – as inevitable effects of the sacrifice of natural fertility.”¹⁶⁰ In her essay “Women, the Sacred, Money” Irigaray contemplates this sacrifice when she asks: “[c]ould it be that the sacrifice of natural fertility is the original sacrifice? It leads to an economic superstructure (falsely labeled infrastructure) that has no respect for the infrastructure of natural fertility.”¹⁶¹ Irigaray urges the importance of sexual difference, as the fecund couple can offer a future beyond the destruction of nature we now face. For Irigaray, the couple is the site for the formulation and cultivation of generative differences of living nature.

In order to clarify what Irigaray views as the limitation of Marxist theory, it is important to explain how the analogy between capitalism and masculine thought functions. More precisely, it is necessary to explain what is meant by the claim that the manner in which Marx thinks about nature is destructive. This can be clarified by explaining the notions of first and second nature and their relation to instrumental reason.

According to Adorno, instrumental reason drives us to reduce the world to ‘thing-like’ equivalences, which lead to judging objects (and other subjects as well) only in terms of material use values. Adorno terms this collection of objects ‘second nature.’¹⁶² Adorno used this concept for exposing the historical dimensions in that which appeared as natural. Adorno found the concept a valuable tool. As described below, Susan Buck-Morss clarifies what is meant by the notions of first and second nature and how they were used in materialist accounts.¹⁶³ According to Adorno ‘first nature’ refers to the sensual world, including the human body, whose physical well-being is the concern of the materialist. ‘Second-nature’ is a negating, critical concept which refers to the false, mythical

appearance of given reality as ahistorical and absolute. Adorno cites Lukács's use of the concept of second nature in *Die Theorie des Romans* and *History and Class Consciousness*. In the latter work, Lukács alters his meaning of the concept, and 'second nature' is used almost synonymously with Marx's concept of 'fetish' in his analysis of bourgeois conventions with regards to commodity structures. Adorno's use of the concept of second nature in his own writings is clearly in the sense of Lukács's later work. Adorno employs 'second nature' in his own works within a configuration of critical concepts, which Buck-Morss explains, include 'fetish,' 'reification,' 'enchantment,' 'myth,' and 'phantasmagoria.'¹⁶⁴ These were used to expose the false mysterious 'natural' appearances of objects as 'given,' and to disclose the historical dimension of their production.

The concept of second nature is similar to Irigaray's 'specularized nature' that, in turn, appears to be an idea she derived from Hegel's notion of *Spekulation* which is the stage of positive reason in the dialectic. The central feature of *Spekulation* is the moment in the dialectic where apparently opposed and distinct thoughts are unified. Furthermore, 'specularized nature' in Irigaray's account is similar to that of Lacan, in the sense that it was language as a system that was the basis for specularization. Battersby clarifies that for Lacan it was on the basis of specularization that one individualized subject is identical to another such subject (at least in terms of the model of ego formation.)¹⁶⁵ Anything that comes from beyond the self (and thus is not identical to the self) is a threat to the sense of itself as an autonomous whole.

In addition to being concerned with the demythification of 'nature,' Adorno is also concerned with exposing the domination inherent to dialectical thought. This argument is

also important for understanding Irigaray's critique of Marx. A closer look at what is entailed by the domination inherent to dialectical thought is explained below. In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer pursue a task identified by Walter Benjamin in 1940, namely, the dismantling of the false notion of history as progress. More precisely, as Buck-Morss clarifies, they demonstrate Max Weber's assertion that the increased rationalization and 'disenchantment' of society in fact does not lead progressively to social order, but rather to "new structures of domination in the forms of monopoly capitalism and political totalitarianism."¹⁶⁶ Within this configuration, Adorno and Horkheimer restructure the historical dialectic of reason. Buck-Morss explains that "reason originated as the tool for the domination of nature, but, intimately connected self-renunciation and bourgeois asceticism, it had turned against the thinking subject himself."¹⁶⁷ What emerges from Adorno's analysis of Enlightenment thought is the realization that logical abstraction leads both to the reification of cognition and to the domination of the content of thought by the concepts. As a result, this form of thought does violence to 'first nature.'

The implications of instrumental reason are important for Irigaray with regard to the concept of nature or, more precisely, the notion of woman's 'nature.' Irigaray maintains that that masculinist way of thinking about nature, and thus about woman's nature is problematic. Adorno provides compelling evidence for the idea that the instrumental reason inherent to dialectical thought creates a 'nature' that is disinvested from itself and remade into something that serves human purpose. As such, the concept of nature is in fact constructed. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the

characteristics of modernity have roots in the distant past of Western history. According to them, instrumental reason takes two forms, both of which are modes of domination. First, there is technological reason that dominates nature; second, there is social reason that dominates other human beings.¹⁶⁸ The drive to dominate nature leads to the reification of nature, and thus reduces it merely to the 'other' that is controlled and used by the 'subject.' It should be stressed that in order to control and manipulate that 'object,' nature has to be stripped of all its qualities and represented as a 'unity' and as mere matter.

Thus, what has to be discussed is how both nature appears as reconstructed or redefined for human purpose and how Marx's mode of thought is also a form of domination. Marx claims that communism is the effective domination of human beings over nature. He also envisions it as a practical solution to the conflict between nature and human beings. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx describes communist society as "the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature."¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, he describes this society as "the consummated oneness in substance of man and nature -- the true resurrection of nature."¹⁷⁰ It should be stressed that Marx does not envision any reciprocity between man and nature. In this sense, Marx's position differs from that of Hegel. More precisely, Marx's 'resurrection of nature' is merely another name for nature's effective domination. This domination in Marx's theory is demonstrated by Jeremy Shapiro's explanation that the overcoming of embeddedness (overcoming the lack of control over nature), according to Marx, "ends the conflict of nature with itself" and as a result is simultaneously its "resurrection."¹⁷¹ Balbus thus stresses that Marx describes embeddedness as the "conflict of nature with itself."¹⁷² As a result, the end of the conflict

of nature with itself can only culminate in the complete subjugation of nature (or the non-human part of nature) to the human part of nature.

What emerges from this instrumental and dominating mode of thought is a 'humanized', namely a dominated, (nonhuman) nature. Nature under this mode of thought appears not as it is in itself, but rather as what it is insofar as it may be of use to human beings. Indeed, in *Capital*, Marx claims that nature exists "for us" insofar as it can be worked on by us: "Nature is matter that receives the stamp of human form."¹⁷³ Furthermore, as Marx claims in his "Critique of Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole" in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, nature alone, namely, nature without any human labor embedded in it, as mere material existing independently of human labor, has no value in itself.¹⁷⁴ It is only through labor that humans endow value on otherwise value-less nature. In Marx's "Estranged Labour" in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, he claims that the domination of nature entails its effective transformation, that is, by acting on the external world, humans are at the same time changing it.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, the domination of nature for Marx entails that a man can "therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself has created."¹⁷⁶ In Marx's works, it thus appears that the domination of nature goes hand in hand with the idea that nature is disinvested from itself and represented in a form that is defined by human beings. Balbus explains that Marx's 'nature' is as much a product of human labor as its instrument.¹⁷⁷ As product, nature is what humans have already made, and as instrument or raw material, nature is what humans can yet make.

It is clear that Irigaray is aware of the problematic distinction between first and second nature in her claims that women in patriarchal societies are disinvested from their natural bodies. Irigaray maintains that, similar to Marx's analysis of the table as commodity, the individuality of the female body has to disappear. More precisely, Irigaray explains, "when women are exchanged, women's body must be treated as an *abstraction*."¹⁷⁸ Thus, as Postl explains, "women's value on the male market has nothing to do with their actual body but with a 'phantom-like reality' of this body."¹⁷⁹ The "actual body" refers to first nature and the "phantom" to second nature. Woman's 'natural body', in the sense of first nature, is repressed and replaced by a second nature, that is, her socially mediated body.

Sexed Nature contra Unitary Nature

The problem Irigaray views in Marx's account of labor is not solely that he repeats the masculine idea where nature lines up with the feminine and culture with the masculine. In the following section, I will argue that although this idea is present, she draws attention to a further problem. The further problem is that Marx, like Hegel has a notion of nature that is unitary, and it is only through labor that difference is introduced into nature. This, I maintain, is the basis for her image of the couple. The couple, as we will begin to see here and as I will elaborate on in the final chapter, is intended to demonstrate that the Hegelian notion of unitary nature that Marx also employs is flawed. The image of the couple is intended to help us think of a nature that is already dual insofar as it is sexed. The couple is thus intended to think about nature as containing difference before the Concept gets to work upon it.

Female Nature and Male Culture: From Unitary Nature

Thinking of historical development as materialistic and as dialectical requires recognizing a turn in the concept of nature. Recalling Hegel's dialectic, the entire course of human history is a negation of negation that may be thought of as successive stages of relations between 'man' and 'nature'. The historical process from primitive naturalism to idealism, to dialectical materialism is the story of the inclusion of man in nature, to idealism, and back to the inclusion of man in nature in dialectical materialism. The loop, however, is progressive rather than regressive because, Goux explains, "what is discovered is an *other* nature, transformed, socialized."¹⁸⁰ This progression must be thought of as a spiral in the Hegelian sense, rather than a circle. In other words, the return to man's inclusion in nature is a negation of negation, that is, an apparent "return to the old" but at a higher level.

The dialectic of history is, as suggested by Goux, "embedded within the production and reproduction of interposition – which automatically poses two terms, separated by the 'inter' of a third." Furthermore, he declares that in "this way social history, or a certain mode of historicity, can be measured by an evolving triangulation that goes beyond [...] the human division of the sexes to govern all the structures of social exchanges [...]."¹⁸¹

Therefore, the separation from nature, whether brought about by labor in the case of Marx, or symbolic thought in the case of Lacan, or the incest taboo in the case of Lévi-Strauss and Freud, implies a split that is to be conceived as an interposition. In all the above cases, and this is true of other instances of social theory, there is a logic of scission and insertion. For example, for Marx, labor "is an act that takes place between man and nature."¹⁸² Similarly, the 'Symbolic' has the power of representation that entails a separation of thought and nature (or form and matter.) The incest taboo is a function of the

separation of the mother by the paternal interposition. It must be stressed here that there are parallel patterns at work, and furthermore, the overall configuration is not merely economic, or signifying, or sexual. Rather, Goux stresses it must “be grasped in its divided unity. The coherent yet differentiated network of all these interpositions must be conceived as a whole.”¹⁸³

In each case, the logic is such that there is a departure from materiality. In fact, the whole history of social, economic, signifying, and other exchanges are the development of this scission. This history winds, without ending, towards the interposition realized in the rule of universal equivalence. Goux claims that “[t]he universal equivalent is the third, the go-between that intervenes in exchanges as legislative detour and, cutting through primitive barter, transforms subjects’ particular demands into pure demand and channels needs through the stairs of desire.”¹⁸⁴ Goux offer the following explanation:

If the phylogenetic odyssey of libidinal positions of knowledge, through which social access to reality is gained, comprises a multiphased shift from inclusion in nature as mother, through a separation, and finally to an inclusive reciprocity with *other* nature, human history through the present has been limited to the history of *man*: history is masculine. It has never been conceived otherwise. There has never been, nor in a sense is there now, any feminine history – in a sense, for according to the virtually sanctified formula, the woman’s sexual voyage is more complicated, more obscure. It unfolds to a different rhythm, for reasons – not yet fully comprehensible, perhaps – having to do with a certain mode of historicity heretofore dominant.¹⁸⁵

The problem that Irigaray uncovers in Marxist theory through her analogy between women and commodities is something that goes beyond her analogy. Irigaray is critical of Marx because he does not give sufficient thought to this particular concept of nature. It is important to clarify certain aspects of how nature or matter is viewed.¹⁸⁶ The fact that Irigaray’s analogy functions says a lot about the limits of Marxist theory. Irigaray is

showing that the Marxist dialectic is faulted due to his notion of nature that remains unanalyzed within his theory. As discussed above, within Marx's account of labor there is an account of the transformation of nature into culture. Although Marx reversed Hegel's idealist dialectic into a materialist dialectic, he appears to have retained an element of Hegelian theory. This is the idea that nature is undifferentiated until it is labored upon. There is thus a parallel between Marx's and Hegel's account of nature. Both work with the notion that there is a unity of nature. For Hegel, it is the Concept that introduces difference into nature; for Marx, similarly, labor gives value to nature. Moreover, as will be discussed in detail later, Marx's account of the creation of the autonomous subject through the fashioning of self-representations embodied in use values runs parallels to Lacan's account of the production of the subject through entry into language. Importantly, much as was the case with Hegel, in both Lacanian and Marxist theory there is a notion of an original unity out of which difference is produced. In Marx, as was the case for Hegel, there is a narrative of increasing domination over nature. In Hegelian theory, the concept introduces difference in nature. In Marxist theory, labor produces value that in turn creates the self as different from nature. Finally, as will be discussed in the chapter in Lacan, Phallus authorizes the masculine self as 'difference'.

This will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter when I return to the images Irigaray employs. For now, it will be useful to take a preliminary look at Irigaray's image of the couple in order to gain a better understanding of how this image is a response to the notion of a unitary nature.

The Couple: Toward a Female and Male Culture

As argued in the chapter on Hegel, for Irigaray the problem is not merely that male philosophy views nature as feminine but, more precisely, that it views it as sexed according to the male/female divide and meaningful only insofar as the Concept has worked upon it. In her later writings, such as *I Love to You* and in certain places in *Thinking the Difference*, Irigaray returns to the idea of nature and grapples with the limiting notion of nature that the Marxist dialectic appears to have retained from Hegel. For Marx, similar to the case with Hegel, Irigaray suggests that we must re-think the notion of nature as always already male and female. This is essential for the possibility of a culture for woman as woman. Irigaray writes:

Mankind has generally put property ahead of life. Men care little about living matter or its cultural economy. Men's society is built upon ownership of property. Life itself is treated like a commodity, productive capital, and processed as a tool of labor, but not as the basis of an identity to be cultivated. Patriarchy cares little about spiritualising sexually differentiated nature.¹⁸⁷

Irigaray notes that Patriarchy is not concerned with spiritualizing sexually different nature. This gives rise to a skewed relationship to matter as well as a distorted interpretation of its cultural organization. Hegel was aware of the difficulties inherent to an ethics of our relation to the natural world insofar as the genders and their ancestors are concerned. As discussed in the chapter on Hegel, Antigone is sacrificed because she respects the blood ties of her mother. Hegel notes that this slants the history of the becoming of spirit. On the other hand, Irigaray maintains that no such awareness appears in Marx's writings. She claims:

Marx [...] was very concerned with social economy but little with the culture of nature, except in its transformation into useful goods, at which point it disappears as a natural phenomenon. We have thus been induced to talk a great deal about social

justice, but in the process we have forgotten that it needed natural reserves and roots to survive. This is particularly obvious for women as reproducers, for raw materials, for arable soil. But it is also true of any body.¹⁸⁸

Irigaray writes: “[f]or centuries, in fact, virgin, lover, mother – has functioned as a use value for man and society without being a partner in exchanges.”¹⁸⁹

In her book *I Love to You*, she returns to Marx’s work in order to criticize the inadequacy of his theory and practice with regard to alienation in sexual difference. In returning to Hegel and his concept of love as labor, Irigaray engages in the analysis of the exploitation of both women and men alike in the familial patriarchal culture. She proposes a different view of the nature-culture divide between the male and female genders. She also posits an alliance between men and women that is no longer necessarily dependent upon the family and its objectives. Her aim is to create the possibility of a change in the male-female relations on all levels, from the most private to the public realm. Irigaray thus envisions “a new method of exchange which creates a distance between sensible immediacy and the passage to the universal, a distance that allows the former to be thought.”¹⁹⁰

To understand Irigaray’s criticism that relies on a return to Hegel, it must be stressed that Irigaray returns to the notion of the negative. She views the negative, as employed in Hegel’s work, as an impossible idea. She stresses over and over that the natural world is not the human world, it is always more and less than that. As discussed above, Irigaray suggests that the negative can mean access to the other of sexual difference without annihilating the other. Indeed, we have seen that Hegel’s notion of negativity was not like this; he was concerned with the mastery of consciousness over nature and human

kind. Irigaray's notion of negativity, that is, the idea that it cannot be overcome, and that it makes possible access to the other insofar as it limits all persons in terms of gender, provides the underlying thread in this my approach to Irigaray's treatment of Marx.

In *I Love to You*, Irigaray returns to Marx and shifts from her earlier treatment of Marx that was concerned with the subject and nature to her concern with political philosophy. This treatment begins with a commentary on Marx's important observation of the exploitation of man by man being based on the exploitation of woman by man. Irigaray asks: "Why did he not devote his life to solving the problem of this exploitation?"¹⁹¹ She notes that Marx perceived the root of all evil but did not recognize it as such. According to Irigaray, the reason why Marx did not recognize it as such lies, to some extent, in Hegel's writings, in particular in those sections where Hegel deals with love. In analyzing the shortcomings in Marxist theory, Irigaray returns again to a Hegelian element retained in Marx, and thus to the idea of a unitary nature.

Irigaray suggests that the importance put on material goods, the use of violence as an weapon of power, and the lack of sufficient consideration to the law of persons, most importantly the differing rights required by women and men, are areas of injustice and alienation that remain unresolved in Marxist and democratic regimes.¹⁹²

Her aim is to create the possibility whereby justice and culture may be developed in such a way that a real civil culture of persons and the subjective and objective relations between them can be elaborated. To this end, as she stresses throughout her works, the aim is not for women to become equal with men. Irigaray stresses, "to become equal is to be unfaithful to the task of incarnating our happiness as living women and men."¹⁹³ The

failure of equalities lies in the danger that equality neutralizes that dimension of the negative that opens an access to a possible alliance between the genders.

Irigaray maintains that Marx's theory only gives rise to a piecemeal economic and cultural development. It therefore cannot satisfy our need for addressing fundamental cultural problems. Irigaray suggests three examples of symptoms which exemplify the kind of limitations in question: "the state of the earth as a natural resource, problems to do with women's liberation, and the world-wide cultural crisis as exemplified by the student revolts that have arisen and re-arisen in France and elsewhere since '68."¹⁹⁴ She suggests that these struggles arise over and over again because the difficulties do not lie in changing this or that within a horizon already defined as human culture. Rather, it is in the realization that our interpretation of human identity is fundamentally flawed, both practically and theoretically. In order to avoid lapsing into an infinite number of secondary ethical problems, a difficulty Irigaray suggests Hegel noted in section VI of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, she stresses the need to remove the exploitation that exists between the sexes in order to allow "humanity to continue developing its history."¹⁹⁵

Irigaray claims that the reason Marx did not recognize the limitations of his theory is related in part to Hegel's writings, especially where he speaks about love. Hegel defines love as it exists within patriarchal cultures. However, he does not resolve the problem of the lack of spirit and ethics he observes. According to Hegelian theory, it is important to move beyond natural immediacy. Hegel suggests that this is also the case within the family. Since in Hegel's method all identities are defined by opposites, Irigaray suggests, "he is forced to define man and woman as opposites and not as different."¹⁹⁶ Hegel

analyzes the labor of love within the family formed by the couple. However, Irigaray notes, “Hegel shows little concern for granting each gender its own identity, particularly a legal one, even though he states that the status of the human person depends upon his or her recognition by civil law.”¹⁹⁷

According to Hegel, the relations in the family are organized in such a way that the woman is the wife and mother. Woman’s role in this view of the family, however, is an abstract duty. Irigaray explains it more precisely as follows:

[S]he is not *this* woman, irreducible in her singularity, wife of *this* man, who is himself also irreducible, any more than she is *this* mother of *this* child or *these* children. She is only attributed that singularity from the perspective of the man, for whom she remains bound to natural immediacy. As far as she is concerned, she is wife and mother inasmuch as these roles represent a task vis-à-vis the universal which she discharges by renouncing her singular desires. [Irigaray’s emphasis].¹⁹⁸

In this view, woman’s love becomes defined as familial and civil duty. Co-relatively, in Hegel’s view, love is not possible on the part of the woman. Rather, woman must love man and child as generic representations. In other words, it is the labor of the universal that is at work.

On the other hand, in Hegel’s view, a woman’s love stands for the rest needed by a citizen in the singularity of the home. Thus, for man the singular and the universal are granted. As a citizen, man forsakes his sexed singularity in the name of a universal for the service of the community. However, in addition to this, at home, the love of a woman provides him with the possibility of the singularity of love as a withdrawal to natural immediacy. In this view, the universal for woman is reduced to a practical labor within the perspective of the masculine universal. Irigaray explains that woman is deprived of a relationship to the singularity of love. As a result, she is dispossessed of a possibility of a

universal for herself.¹⁹⁹ In the Hegelian dialectic, the universal appears as only masculine. Irigaray argues that the division between home and public life “could not be sustained without depriving woman of a relationship to the singular in love and the singularity necessary for her relationship to the universal.”²⁰⁰

Contrary to this view, Irigaray maintains that the home, and likewise life as a citizen should be the locus for the singular and the universal for both sexes. She thus argues that, not only natural identity, but also the order of cultural identity must endure in the couple, the family and the state. Irigaray stresses that “[w]ithout a cultural identity suited to the natural identity of each sex, nature and the universal are parted, like heaven and earth; with infinite distance between them, they marry no more.”²⁰¹

Irigaray uses this return to Hegel to suggest that the inherent notion of nature in Marx does not allow him to realize that identity based on natural differences is important. She asks: “[W]hat is spirit if it forces the body to comply with an abstract model that is unsuited to it?”²⁰² She describes it as: “[t]he capitalization of life in the hands of a few who demand this sacrifice of the majority. More especially, the capitalization of the living by a male culture which, in giving itself death as its sole horizon, oppresses the female.”²⁰³

Irigaray explains this as follows:

If a man is always able to find another woman, another singularity, to work towards accumulating property for the family or the community, to return to his citizenship, the woman is left with nothing other than the obligation to make herself available for intercourse, to suffer child-birth, to mother her children and her husband.²⁰⁴

With regard to the task of rethinking the notion of woman, Irigaray repeatedly stresses that it is a serious ethical mistake to claim to be equal to men. This can only contribute to the erasure of the natural and spiritual reality specific to woman.

Instead of a universal in the Hegelian sense, Irigaray proposes a different paradigm. She maintains that the elemental social community is formed by the couple. Here, the gender of the man and that of the woman can come to represent the model of male human kind or female human kind. To this end, Irigaray makes the following claim:

In realizing the transition from nature to culture, from singular to universal, from sexual attraction to actualizing gender, the couple formed by the man and the woman ensures the salvation of the community and of nature, both together.²⁰⁵

Dialectic Structures and the Subject

According to Irigaray, the reason why Marx's theory is limited is because it does not question the current oppositional structures that are in place and, as a result, he repeats the idea of a unity of nature in his account of labor. While Marx offers a powerful method for interrogating the logic of equivalence, his theory cannot provide women with the possibility of emancipation from patriarchal systems. As has been seen, to prioritize use and, similarly, to prioritize nature does not address the problem inherent to the oppositional structures between use/exchange and nature/culture. As a result of this, it cannot address the masculinist tradition whereby woman is aligned with the natural. Furthermore, the domination inherent to Marx's dialectical thought creates a 'nature' that is disinvested from itself. In this sense, Marxist theory cannot be used to question patriarchal concepts of woman's 'nature.' This limitation is serious, especially because humans are embedded in nature.

Part of Irigaray's critique of Marx relies on the need to think of woman and man's nature as different. Therefore, the materiality of the subject is important. According to Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, what is missing from Marxist theory is "an idea of the

materiality of the human subject [...].”²⁰⁶ Marxism differs from idealist philosophy insofar as it makes philosophy a revolutionary activity. Historical materialism is not only a method for understanding and explaining the world. Importantly, it is also a philosophy that posits a new subject. This subject, as Coward and Ellis explain, is not one that merely “understands” reality, but one that likewise transforms reality through practice.²⁰⁷ It is this conception of the subject -- namely, one that stresses process over identity, struggle over structure -- that is descriptive of the subject of materialism.

The content of historical materialism, dialectical materialism, is the underlying logic of Marx’s *Capital*. Although Marx did not write a method as Hegel did in his *Logic*, elements of a method are to be found. As Lenin notes: “[I]f Marx did not leave behind a *Logic*, he did leave behind the logic of *Capital*.”²⁰⁸ The primary feature of Marx’s dialectical materialism is contradiction, Lenin explains:

In his *Capital*, Marx analyses the simplest, most ordinary and fundamental, most common everyday relation of bourgeois (commodity) society, a relation encountered billions of times viz., the exchange of commodities. In this very simple phenomenon (in this ‘cell’ of bourgeois society) analysis reveals *all* the contradictions [...] of modern society. The subsequent exposition shows us the development (*both* the growth *and* movement) of these contradictions and of this society in the sum of its individual parts, from its beginning to its end [...]. Such must also be the method of exposition (or study) of dialectics in general. [Lenin’s emphasis].”²⁰⁹

As mentioned in the chapter on Hegel, in contrast with Hegel’s idealism, the Marxist dialectic is not dealing with ideal concepts but, rather, with practical activity. In this sense, it is the practical activity of men that governs their mental relations, rather than, as in Hegel, the unfolding of the ‘Idea’. Coward and Ellis clarify that in the Marxist dialectic, “[d]eterminacy therefore is *not* the immediate negation of what is determined. Because the

dialectic is historical, the moment of negation and the moment of determinacy can be temporally and spatially separate.”²¹⁰

Marxism is characterized by and distinguished from idealism by both process and practice. It is thus the primacy of contradiction over identity and an emphasis on struggle or a continued process that are central to the Marxist dialectic. Furthermore, to distinguish materialism from idealism, the emphasis should be on the division of unity rather than the unity of opposites.

According to Julia Kristeva, dialectic materialism, because of its emphasis on practice, inexorably points towards the contradictory process of subject and object. Kristeva writes:

As the logical expression of the objective process, negativity can only produce a subject in process/on trial. In other words, the subject, constituted by the law of negativity and thus by the law of an objective reality, is necessarily suffused by negativity – opened onto and by objectivity, he is mobile, non-subjected, free. A subject submerged in negativity is no longer ‘outside’ objective negativity as a transcendent unity or a specifically regulated monad; instead he positions himself as the “*innermost and most objective* of Life and Spirit. [Kristeva’s emphasis.].”²¹¹

However, materialism has been elaborated in such a way that only a part of negativity is preserved for theoretical purposes. It is expressed primarily in the idea that the subject is subordinate to the social and natural process. What it does not consider is the negativity inherent to the subject itself. This, however, is central to the understanding of the subject.

In developing his dialectical materialism, Marx distances himself from the naturalist metaphysics of Feuerbach. Coward and Ellis note, however, that Marxist doctrine ends up inheriting two essential moments in Feuerbachian thought:

The first is the tendency to posit ‘human’ unity in the form of the man of lack [. . .]. The second is the direct and exclusive anchoring of man in the State or more

generally in the social machine and in social relations, which are then seen as relations of need and suffering.²¹²

Social and political movements of the twentieth century were inclined to proceed from one or the other of these views. As a result, efforts were either made to change the relation between men, or attempts were made to change the structure of the State. The dialectical structure of the subject itself was not addressed. Coward and Ellis stress that “[u]nless the subject is seen to be a process, ‘an effect of the intersection of matter in movement’ (Sollers), which activates practice, there will only ever be a mechanical view of movement of the superstructure and therefore of the social totality as a whole.”²¹³ In other words, without a revolutionary subject, revolutionary change is not possible.

Analyzing the structure of society without taking account of the genesis of the subject is doomed to be limited. This is so because the determinacy of the symbolic system as it is imposed on the human subject in its construction in history and ideological formation must be taken into account. In order to develop a better understanding of how Irigaray views this process it is necessary to examine how a further image functions in psychoanalytic theory. Taking into consideration the Lacanian account of the subject is important because it enables a more critical analysis of the split subject. In the next chapter, I will analyze the Lacanian account of the subject, which will highlight the importance of rethinking the dialectical structure of the subject. This will then be followed by an account of how the images discussed in each chapter are part of the larger picture. These images are keys to more fully understanding Irigaray.

NOTES

¹ Irigaray, *I Love To You* 11.

² Luce Irigaray "Women on the Market", trans. Catherine Porter *This Sex Which is not One* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press) 170-191; 171.

³ Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989) 147.

⁴ Irigaray, "Women on the Market," 172-173.

⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* 147.

⁶ Irigaray, "Women on the Market," 188.

⁷ Dorothy Leland, "Lacanian Psychoanalysis and French Feminism: Toward an Adequate Political Psychology," *Hypatia* 3.3 (1989): 81-103; 86. In this article, Leland also suggests that Irigaray's account of women's psychological oppression as the alienation through commodification is also the oedipalization of women's desire. Leland appears to misunderstand Irigaray, however, because she suggests that "What [Irigaray] does not consider is the possibility that the genderized nature/culture distinction retained in her account is not a cultural universal but rather specific to modern, Western society – a view supported by several anthropological studies." See Dorothy Leland, "Lacanian Psychoanalysis" 87. This view is mistaken. As will be seen, Irigaray is putting into question precisely the nature/culture divide of western patriarchal society.

⁸ Irigaray, "Women on the Market," 187.

⁹ Irigaray, "Women on the Market," 188.

¹⁰ Irigaray, "Women on the Market," 171.

¹¹ Luce Irigaray "Commodities Among Themselves", trans. Catherine Porter *This Sex Which is not One* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press) 192-197; 192.

¹² Elizabeth Grosz, "The Hetero and the Homo: The Sexual Ethics of Luce Irigaray," *Engaging With Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought*, ed. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor and Margaret Whitford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 335-350; 341.

¹³ Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine* 187.

¹⁴ Irigaray, "Women on the Market," 187.

¹⁵ Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine* 187.

¹⁶ Although Goux is not referenced in either "Women on the Market" or "Commodities Among Themselves," these works appear to be theoretically close to Goux. I have also been unable to find any explicit reference to him in her later works. The only relation between the two writers that I have been able to discover is an essay written by Goux in a collection of essays on Irigaray. Whitford suggests that one of the writers that Irigaray appears to draw on is Jean-Joseph Goux. See Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine* 196, note 21.

¹⁷ In addition to the concerns that will be discussed in this chapter, it is interesting to note that Irigaray and Goux also propose similar arguments to one another in other works. For example, in his essay "Subversion and Consensus: Proletarians, Women, Artists," *Terror and Consensus: Vicissitudes of French Thought* ed. Jean-Joseph Goux (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998) 37-53, Goux argues that the simultaneous critique of capital, of the symbolic father, and of logos communicate a shared concern of proletarians, women, and artists. A similar argument is made by Irigaray with regard to Women and Academics.

¹⁸ See, Jean-Joseph Goux, "Luce Irigaray Versus the Utopia of the Neutral Sex." *Engaging With Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought*, eds. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor, Margaret Whitford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 175-190. See also note 17.

¹⁹ Alison Martin in her book *Luce Irigaray and the Question of the Divine* also employs Goux in her analysis of Irigaray's discussion of exchange. In chapter two entitled "The Religion of Patriarchy" Martin employs Goux in order to contextualize and explain Irigaray's position. As mentioned above both Irigaray and Goux's texts were written in the early 1970s. Martin notes, much like I elaborate in this chapter, that the tendency in French thought at this time was to emphasize the structural continuity between the discourses of psychoanalysis and Marxism. She notes as well that these thinkers drew a connection between social and psychological analyses with the notion of economy.

²⁰ Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine* 196, note 20.

²¹ Whitford, *Philosophy in the Feminine* 196, note 20.

²² Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud*, trans. Jennifer Curtis Gage (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press: 1990) 1.

²³ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 2.

²⁴ See Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction" to Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1966) xxvii. Cited in Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 2.

²⁵ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 2.

²⁶ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 9.

²⁷ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 3.

²⁸ J.A.K. Thompson, trans., *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics Translated* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953) 134. Cited in Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 3.

²⁹ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 4.

³⁰ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 5.

³¹ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 5.

³² Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 6.

³³ Karl Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, ed. David McLelland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 423-423.

³⁴ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 23.

³⁵ Marx maintains that, by getting caught up on the quantitative aspects, political economy lost sight of the qualitative basis. In this section, Marx argues that labor, similar to commodities, has a two-fold nature. Commodities present themselves as a complex of use value and exchange value; similarly labor as an expression of exchange value differs from labor as creator of use value.

³⁶ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 23-24.

³⁷ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 13.

³⁸ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 26.

³⁹ This passage is not included in the translation quoted above. See Karl Marx, "Capital Volume One", *The Marx Engels Reader*, 2nd edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978) 317 note 5.

⁴⁰ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 13.

⁴¹ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 35.

⁴² Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 35.

⁴³ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 15. The last part of this citation (in quotation marks) is Goux's quote from Karl Marx's *Capital* 35.

⁴⁴ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 36

⁴⁵ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 15-16.

⁴⁶ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 38.

⁴⁷ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 41.

⁴⁸ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 16.

⁴⁹ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 40-41.

⁵⁰ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 15.

⁵¹ Karl Joël, "G. Simmel" *Buch des Dankes an Georg Simmel* eds. K. Gassen and M. Landsmann ((Berlin, 1958) 167. Cited in Tom Bottomore and David Frisby, "Introduction to the Translation," Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London, Henly and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 1-49: 3.

⁵² Tom Bottomore and David Frisby, "Preface," Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London, Henley and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 53-56; 55.

⁵³ Bottomore and David Frisby, "Preface," 55.

⁵⁴ Bottomore and Frisby "Preface," 56.

⁵⁵ R. Goldscheid, "Jahresbericht über Erscheinungen der Soziologie in den Jahren 1899-1904" *Archiv für systematische Philosophie*, vol. 10, 1904 397-413; 398. Cited in Bottomore and Frisby, "Introduction to the Translation" 11.

⁵⁶ Of interest as well, Simmel's account of the nature of that economic rationality brought about by a money economy and the extent to which this new rationality pervades many aspects of social life appears to have influenced many thinkers. For instance, Bottomore and Frisby suggest Simmel's "pessimistic portrayal of the pervasive levelling effects of intellectuality and rationalization and the functionalization of human relationships anticipates Max Weber's own philosophy of history that permeates his later work" (Bottomore and Frisby, "Introduction to the Translation" 15.) More obvious is Simmel's influence on Georg Lukács, who attended Simmel's lectures in 1909-1910, and became one of Simmel's favourite pupils. Indeed, for Lukács, Simmel was "the most important and interesting transitional phenomenon in the whole of modern philosophy." (Georg Lukács, "G Simmel," *Buch des Dankes an Georg Simmel* eds. K. Gassen and M. Landsmann (Berlin, 1958) 171-176; 172. Cited in Bottomore and Frisby "Introduction to the Translation 15.)

⁵⁷ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 20.

⁵⁸ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 21. The following note is added in Goux's text by the translator: "There follows an etymological elaboration upon the French word *etalon* ("standard," as in "gold standard"), derived from the Picard word *estel*, meaning "stake, pole, pale, bounty maker." See Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 21, note 31.

⁵⁹ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977) 285.

⁶⁰ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 21.

⁶¹ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 24.

⁶² Irigaray, *This Sex* 177.

⁶³ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 47.

⁶⁴ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 59.

⁶⁵ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 83.

⁶⁶ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 84.

⁶⁷ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 21.

⁶⁸ Irigaray, *This Sex*, 187.

⁶⁹ Irigaray, *This Sex*, 190.

⁷⁰ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. N. I. Tone (New York: International Library, 1904) 149. Cited in Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 50.

⁷¹ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 50.

⁷² Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 50.

- ⁷³ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 50. Curiously, Marx seems to have anticipated Saussure's account of the arbitrary relation between the two component of a linguistic sign.
- ⁷⁴ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 145. Cited in Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 50.
- ⁷⁵ Luce Irigaray, "Women's Exile. Interview With Luce Irigaray" trans. Couze Venn, *Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, ed. Deborah Cameron (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 80-96: 91
- ⁷⁶ Luce Irigaray, "Language, Persephone and Sacrifice" Interview in *Borderlines* Conducted and trans. Heather Jan Marony, Winter: 4 (1985): 30-32; 31.
- ⁷⁷ Luce Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution*, trans. Karin Montin (New York: Routledge, 1994) 39-40.
- ⁷⁸ Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference* 16-17.
- ⁷⁹ Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference* 17.
- ⁸⁰ Luce Irigaray, *Je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, trans. Alison Martin (New York and London: Routledge 1993).
- ⁸¹ Kathryn Bond Stockton, *God Between Their Lips: Desire Between Women in Irigaray, Brontë, and Eliot* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994) 64.
- ⁸² Irigaray, "Women in Exile" 92.
- ⁸³ Irigaray, "Women in Exile" 93.
- ⁸⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* 239.
- ⁸⁵ Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 13.
- ⁸⁶ Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 13.
- ⁸⁷ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology," *The Marx – Engels Reader*, 2nd edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978) 146-200; 150.
- ⁸⁸ Balbus, *Marxism and Domination*, 14.
- ⁸⁹ Hebert Marcuse, "Foundations of Historical Materialism," *Studies in Critical Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) 25.
- ⁹⁰ Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology" 150.
- ⁹¹ Hilary Mannette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature," *Feminist Studies* 15. 2 (1989) 255-278; 258; 265.
- ⁹² Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 115, translation adapted.
- ⁹³ Mannette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 259.

- ⁹⁴ L. J. Jordanova "Natural Facts: A Historical Perspective on Science and Sexuality," *Nature, Culture, and Gender*, eds. Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980) 66. Cited in Mennette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 258.
- ⁹⁵ Mennette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 258.
- ⁹⁶ Mennette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 260.
- ⁹⁷ Mennette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 260.
- ⁹⁸ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 119. Cited in Mennette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 260.
- ⁹⁹ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1, 119, translation adapted. Cited in Mennette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 261.
- ¹⁰⁰ Mennette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 261. See Karl Marx *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, ed. Dirk J. Struik, (New York: International Publishers, 1964) 113; Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 461-462; Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, ed. C.J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1981) 51; Karl Marx *Capital 1*, ed. Friedrich Engels (New York: International Publishers, 1967) 178.
- ¹⁰¹ Mennette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 261.
- ¹⁰² Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology" 158.
- ¹⁰³ Mennette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 262.
- ¹⁰⁴ Mennette Klein "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 26.
- ¹⁰⁵ Irigaray "Language, Persephone and Sacrifice" 31.
- ¹⁰⁶ Jordanova "Natural Facts" 66. Cited in Mennette Klein, "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 262.
- ¹⁰⁷ Mennette Klein, "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 263.
- ¹⁰⁸ Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts," trans. Rodney Livingston and Gregor Benton *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, ed. Lucio Colletti (New York: Vintage Books, 1975) 279-400; 329.
- ¹⁰⁹ Mennette Klein, "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 263.
- ¹¹⁰ Marx, *Capital* Vol. 3, *The Marx-Engles Reader 2nd edition* ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978) 439-442; 441.
- ¹¹¹ Mennette Klein, "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 267.
- ¹¹² Mennette Klein, "Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Mother Nature" 268-269.
- ¹¹³ Irigaray, *This Sex* 187.
- ¹¹⁴ Christine Di Stefano, "Masculine Marx," *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, ed. Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991) 1476-163; 147.

- ¹¹⁵ Nancy C. M. Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Feminism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985) 146ff.
- ¹¹⁶ Nancy C. M. Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power* 152. See Marx and Engels *The German Ideology* Part I.
- ¹¹⁷ Di Stefano, "Masculine Marx" 153.
- ¹¹⁸ Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex and Power* 148. Cited in Di Stefano "Masculine Marx" 153.
- ¹¹⁹ Di Stefano, "Masculine Marx" 154.
- ¹²⁰ Marx, *Capital* vol. 1, 19. Cited in Di Stefano, "Masculine Marx" 154.
- ¹²¹ Jeremy Shapiro (1976) "The Slim of History: Embeddedness in Nature and Critical Theory" in Ed. John O'Neil *On Critical Theory*, New York: Seabury Press, 149. Cited in Di Stefano, "Masculine Marx" 156-157.
- ¹²² Silvia Bovenschen, "The Contemporary Witch, the Historical Witch, and the Witch Myth," *New German Critique*, 15 Fall (1978) 83-119; 117. Cited in Di Stefano, "Masculine Marx" 157.
- ¹²³ Di Stefano, "Masculine Marx" 158.
- ¹²⁴ Irigaray, *This Sex* 173.
- ¹²⁵ Marx, cited in Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 97.
- ¹²⁶ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 18.
- ¹²⁷ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 97.
- ¹²⁸ Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 23.
- ¹²⁹ Goux, *Symbolic Economies*, 97.
- ¹³⁰ Marx, cited in Goux, *Symbolic Economies*, 97-98.
- ¹³¹ Irigaray, *This Sex* 174.
- ¹³² Irigaray, *This Sex* 190.
- ¹³³ Irigaray, *This Sex* 187.
- ¹³⁴ Irigaray, *This Sex* 188.
- ¹³⁵ Paul Craig Roberts and Matthew A. Stevenson, *Marx's Theory of Exchange, Alienation and Crisis* (Stanford: Hoover Institutional Press, Stanford University, 1973) 71-89.
- ¹³⁶ Tom Rockmore, *Before & After Hegel: A Historical Introduction to Hegel's Thought* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press: 1992) 156-158.
- ¹³⁷ Rockmore, *Before & After Hegel* 156.

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- ¹³⁸ Karl Marx, "The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, *Karl Marx: Early Writings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975) 279-400; 3336. Cited in Paul Craig Roberts and Matthew A. Stevenson, *Marx's Theory of Exchange* 74.
- ¹³⁹ Roberts and Stevenson, *Marx's Theory of Exchange* 74.
- ¹⁴⁰ Roberts and Stevenson, *Marx's Theory of Exchange* 76.
- ¹⁴¹ Marx, "The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" 323. Cited in Roberts and Stevenson, *Marx's Theory of Exchange* 76.
- ¹⁴² Rockmore, *Before & After Hegel* 157-158.
- ¹⁴³ Rockmore, *Before & After Hegel* 157.
- ¹⁴⁴ Marx, "The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," 330.
- ¹⁴⁵ Roberts and Stevenson, *Marx's Theory of Exchange* 78.
- ¹⁴⁶ Marx, cited in Roberts and Stevenson, *Marx's Theory of Exchange* 78.
- ¹⁴⁷ Roberts and Stevenson, *Marx's Theory of Exchange* 78.
- ¹⁴⁸ Marx, "the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" 281, 322, 330, 332.
- ¹⁴⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Ian Hamilton Grant (London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993) 116.
- ¹⁵⁰ Irigaray, *This Sex* 180.
- ¹⁵¹ Irigaray, *This Sex* 176.
- ¹⁵² Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 115.
- ¹⁵³ Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 130.
- ¹⁵⁴ Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984) 19.
- ¹⁵⁵ Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: New Left Books, 1971) 61-93, 61.
- ¹⁵⁶ Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx* 61.
- ¹⁵⁷ Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx* 68.
- ¹⁵⁸ Irigaray, *This Sex* 170. Cited in Gertrude Postl, "Of Ghosts, Commodities, and Women: Irigaray and Derrida," *Philosophy Today* SUPP (1999): 62-67; 62.
- ¹⁵⁹ Postl, "Of Ghosts, Commodities, and Women" 62.

¹⁶⁰ Pheng Cheah, and Elizabeth Grosz “Of Being Two: Introduction” 7.

¹⁶¹ Luce Irigaray, “Women, the Sacred, Money,” trans. Gillian C. Gill, *Sexes and Genealogies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) 80.

¹⁶² See Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman* 128. Regarding the origin and meaning of this concept, Susan Buck-Morss explains that Adorno cited Lukács’s *Die Theorie des Romans*, in which ‘second nature’ is used to describe the alienated world emptied of meaning, “created by man yet composed of things which have become lost to him, [...]the world of convention.” See Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectics: Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1977) 55. Furthermore Buck-Morss clarifies that Lukács did not originate the concept of ‘second nature,’ but that Hegel originally used the term to expose the eternality of forms as mere appearances.

¹⁶³ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectics* 55

¹⁶⁴ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectics* 55.

¹⁶⁵ Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman* 128.

¹⁶⁶ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectics* 60.

¹⁶⁷ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of the Negative Dialectics* 60.

¹⁶⁸ This is explained convincingly by Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman* 128.

¹⁶⁹ Marx, “the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844” 348. Cited in Issac Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 274.

¹⁷⁰ Marx, “the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844” 348. Cited in Issac Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 274.

¹⁷¹ Cited in Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 275.

¹⁷² Cited in Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 275.

¹⁷³ Marx, cited in Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 271.

¹⁷⁴ Marx, cited in Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 271.

¹⁷⁵ Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844” 329.

¹⁷⁶ Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844” 329.

¹⁷⁷ Balbus, *Marxism and Domination* 272.

¹⁷⁸ Irigaray, *This Sex* 175.

¹⁷⁹ Gertrude Postl, “Of Ghosts, Commodities, and Women 63.

¹⁸⁰ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 238.

¹⁸¹ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 239.

¹⁸² Marx, *Capital* vol. 1, 206.

¹⁸³ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 240.

¹⁸⁴ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 240.

¹⁸⁵ Goux, *Symbolic Economies* 241.

¹⁸⁶ I am reading Irigaray's proposal for revisiting the notion of nature as different from that of Judith Butler. Butler notes that certain categories, such as gender, are recognized as cultural constructions whereas others, such as the materiality of sex, appear irreducible. Butler stresses, however, that matter is a sign that has a history, a history connected to the history of sexual difference. Butler emphasizes the complexity of the manner in which matter is to be thought about as follows: "... it is clear from the start that matter has a history (indeed, more than one) and that the history of matter is in part determined by the negotiation of sexual difference. We may seek to return to matter prior to discourse to ground our claims about sexual difference only to discover that matter is fully sedimented with discourses on sex and sexuality that prefigure and constrain the use to which that term can be put. Moreover, we may seek recourse to matter in order to verify a set of injuries or violations only to find that *matter is founded through a set of violations*, ones which are unwittingly repeated in the contemporary invocation [Butler's emphasis.]" See Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) 29. I am suggesting that Irigaray is critical of the Marxist notion of nature because it is viewed as unitary. Irigaray is proposing that it should be viewed as already differentiated.

¹⁸⁷ Luce Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference: For a Peaceful Revolution*, Trans. Karin Montin (New York: Routledge, 1994) 16.

¹⁸⁸ Irigaray, *Thinking the Difference*, 16-17.

¹⁸⁹ Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History*, trans. Alison Martin (New York and London: Routledge, 1996) 76.

¹⁹⁰ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 12.

¹⁹¹ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 19.

¹⁹² Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 14.

¹⁹³ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 15.

¹⁹⁴ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 20.

¹⁹⁵ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 20.

¹⁹⁶ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 20.

¹⁹⁷ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 21.

¹⁹⁸ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 21..

¹⁹⁹ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 22.

²⁰⁰ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 23.

²⁰¹ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 23. .

²⁰² Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 25.

²⁰³ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 25.

²⁰⁴ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 26.

²⁰⁵ Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 28.

²⁰⁶ Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, *Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject* (London and New York: Routledge, 1977) 82.

²⁰⁷ Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism* 83.

²⁰⁸ V. I. Lenin, 'Philosophical Notebooks', *Collected Works*, vol. 38 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1972) 319. Cited in Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism* 83.

²⁰⁹ Lenin, 'Philosophical Notebooks' 360-361, Cited in Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism* 83.

²¹⁰ Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism* 85.

²¹¹ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) 110-111. Cited in Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism* 90.

²¹² Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism* 91.

²¹³ Coward and Ellis, *Language and Materialism* 9.

CHAPTER THREE

Figuring Woman in the Mirror

In this chapter, I will examine how the image of the lips is yet another way Irigaray engages in questioning the notion of nature or otherness. The image of the lips, much like the image of blood in Hegel and the image of the couple in Marx, is intended to expose the flaw in the notion of a unity of nature, or in Lacan's sense, a notion of the Real or otherness that is not differentiated. I maintain that the image of the lips is yet another way in which Irigaray puts into question the manner in which the notion of nature or otherness is theorized. As was the case with the Hegel and Marx, I argue that the images of the lips is also a step toward returning the notion of the two-ness of the sexes back to nature. In a similar manner that Irigaray is critical of Hegel and Marx for holding that nature is undifferentiated until the Concept introduces difference, I believe that the image of the lips suggests a flaw in Lacanian theory. More precisely, the image of the lips implies that nature, or otherness is already marked by sex and thus by difference. As will be discussed more in the final chapter, in a sense, the image of the lips works against Lacan's idea that it is only through the sign and the process of symbolization that difference is introduced.

In order to demonstrate that the image of the lips may function in this manner, it is important to demonstrate how Lacan, like Marx, retains the problematic Hegelian notion of unitary nature. More precisely, in Lacan, we find the idea that otherness or the body as Real is not differentiated. I will thus begin this chapter with a discussion of important aspects of Hegelian influence in Lacan's account of psychic development.

I will begin by showing that while Lacan's account of the mirror stage is adopted from Henri Wallon, it is greatly influenced by Hegel and Kojève's work on Hegel. This is evident in Lacan's essay "The Mirror stage as formative of the function of the I" in *Écrits*. I will also discuss "Agressivity in Psychoanalysis" from Lacan's *Écrits* in which he makes clear that the mirror stage is part of a natural dialectic, that is, the psychological maturation of the individual, or a progress in knowledge. Notions of space and otherness are also an important part of Lacan's essay.

I will also treat another important theoretical concept that Lacan adapted from Hegel, that is, the notion of desire. Lacan addresses the concept of desire in his essay "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious." He also relates the concept of desire to metaphor and metonymy in his essay "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious since Freud."

Finally, I will focus on the influence of Hegel's master-slave dialectic on Lacan's account of psychic development. This is seen in Lacan's *Seminar* book I, especially in his essay "The Symbolic Order." In this, essay Lacan addresses the importance of the master-slave relation in the structuring of the inter-subjective field. He suggests that the master-slave relation appears at the limit of our experience of the Imaginary Order, which is structured by the mirror stage.

This will be followed by a discussion of Lacan's three registers, the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. It is important to discuss these before turning to Irigaray's critique of Lacan and her image of the lips because an understanding of this is dependent upon how

these three registers function together. In this section of the chapter, I will also discuss various interpretation of Lacan's Real. I will highlight two interpretations of the Real that are of particular interest. One interpretation of the Real is that it is the body; the other is that it is negativity. I find these two interpretations the closest to how Irigaray understands the notion and uses it to critique Lacan's views on nature.

The discussion of the Hegelian influences on Lacan and Lacan's account of the three registers in psychic development will be followed by Irigaray's critique of Lacan. In this part, I will focus mainly on Irigaray's "Così Fan Tutti" and "When Our lips Speak Together" in *This Sex Which is Not One*. I will, however, make reference to several of her other works in which she engages Lacan on the mirror and the image of the lips. For example, in *Speculum*, Irigaray refers to the mirror used by doctors for examining the internal cavities of the body. Furthermore, engaging with the idea of the mirror, Irigaray suggests that Lacan's mirror can only see women's bodies as lacking. She thus suggests a different kind of mirror is required to 'see' woman's difference. In her essay "The Poverty of Psychoanalysis" Irigaray suggests this different mirror is the mirror of theory or discourse.¹ Irigaray also returns to the image of the lips in her book *Marine Lover*.

In her essay "Così Fan Tutti" in *This Sex*,² Irigaray questions where women stand in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis. More specifically, this essay deals with Lacan's seminar, *Encore*. This seminar is Lacan's most direct attempt to undertake the question of feminine sexuality. Irigaray's essay is concerned with criticizing some of the central elements of Lacan's theory, namely, the primacy of the Phallus and the conceptualization of the imaginary body of the mirror stage as male. In this essay, Irigaray also is concerned

with the historicity of Lacan's account of castration and the Phallus. To a certain degree, then, the essay is about the relation between psychoanalysis and history.

In the latter part of this chapter, I will focus on Irigaray's "When our lips Speak Together" in her collection *This Sex Which is not One*. In this essay, Irigaray offers the image of the lips. This image appears to be a response to certain psychoanalytical principles where there is an equation between the Phallus and identity and individuation. The various interpretations of this image will be discussed below. However, I maintain that more can be learned from Irigaray's image of the lips when she is interpreted not only as a philosopher of sexual difference but also a philosopher of nature. The image of the lips suggests that Lacan's notion of the Real is flawed because it does not take into account difference in the pre-given. I argue that in a manner similar to the way in which Marx criticizes Hegel for the abstractions inherent to his dialectic, Irigaray criticizes Lacan for abstraction in his dialectic as well. The problem with Lacan's account is related to his account of the mirror stage where he abstracts from the male body. As will be seen, the image of the lips is yet another way that Irigaray attempts to return the two-ness of the sexes back into nature. This will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.

An examination of Lacan's theory of the mirror stage and related concepts is important to understanding Irigaray. I shall point out the complexity of Irigaray's relation to psychoanalysis. This is borne out of the very fact that, although she is a trained analyst, and psychoanalytic theory is often central to her philosophy, she remains ever critical of both theory and practice. Although it is not central to this thesis to analyze Irigaray's exact stance toward psychoanalytic theory, it is critical to stress how psychoanalysis is important

to her theoretical analyses. Despite her criticism of Lacan, she still uses psychoanalytic theory as a tool. She discovers that psychoanalytic theory unveils patriarchy in the development of the subject. Instead of abandoning psychoanalytic theory, she accepts the validity of these theories and views them as an accurate analysis of Western patriarchal society. She uses these findings to uncover patriarchal currents in the Western philosophical tradition.

As mentioned, Irigaray never directly mentions Lacan by name in *Speculum of the Other Woman*. However, it has often been noted that throughout the book, whenever she examines the idea of the mirror, she is addressing Lacan's account of the imaginary and his theory on the role of the mirror in the construction of subjectivity. One of the major criticisms Irigaray makes of Lacan is that his theories surrounding the mirror stage are not gender sensitive. In part, this criticism led to her expulsion from the Freudian School and her teaching position at Vincennes in 1974. The circumstances under which this occurred coincide with the time that Lacan took a new interest in the Department of Psychoanalysis at Vincennes. Sherry Turkle explains some of the circumstances surrounding Irigaray's exclusion.³ The department was created in Lacan's image, but had become chaotic and marginal. Lacan maintained that the department had failed as a 'pilot project' and decided to take charge of its reorganization. In 1974, Lacan named himself scientific director of the department and selected his son-in-law Jacques-Alain Miller, who was not an analyst but rather a philosopher, as the new chairman of the department.

The department of psychoanalysis at Vincennes, under Lacan, was renamed *Le champs freudien* (the Freudian Field) of research in structuralist psychoanalysis. To

implement large changes, the department was refounded on new principles that focused on Lacan's psychoanalytical matheme. As a result, all scheduled courses were cancelled and faculty members were required to submit a research plan for proposed courses. Lacan named himself as the head of the scientific committee to judge the proposals. Many faculty members viewed Lacan's 'takeover' as arbitrary and dictatorial, and sensed that the review process would go to great lengths to get rid of those analysts who did not follow Lacan.

Some faculty members, out of protest, refused to submit projects and resigned. Other faculty members had their projects rejected for what often seemed arbitrary reasons. Irigaray, a Freudian School analyst and member of faculty at Vincennes, had just published her book *Speculum*, when the crisis at Vincennes broke out. Irigaray's book on psychoanalysis and feminine sexuality was diametrically opposed to Lacan. She proposed to teach a course based on the themes of her recent book. Her proposal was rejected and Irigaray was told that she could no longer lecture at Vincennes. Turkle suggests many believed that Irigaray's book had greatly displeased Lacan and that he used the department of psychoanalysis at Vincennes to settle personal scores.⁴

Hegelian Influence: The Dialectic of Consciousness and 'Desire':

In the following section, I will examine the Hegelian influences on Lacan's account of the mirror stage and his account of desire. Lacan develops his ideas of the mirror stage in his essay entitled "The Mirror Stage as formative of the function of the "I" and "Agressivity in psychoanalysis" in *Écrits*. I will refer to Lacan's theories on the notion of desire in his essay "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious." He also relates the concept of desire to metaphor and metonymy in his essay

“The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious since Freud.” The mirror stage and desire are important aspects in Lacanian theory for understanding how Irigaray’s image of the lips is intended for rethinking the notion of otherness. The mirror stage is a central aspect in Lacan’s account of psychic development. Desire is important in Lacanian theory because it is that which drives us to seek a lost unity. As will be seen, Lacan’s a-sexual account of the mirror stage and the notion of desire as a drive for unity are of central importance for understanding what Irigaray proposes with the image of the lips.

Edward Casey and Melvin Woody argue that Lacan offers an alternative to the reductionistic versions of Freudian psychoanalysis.⁵ This is in part due to Lacan’s emphasis on linguistics, but also due to the influence of Heidegger and Hegel, and especially by the fact that Lacan was greatly inspired by Kojève’s influential interpretation of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The Hegelian influence in Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage can be discovered by examining the parallel between these two thinkers’ methods of extracting the self from estrangement. Hegel addresses the problem of estrangement through his theory of the master-slave relation, that is, his dialectic of consciousness and his concept of ‘desire’. Lacan’s theoretical indebtedness to Hegel is seen in how he adapts Hegel’s dialectic of consciousness and his concept of ‘desire’.

The Dialectic of Consciousness:

Lacan’s theory of the mirror is greatly influenced by Hegel’s critique of ego-centered philosophies that were so prominent in modern European thought. Casey and Woody clarify that these “include Descartes’ rational ‘cogito’, English empiricism’s introspective

consciousness, and Kant's and Fichte's autonomous 'transcendental ego.'"⁶ These philosophies, Hegel argues, abstract from human activity, and thus from the social, cultural, and historical conditions in which man lives. Casey and Woody stress that Hegel concludes that these ego-centered philosophies fail to recognize man's historicity and, in doing so, estrange man not only from culture, society, and history, but ultimately from himself as well.⁷

As discussed earlier in the section on Hegel's master-slave dialectic, Hegel seeks to demonstrate that self-consciousness requires the reflection back from something that is seen not merely as an object, but rather as another self similar to oneself. As Ver Eecke stresses, Hegel criticizes "atomistic individualism," as the foundation of consciousness.⁸ This is evident, for example, in Leibniz's Monadism wherein each individual is self-sufficient. Hegel criticizes the view that consciousness is an activity of the will and argues instead that it is a result of being recognized, and thus of an inter-subjective relationship. The emergence of self-consciousness as elaborated by Hegel is, as Casey and Woody explain, "the emergence of a self-consciousness from the recognition of the self in a mirror, in another self."⁹ This view of self-consciousness is, in fact, taken up by Lacan in his theory of the mirror stage. Lacan's claim that "the natural individual is regarded as nothingness" is developed in his theory of the mirror stage where he argues that the ego begins to emerge in the image of the other.¹⁰ Casey and Woody describe Lacan's specular image of the self as "the matrix and first outline of what is to become the ego."¹¹

With regard to the Hegelian influence on Lacan, it is interesting to note that there was an attempted collaboration between Lacan and Kojève. Elisabeth Roudinesco explains

that this collaboration was to be a comparative interpretation between Hegel and Freud. Kojève's contribution to the project was to be a comparative study between Hegel and Descartes, while Lacan's contribution was to place Freud and Hegel in a similar context.¹² However, the project was never realized. Nonetheless, Kojève did begin this project by comparing Descartes' 'cogito' with Hegel's 'self-awareness' and argued that philosophy is nothing but the desire to philosophize. Lacan notes in Hegel's philosophy the change from a philosophy of "I think" (Cartesian) to a philosophy of "I want." Roudinesco thus notes that Kojève's work clearly emphasizes Hegel's introduction of "a split between the *je* (I) site of thought and desire, and the *moi* (me or ego) source of error."¹³

Despite Lacan's failure to realize this joint project with Kojève, Roudinesco explains that in 1938 Lacan uses three major concepts that he borrowed from Kojève's work on Hegel.¹⁴ These concepts are the following: the 'I' as subject of desire; 'desire' as the disclosure of the truth of being, and finally, the 'ego' as the location of delusion and the basis or error.

Kojève's influence led Lacan to examine the genesis of the ego in the light of a philosophical approach to self-awareness. Casey and Woody point out that Lacan criticizes both the "transparency of consciousness in Sartre's existential phenomenology and the primacy of the ego in American psychoanalytic theory [. . .]"¹⁵ Lacan writes:

But unfortunately that philosophy [existentialism] grasps negativity only within the limits of a self-sufficiency of consciousness which, as one of its premises links to the *méconnaissances* that constitutes the ego, the illusion of autonomy to which it entrusts itself. This flight of fancy, for all that it draws, to an unusual extent, on borrowing from psychoanalytic experience, culminates in the pretension of providing an existential psychoanalysis. [Translator's emphasis].¹⁶

Lacan argues instead that the ego is not autonomously in control, nor is it the originator of truth, but rather a source of illusions and ‘mis-recognitions.’ Lacan stresses instead that our experience teaches us:

[. . .] not to regard the ego as centred on the *perception-consciousness system*, or as organized by the ‘reality principle’ – a principle that is the expression of a scientific prejudice most hostile to the dialectic of knowledge. Our experience shows us that we should start instead from the function of *méconnaissance* that characterizes the ego in all its structures[. . .]. [Translator’s emphasis].¹⁷

Casey and Woody thus stress that Lacan finds Hegel a natural ally in his disputes with ego-centered psychoanalytic theories.¹⁸

The aforementioned Hegelian concepts eventually led Lacan to a philosophical reading of Freud. Lacan’s own work eventually gave rise to a new dialectic of self-awareness incompatible with the positivist norms of a certain reading of Freud, characterized above all by the ego psychology of Erik Erikson. Thus, whereas in the Freudianism of ego psychology the ego is viewed as a gradual differentiation of the id responsible for representing reality and controlling the drives, Lacan rejects the idea of an autonomous ego. Lacan, like Melanie Klein, opts instead to identify the ego’s genesis in identification. The implication of this view of the ego moves the ego closer to the id and seeks to demonstrate that the ego structures itself in a series of images adopted from the ‘other’. This is precisely the theory Lacan develops when he adopts and entirely transforms Henri Wallon’s notion of the mirror stage.¹⁹

It is useful to briefly outline the basic thoughts of Wallon’s mirror stage, not merely to show how Lacan later adapts it, but also to emphasize Lacan’s deviation from Hegel. Roudinesco points out that Wallon held the Darwinian idea that the individual becomes a

subject through successive stages of a natural dialectic.²⁰ According to Wallon's notion of the mirror stage, the infant, between the ages of six to eight months, undergoes changes when faced with the mirror. The infant is eventually able to recognize himself and, importantly, to unify its ego in a place. Roudinesco explains that this experience in Wallon's mirror stage represents the transition from the specular to the Imaginary and then the Imaginary to the Symbolic.²¹

Lacan adopts Wallon's mirror stage but, through the influence of Hegel and Kojève's work on Hegel, he transforms Wallon's notion. Lacan modifies this experience into a stage, or rather a position. More precisely, Lacan's adaptation is a theory of the mirror stage developed without any reference to a natural dialectic. Natural dialectic here refers to the psychological maturation of the individual, or a progress in knowledge. Lacan claims:

Before Darwin, however, Hegel had provided the ultimate theory of the proper function of aggressivity in human ontology, seeming to prophecy the iron law of our time. From the conflict of Master and Slave, he deduced the entire subjective and objective progress of our history [. . .].²²

As a result, Lacan's theory of the mirror stage no longer resembles a mirror stage in the developmental sense nor, in fact, does it bear semblance to any concrete experience. Lacan's theory of the mirror stage becomes, as Roudinesco describes, "a psychological, or even an ontological operation, by which a human being comes to exist as such by identifying with his *semblable* -- his likeness, fellow, or 'neighbour.' [Roudinesco's emphasis]."²³

Lacan's Mirror Stage

As mentioned above, the essay "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I revealed in psychoanalytic experience" is the point of departure for Lacan's critique of ego psychology. In this essay, Lacan gives his account of the "mirror stage," the stage in which the infant first achieves consciousness of itself in its image in the mirror, and thus in an object outside itself. Lacan delivered an earlier version of this essay simply entitled "Le stade du miroir" in August 1936 at the 14th *International Psychoanalytical Congress* in Marienbad. The more recent essay was delivered in July 1949 at the 16th *International Congress of Psychoanalysis* in Zurich.

The metaphor developed in Lacan's theory of the mirror stage expresses his conceptualization of ego formation. It reiterates, albeit critically, the Hegelian philosophical tradition wherein subjectivity is achieved culturally by means of mutual recognition in the resemblance of reflection between self and other. Cathryn Vasseleu suggests that Lacan's mirror stage is a heuristic device that serves a similar function to Hegel's master-slave dialectic.²⁴ As discussed above, Hegel employs the master-slave drama as a prerequisite for objective self-consciousness that he develops into his phenomenological account of the intersubjective nature of human self-recognition. Lacan's mirror stage functions in a similar fashion. As will be developed in more detail later in an analysis of Lacan's account of psychic development, Lacan's account of the mirror stage is a heuristic device that is needed for the development of an inter-human relationship. In his essay "The Symbolic Order," Lacan addresses, among other things, the importance of the master-slave relation in the structuring of the inter-subjective field.²⁵ He suggests that the

master-slave relation appears at the limit of our experience of the Imaginary Order, and this order is structured by the mirror stage.

Lacan's theory of the mirror stage is an attempt to explain how the child comes to accept the otherness of others. As will be seen, the image in Lacan's mirror stage is a metaphor for the infant's alienating identification with a *Gestalt* that has its origin from a reflected ideal image with which the infant identifies.

Before explaining and analyzing this stage, it is helpful to understand the several scientific and cultural facts that Lacan attempts to integrate in his theory of the mirror stage. As outlined below, Ver Eecke points to five facts that Lacan integrates into his theory.²⁶ The first fact is the remarkable difference between a human baby and a chimpanzee baby. The latter at the age of approximately six to eight months clearly has greater problem solving ability than the human baby at the same age. However, the baby chimpanzee cannot grasp the meaning of the mirror image, whereas the child of the same age develops this ability. The chimpanzee tries to grab hold of the image, looks behind the mirror and, when it finds nothing, it loses interest. It is thus inferred that the chimpanzee is unable to recognize itself. Because the human infant at this age shows great interest in the image of itself in the mirror, Lacan thus concludes that the child recognizes itself in the image of the mirror. Lacan also stresses that the child is affected in an emotional manner as it reacts with great pleasure to the image of itself in the mirror.²⁷

The second scientific datum Lacan incorporates into the theory of the mirror stage is the fact that for certain animals seeing the *Gestalt* of their own species members has physiological consequences. Lacan draws on many experiments, such as Harrison

Matthews's study, "Visual Simulation and Ovulation in Pigeons,"²⁸ and R. Chauvin's study on the desert locust.²⁹ Of the studies Lacan draws on, the study by Matthews is perhaps most relevant. Matthews's study reveals that the stimulus which causes ovulation in pigeons is visual. Ver Eecke suggests that Matthews's study seems to "provide more explicit support for the Lacanian thesis that seeing is the faculty which bridges the psychological and the physiological."³⁰

The third scientific fact Lacan incorporates in his theory of the mirror stage is transitivity. Transitivity is Charlotte Bühler's term for the indifferenciation of subject and object in young children.³¹ Lacan notes that transitivity is exhibited in young children's tendency to say they themselves have been struck when they struck another child, or to cry when another child falls.³² Ver Eecke clarifies that the essence of transitivity is that young children identify so strongly with others that they cannot distinguish between themselves and other children.³³ For this reason a child will ascribe to itself what another child does, and likewise ascribe what it itself does to another child. In his essay "A Child is Being Beaten," Freud makes a similar observation in his analysis of the origin of sexual perversion.³⁴

The fourth fact that Lacan includes in his theory of the mirror stage is man's fascination with dismemberment. Lacan points to man's fascination in "tattooing, incision, and circumcision."³⁵ Lacan also argues that this fascination is present in dreams of "castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body."³⁶ Anika Lemaire points out that the fascination with dismemberment is shown by certain recurrent phantasies in dreams, and also in schizophrenia, that is, "in

phantasies of aggression or of the fragmentation of the body, the hallucination of a double [. . .].”³⁷

The fifth scientific fact that Lacan incorporates into his theory is the so-called prematurity of human birth. Lacan argues that “the anatomical incompleteness” of the human brain gives rise to motor uncoordination in the first few months after the child’s birth.³⁸ Ver Eecke explains that, in incorporating this fact, Lacan uses the embryologist’s label for this phenomenon, namely, foetilization.³⁹

The mirror stage for Lacan, as Grosz explains, “is the threshold of a number of ruptures or divisions which govern the child’s hitherto ‘natural existence.’”⁴⁰ Ver Eecke stresses two important issues related to Lacan’s theory.⁴¹ Firstly, according to Lacan, a person’s emotional life is radically transformed several times. In Lacanian theory, these transformations occur due to the numerous frustrations encountered, such as the process of weaning, the arrival of siblings into the affective relationship with the child’s parents, and finally the Oedipus Complex. According to Lacan, each of these transformations forces upon the infant an emotional transformation that makes him accept the otherness of others.

The second important aspect related to Lacan’s mirror stage is his view that the function of images or ideals is central. In other words, the child does not experience his own unity until it sees that unity in the *Gestalt* of another human being, or the *Gestalt* of its own image. More precisely, Lacan argues that the child becomes an ‘ego’ only by means of recognition of this other, namely, the mirror image. This theory, Ver Eecke explains, shows Lacan’s agreement with Rimbaud’s aphorism *j’est un autre* (‘I’ is ‘an other’) which for Lacan suggests the concept ‘I’ is built upon an image borrowed from another.⁴²

The child's ability to recognize itself in the mirror takes place between the ages of six to eight months. The child's recognition is accompanied by great delight. In this phase, the child gradually recovers the totality of its body in an image and gradually becomes conscious of itself as a being. Lemaire explains that the mirror stage for Lacan takes on fundamental importance not so much for its intrinsic value, but rather because of its structuring function.⁴³ Its primordial importance for Lacan lies in the fact that it prefigures the dialectic between alienation and subjectivity.

The mirror stage is conditioned on several things. It is conditioned on the child's recognition of a distinction between itself and the other. The mirror stage is also based on the recognition of a lack or on an absence of gratification of needs. Thus, Grosz explains that the mirror stage becomes a compensation for the child's acceptance of a lack.⁴⁴ This acceptance, however, comes with an anticipation of self control, or self mastery which the child lacks. The mirror stage, which is the genesis of the ego, coincides with the emergence of the child's first psycho-sexual drives. In other words, the part of the child's own body and its own auto-erotic pleasure is replaced by what the mother had originally provided. Finally, the mirror stage gives rise to an internalized psychic sensory image of the self as well as the objects in the world. Grosz clarifies that this marks the child's earliest understanding of space, distance, and position.⁴⁵ These will be discussed in more detail below in the section on the Imaginary order.

Therefore the mirror stage indicates the first phase in the child's attainment of an identity independent of the mother, the origin of a sense of self or personal unity, the origin of the child's sexual drives and the beginning of social acculturation. Lacan explains the

importance of this stage insofar as it “inaugurates, by the identification with the *imago* of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jealousy [. . .], the dialectic that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations. [Translator’s emphasis.]”⁴⁶ Lemaire stresses that “the mirror stage is therefore the first articulation of the ‘I’, it performs the I through the entry into the Imaginary which precedes the Symbolic.”⁴⁷

Lemaire explains that the importance of the mirror stage is twofold: on the one hand, positive; and on the other hand, negative.⁴⁸ This is the aforementioned distinction made between subjectivity and alienation. Two things occur as a result of the mirror stage. In the first case, a total form of the body is given to the infant in the *Gestalt*. Lacan explains the second case in the following manner:

The fact is that the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as *Gestalt*, that is to say, in an exteriority. . . . Thus this *Gestalt* – whose pregnancy should be regarded as bound up with the species, though its motor style remains scarcely recognizable -- by these two aspects of its appearance, symbolizes the mental permanence of the *I*, at the same time it prefigures its alienating destination [. . .]. [Translator’s emphasis.]⁴⁹

It is positive because, as discussed above, the child does not immediately have a unified representation of its body. Therefore, because the mirror shows a total representation of the child’s own body, this stage is the first step toward gaining a sense of totality of self. However, this stage also has a negative side. This phase uncovers the falsehood in which the subject constructs himself, precisely because the mirror stage provides the key to the division between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Lemaire clarifies that the mirror stage deceptively provides the idea of access to a total corporeal ‘I.’⁵⁰ However, because the image is characterized by exteriority and inverted symmetry, this image of the self, or this notion of subjectivity, is alienated in the Imaginary. The ego that

emerges at the mirror stage is the mirror image with an inverted structure, reminiscent of Hegel's *Verkehrte Welt*. This image is objectified and external to the subject. The infant merges with his image (as is seen in children's tendency toward transitivity) and is unaware of his alienation. It is only in symbolism that subjectivity is restored.

These two aforementioned aspects of the mirror stage are important in the understanding of the future constitution of the subject. As mentioned above, Lacan stresses that "by the two aspects of its appearance, [the image in the mirror] symbolizes the mental permanence of the *I*, at the same time as it prefigures its alienation [. . .]."⁵¹ The two aspects, that is, the imaginary unification of the body and the sense of alienation are also moments in the dialectic and are exhibited in narcissism and aggressivity.

Lemaire explains that the reason why Lacan stresses the importance of the mirror stage is because "it reveals the immediate dual relationship proper to the Imaginary and because observation of this stage reveals the crucial importance of the transition to the three-dimensional register of the Symbolic."⁵²

Desire

A further theoretical concept Lacan borrows from Hegel is the concept of 'desire.' The notion of desire and its relation to the notion of otherness is important for understanding Irigaray's image of the lips. I will illustrate how, in Lacanian theory, desire is the drive for lost unity with the Other. Lacan addresses the concept of desire in his essay "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious."⁵³ He also relates the concept of desire to metaphor and metonymy in his essay "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious since Freud."⁵⁴ The first aforementioned essay was Lacan's contribution to a conference entitled *La Dialectique* held at Royaumont in September 1960.

It is a development of an earlier one, entitled “Position de l’inconscient,” delivered at the *Congrès de Bonneval* a month earlier. Muller and Richardson explain that in the later essay, Lacan formally addresses a colloquium of philosophers rather than psychoanalysts.⁵⁵ As seen in the previous chapter on Hegel, dialectic implies the movement through a series of negations each of which is followed by an *Aufhebung*, which brings the negated moment into a higher synthesis. I will point out how the subject, according to Lacan, arises from desire. Lacan focuses on the “dialectic of desire” in which notions of negativity and negation play an important role.

“The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious Since Freud” is perhaps best known because it expresses more fully than any of his other essays the articulation of Lacan’s fundamental thesis that the unconscious is “structured like a language.” As Muller and Richardson states that Lacan’s aim in this essay is to explain the function of the letter in structuring the unconscious.⁵⁶ ‘Letter,’ as Lacan suggests, is to be understood as “that material support that concrete discourse borrows from language.”⁵⁷ Lacan argues that language pre-exists the subject’s entry therein and thus is a structure that both pre-exists the subject as well as structures the subject. This structure, Lacan acknowledges, is to be thought about in the manner suggested by Saussure. Saussure maintains that language is made up of the signifier and the signified, two elements of the sign. The signifier is the sound image of a word, and the signified is the mental concept corresponding to it. Importantly, Saussure argues that these two elements of the sign are only arbitrarily related.

As far as Lacan’s concept of desire is concerned, the importance of this essay lies in Lacan’s discussion of the two fundamental ways in which clusters of signifiers join

together. As Muller and Richardson explain, signifiers join together through a process which linguistic tradition calls “metonymy” and “metaphor.”⁵⁸ It is through these that Lacan develops his view of the role of the signifier in psychical life.

Metonymy is not based on any real relation between objects, although in real life there may be instances of contiguity. An example of metonymy, as Lacan suggests, is “thirty sails” where ‘sail’ can represent ‘ship.’⁵⁹ Similarly, metaphor is not based on any resemblance between objects. An example of a metaphor that Lacan borrows from Victor Hugo, is “his sheaf was neither miserly nor spiteful.”⁶⁰ Gallop explains, ‘his shief’ comes to represent ‘Booz,’ because they are linked by a third term.⁶¹ In other words, metaphor is a relation between two words linked by similarity and thus one can take the place of the other.

Lacan identifies metaphor, that is, the substitution of one term with another, with Freud’s process of condensation. Gallop clarifies that Lacan thus “equates metonymy with the process of displacement, that ‘veering off of signification’ which primary processes utilize to evade the sensor.”⁶² In other words, the metaphoric substitution of one term for another describes the general model for the unconscious symptom insofar as a term that is replaced by another is, in fact, repressed while the signifier that comes to replace the original term becomes the symptom.

In the case of metonymy, the movement between one term and another is not based on the hierarchical structure involving repression as in metaphor. In the movement from one term to its substitute in metonymy, Lacan recognizes the movement of desire. This is because desire, like metonymy, is based on a chain substitution. More precisely, in desire

there is a chain of substitutions where the first lost object of desire gives rise to an infinite chain of substitutes, none of which can satisfy the lack that constitutes the subject. Metaphor and metonymy, as will be discussed later, play an important role in Irigaray's reconceptualization of the concept of desire at the level of the Imaginary and the Symbolic.

Through the influence of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Lacan describes 'desire' as an irreducible residue between need and demand that also transcends both. This concept is central to Hegel's dialectic of consciousness and Lacan's theory of the mirror stage. Both Hegel and Lacan agree that the image of the other is central to their respective theories. Furthermore, Casey and Woody point out that what is not to be found in the "looking glass" for neither Hegel nor Lacan is any awareness of self as subjective agency.⁶³ Both thinkers argue this because they agree that the mirror does not reflect the subject's 'desire.' For both Hegel and Lacan, the concept of 'desire' represents the source of all human activity.

'Desire,' according to Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, gives rise to self-consciousness. More specifically, "self-consciousness is desire in itself."⁶⁴ Hegel's discussion of 'desire' precedes his discussions on maintaining and reproducing life, and the master-slave relation. As outlined in the section on the master-slave dialectic, Hegel argues that man is self-conscious, and this distinguishes him from animals. This self-consciousness, however, requires 'desire.' Kojève explains that the genesis of the 'I', according to Hegel, is 'desire,' because the subject who contemplates loses himself in the object.⁶⁵ Contemplation thus reveals the object and not the subject. Kojève elaborates that "the man who is 'absorbed' by the object can be brought back to himself only by a desire to

eat, for example.”⁶⁶ It is man’s desire to eat that makes him aware of himself. It is therefore ‘desire’ which reveals the ‘I’ insofar as the self emerges as the place of desire. An important point made by Kojève is that, according to Hegel’s notion of ‘desire,’ desire is always revealed as one’s own desire.⁶⁷ For this reason, one must use the word “I” when one becomes aware of the desire. Similarly, according to Lacan, the self emerges in the place of desire.

Hegel narrows down the concept of ‘desire’ by distinguishing human ‘desire’ from merely biological drives. For example, while an animal’s desire may lead it to eat, which in Hegel’s view raises it above the given state of hunger, the animal remains dependent on nature and does not truly pass beyond it. Kojève explains that the animal temporarily “raises itself above the Nature that is negated in its animal Desire only to fall back into it immediately by the satisfaction of this Desire.”⁶⁸ It is through this concept of ‘desire’ that Hegel makes a distinction between ‘sentiment of self’ and ‘Self-Consciousness,’ the latter distinguishing humans from animals. Hegel argues, as Kojève makes clear, that the animal does not transcend itself as given, that is, as body.⁶⁹ As such, it cannot stand back from itself and contemplate itself. Hegel maintains that Self-Consciousness is only attainable in the transcendence of the self. In Kojève’s words, this is possible:

[. . .] only if Desire is directed not toward a *given* being, but toward a *nonbeing*. To desire Being is to fill oneself with this given Being, to enslave oneself to it. To desire non-Being is to liberate oneself from Being, to realize one’s autonomy, one’s Freedom. To be anthropogenetic, then, Desire must be directed toward non-being, that is toward another *Desire*, another greedy emptiness, another *I*. [Kojève’s emphasis].⁷⁰

Muller and Richardson suggest that Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* centers entirely on “the process by which Knowing comes to know itself.”⁷¹ This process develops

in three moments. In the first moment, the subject knows an object *an sich* (in-itself), that is, via sense perception. In the second moment, the subject knows the object *für sich* (for-itself). Finally, in the third moment the subject comes to know the object *an und für sich* (in-and-for-itself), thereby distancing itself from the dependence of the object and assuring itself of the truth of its knowledge. This process describes the movement of the dialectic, where the knowing subject progresses from the initial affirmation of its object, to the negation insofar as it realizes the inadequacy of this perception, to an *Aufhebung* where the two previous moments are brought to a higher process in the dialectic. The dynamism of this dialectic, according to Hegel, is 'desire'.

Lacan adopts and adapts this analysis of 'desire.' He adopts the Hegelian view of the humanizing effect of 'desire,' but narrows the notion of 'desire.' Lacan also accepts Hegel's view of 'desire' as a lack or an absence. In this view, as Grosz explains, "'desire' is a fundamental lack, a hole in being that can only be satisfied by one 'thing' – another'(s) desire."⁷² In other words, each self-consciousness desires the desire of the other as its object. Casey and Woody argue that Lacan elaborates this notion into a distinction.⁷³ The first is 'need,' which Lacan views as mere biological need. The second is demand, which requires real tangible objects for its satisfaction, and is always directed to another. The third is 'desire'. Casey and Woody describe this Lacanian concept as a "transcendental, unconditional ingredient in the demand for love, the particularly human emptiness that cannot be satisfied by any object or proof of love."⁷⁴ Thus, Lacan psychoanalytically reworks the Hegelian desire into a drive to elevate the desire for self certainty, that is, to deny need in order to obtain a "gain [. . .] over anxiety with regard to need," as well as

demand for the proof of love from the other.⁷⁵ Therefore, desire occupies a place between the dependency of need and the dependency of demand (for love). However, Consciousness, insofar as it is involved in the dialectic of recognition, must encounter the unconscious. Lacan explains that “there [is] the phantom of the Omnipotence, not of the subject, but of the Other in which his demand is installed.”⁷⁶ Therefore, Lacan suggests that one must ask: “Che vuoi?” that is, “What do you want?” in order to find out what one wants oneself.⁷⁷ Thus, as Lacan describes, “man’s desire is the *désir de l’Autre* (the desire of the Other)”⁷⁸ Furthermore, the ‘*de*’ is to be understood as having a subjective determination, in other words, it is *qua* Other that man finds out what he desires.

As discussed in the section of the mirror stage, Lacan suggests that the early development of the ego follows the dialectic of the master-slave relation. With the view that desire is the dynamic of the struggle, Lacan also suggests the master-slave struggle is paradigmatic of the obsessional patterns of the neurotic who waits out the Master’s death. Lacan thus stresses that “philosophers should not make the mistake of thinking that they can take little account of the interruption that Freud’s views on desire represented.”⁷⁹

According to Lacan, ‘desire’ lies always before and beyond demand. Lacan’s claim that ‘desire’ is beyond ‘demand,’ means that ‘desire’ transcends ‘demand’, and that it is eternal, because ‘desire’ cannot be satisfied. Lemaire explains that Lacan positions ‘desire’ before ‘demand,’ because “the unconditional absolute demand recalls the radical lack of being which underlies desire.”⁸⁰ Lacan’s notion of ‘desire’ ties into his argument that subjectivity is organized around a lack. Abigail Bray and Claire Colebrook clarify that this type of argument, namely, Lacan’s view that subjectivity is organized around a lack, begins

from the assumption that “there is an originary maternal/pre-Oedipal/preconsciousness that is negated in the movement of difference, but this difference is also the negation of an originary identity.”⁸¹ Therefore, ‘desire,’ is that which cannot be satisfied, insofar as it arises from a phantasized unity with the ‘Other’. It also precedes ‘demand,’ insofar as it points to a primal experience of pleasure that has been lost in the process of the subject’s acculturation.

Desire, for Lacan, can only exist by virtue of its alienation. He stresses that the object that is longed for only comes into existence as an object when it is lost to the infant. Need, demand and desire are effects of the orders of human existence which Lacan terms Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic. Thus, desire becomes part of psychic development. Lacan traces psychic development through three orders, the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.

The Imaginary, The Symbolic, and The Real

These concepts are central to understanding both Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage and Irigaray’s criticism of Lacan’s dialectics. The Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real can be partially defined on their own, but a clear understanding of them is best reached in the comprehension of how they work together as a system. As will be seen, the notion of the Real will be important for understanding Irigaray’s critique of Lacan. The very fact that these registers work together suggests that a critique on one level has repressions on all others.

I will attempt to look at each of these registers individually, but it is very difficult to understand any one without referring to the others. As Fredric Jameson explains, the notion of the Real is very problematic and cannot be experienced immediately, rather, it is

possible only by mediation of the Imaginary and the 'Symbolic.'⁸² Furthermore, Jameson also points out that the Lacanian notions of the Imaginary and the Symbolic are difficult to talk about since it is virtually impossible to have a relatively pure experience of either.⁸³ It is also important to stress that Lacan's three orders not only point to a system of thought, but to a method of thinking which is triadic. As will be seen, this kind of thinking shares much with the triadic thinking in Hegel's dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

The Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real are for Lacan three different orders of reality. Patricia Elliot clarifies that these different orders of reality signify different relationships between the subject and the world.⁸⁴ In a sense, these three orders co-exist for the subject, as Jameson points out, "[a]ccording to Lacanian epistemology, indeed, acts of conscious experience in the mature subject, necessarily implies a structural coordination between the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real."⁸⁵

The three aforementioned orders of human existence theorized by Lacan can be expressed by the terms: 'need,' 'demand,' and 'desire.' Grosz explains that the child's "development" from need to demand to desire is congruent with the child's movement out of the Real and into the Imaginary and the Symbolic.⁸⁶

Before examining Lacan's three orders of existence, it is useful to look at how the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real form a system of thought. This, as mentioned above, is central to understanding each individual order.

According to Kojève's interpretation, Hegel's entire philosophy of development in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is based on the dialectical triad. There are, of course, other interpretations, such as Walter Kaufmann's *Hegel: A Reinterpretation*. Kaufmann suggests

that although Hegel did not use the three steps of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, as introduced into German philosophy by Fichte, this scheme was available to Hegel because Hegel knew of Fichte's use of it.⁸⁷ It thus appears that Hegel consciously chose not to use this scheme. However, as mentioned above, Lacan's reading of Hegel is influenced by Kojève and Kojève interprets Hegel's dialectical method as triadic. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, this is also the interpretation of Hegel used by Irigaray. Malcolm Bowie explains that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* "is the story of a subliming successful integrative exploit, carried out upon itself and on its own behalf by a representative individual consciousness."⁸⁸ Hegel's dialectic outlines the progress of that consciousness in a circular upward movement toward absolute knowledge. Hegel's triadic thinking, as discussed earlier, is exemplified in his dialectical thinking whereby opposites are *aufgehoben*, and thus raised to a higher level. The dialectic begins again at a higher level until it reaches the final level in which consciousness is united with the World Spirit.

Lacan's system, consisting of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, has certain parallels to the Hegelian triad. Bowie explains that this triad is representative of Lacan's polemic against binaristic thinking.⁸⁹ Lacan firmly held that no two qualities or postulates can be coupled or contrasted without a mediating third. For Lacan, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real are the whole of what is. Whether dichotomies or complementaries, everything that exists comes to be only in relation to that which lies outside it. A further similarity to Hegel's triad is seen in Lacan's Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real insofar as he calls them "orders." Bowie suggests that a hierarchical arrangement of classes is taking place.⁹⁰ In a similar manner to the way in which Hegel outlines

development in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the progression of consciousness to higher levels through successive syntheses of oppositions, Lacan suggests that psychical development is the subject's movement from the Real, to the Imaginary, and finally to the Symbolic.

Lacan's triadic method, however, has some very un-Hegelian elements. This can be seen in Lacan's adaptation of Freud's tripartite mind (ego, id, superego.) In the 1950s, Lacan developed his own triadic system that can largely be seen as a complement to Freud's since it was intended to expand psychoanalytical discussion into a fully intersubjective dimension. What distinguishes Lacan's method from Freud's, as Bowie points out, is that in Lacanian theory the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real are not mental forces; rather, they are orders that position the individual within a larger system.⁹¹

The deviation from the Hegelian dialectic emerges in Lacan's adaptation of Freud's psychoanalytic conclusions on the state of the triadic mind. Bowie explains that for Freud there was no hope for a perfect state in which the id, the ego, and the superego could reach a state of settlement.⁹² Freud's tripartite mind, like its bipartite predecessor, was destined to exist in a state of conflict. For Lacan, likewise, psychoanalysis is not and could never be an idealism. Lacan's dialectic differs from Hegel's insofar as the Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real cannot be *aufgehoben*. Bowie elaborates that although the three orders may have their short term truces, they do not allow any embracing synthesis to emerge inside or outside the analytic encounter.⁹³ The reasons for this will be elaborated later.

The Imaginary

The Imaginary is a kind of pre-verbal register. Its moment of formation is the mirror stage and thus constitutes the formation of the ego. The Imaginary is the order of being based on

confusion of self, and mis-recognition. The mirror image represents the moment when the infant is located in an order outside itself and to which it will hereafter refer.⁹⁴ Since the mirror structures relations as imaginary, the order is thus marked by a fundamental unbridgeable gap between the subject and its own self, or 'imago.' This order is characterized by a pre-symbolic and pre-subjective order of being. Finally, this order is characterized by the first attempts of distinguishing between subject and other. This is seen in the infant's relation toward objects.

Since the Imaginary is derived from the experience of the mirror and the 'imago,' Jameson suggests it is akin to a pre-verbal register.⁹⁵ The Imaginary's logic is therefore essentially visual. For Lacan, the importance of the mirror stage and the Imaginary is the subject's attempt to reintegrate the self from the alienated image. Lacan writes:

This development is experienced as a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the formation of the individual into history. The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identifications, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armor of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development. Thus to break out of the circle of the *Innenwelt* into the *Umwelt* generates the inexhaustible quadrature of the ego's verifications. [Translator's emphasis.]⁹⁶

As mentioned above, upon entering the mirror stage, the individual becomes alienated from himself. There is, however, a further alienation that occurs in the Imaginary. The mirror stage is the precondition for primary narcissism because it opens an equally irreducible gap between the infant and his fellows.⁹⁷ This is the very source of human aggressivity.

The Imaginary, as Jameson explains, is qualified by a uniquely determinate configuration of space.⁹⁸ Space in this order is just beginning to be organized, however, it

is not yet fully organized around the individuation of one's own body, nor is it differentiated in a hierarchical manner according to one's own perspective. Despite the individual's inability for making sense of differentiation, the visual logic of the Imaginary order must be stressed, as Jameson does when he says it "swarms with bodies and forms."⁹⁹ Again, however, it must be pointed out that these bodies of the Imaginary are not the normal object world of adult life, though this prior imaginary space is presupposed by it.

Although the Imaginary designates an order where the subject and the other are not yet clearly defined, Elliot explains that within the Imaginary there is the process toward the distinction between the subject and the other.¹⁰⁰ How this distinction between the individual and the other begins to develop is through the individual's relationship toward objects. In his *Seminar I*, Lacan notes the infant's valorization of objects that have an influence on an affective level.¹⁰¹ Jameson clarifies that the affective valorization of objects is derivative of the primacy of the human imago in the mirror stage.¹⁰²

This order has certain Hegelian elements that can be seen in Lacan's notions of recognition and mis-recognition and their role in man's aptitude for spatial symmetry. In the mirror stage, the infant's ability to recognize itself leads to two things. The first is recognition of self which gives rise to a sense of pleasure. The second, as stated earlier, is mis-recognition, the result of an alienating sense because the mirror gives a sense of unity but it is only a false sense of unity that is soon shattered.

Lacan turns to the idea of the destruction of the other consciousness in Hegel's master-slave dialectic. In "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," Lacan suggests that Hegel's dialectic is the key to the "most formidable social hell" of modern times and, in his essay

“the Mirror Stage,” Lacan terms it the “paranoid ego era.”¹⁰³ Teresa Brennan suggests that according to Lacan, the ego’s era is erected on a destructive objectification of the other.¹⁰⁴ This destructive objectification of the other in Hegel’s master-slave dialectic involves transforming the other into a controllable thing. It is this need to control the other that makes the ego’s era paranoid. Furthermore, as Brennan clarifies “this paranoia originates in the subject’s own projected aggressive desire toward the other.”¹⁰⁵ The paranoia results in anxiety that makes the ego anxious and, thus, seek control.

In his essay “Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis,” Lacan addresses the issue of aggressivity and its role in the development of the subject. He writes: “[t]he notion of spatial symmetry in man’s narcissistic structure is essential in the establishment of the bases of a psychological analysis of space [. . .].”¹⁰⁶ Aggression seems to be a response to the other which appears as a threat. The pre-mirror merging with images is what Lacan calls primary identification. Secondary identification is the mirror fusion with others as objects. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan suggests that, according to Lacan, aggression is the infant’s response to tensions, or threats and confusion tied in with primary identification.¹⁰⁷ Aggression is tied in with concern with the body, and its earliest intentions are linked with ‘imagoes’ of the bodily disintegration. Ragland-Sullivan elaborates that after the mirror stage, aggression becomes related to separation and recognition dynamics “and is at the base of the paranoid structure of the human subject.”¹⁰⁸ The objective of aggression is to protect the *moi* (the unconscious subject of identification which assumes a place of privilege over the speaking subject) from perceiving the fragility of its own formation.

Lacan views narcissism as the irreducible and spatial feature of human identity. Because of the human infant's prematuration at birth, and because of the natural 'lack' in being, Ragland-Sullivan explains "narcissism is the necessary assumption of an alien ego, taken on in the erotic captivation of the infant by the image of the other."¹⁰⁹ During the mirror stage, the infant identifies with the mother because he does not have a sense of continuity. This identification with the mother provides the infant with a narcissistic kernel of identity. It is via identification that the ego is formed, and narcissism is the foundation of this identification. Lacan writes:

Nevertheless, we have a few psychological truths to contribute there too: namely, the extent to which so-called 'instinct of self-preservation' deflects into the vertigo of the domination of space, and above all the extent to which the fear of death, the 'absolute Master', presupposed in consciousness by a whole philosophical tradition from Hegel onwards, is psychologically subordinated to the narcissistic fear of damage to one's own body.¹¹⁰

The infant's mastery of spatial symmetry and its further ability to move beyond the imaginary is tied into how it deals with otherness. Lacan addresses the issue of otherness in its various forms through what is known in psychoanalytic theory as object relations. Object relations are central to Lacan's theory of psychical development. He makes a distinction between two kinds of object, the first *le petit a* (the small object, or 'other' with a lower case "o".) and *le A* (the big object, or Other with an upper case "O".) The meaning of these and the role they play in psychical development will be explored after examining Lacan's third order, the Real.

The Symbolic

In his essay "The Symbolic Order," Lacan addresses the importance of the master-slave relation in the structuring of the inter-subjective field.¹¹¹ He suggests that the master-slave

relation appears at the limit of our experience of the Imaginary Order, which is structured by the mirror stage. As already established, Hegel's master-slave relation reaches an impasse because the slave, reduced to a thing, is no longer of value to the master. History thus becomes the history of the slave's attempt to overcome his situation through labour. As Lacan explains, "[t]he master slave relation therefore does not involve the domestication of man by man [. . .]." instead, "[a] law is imposed on the slave, that he should satisfy the desire and the pleasure of the other."¹¹² This involves work, and work, as Lacan stresses, involves rules. By entering into a relation involving rules, we enter the domain of the Symbolic, the cultural order structured by language. Lacan thus claims that "the intersubjective relation, which unfolds in the Imaginary, is at the same time, insofar as it structures a human action, implicated in a rule of the game."¹¹³

Chris Weedon provides what can be used here as a preliminary understanding of the Symbolic, namely, an order of "language, laws, social processes and institutions."¹¹⁴ As such, the Symbolic is the condition of social existence insofar as it conditions the rules by which human subjects situate themselves toward others. Although Jameson warns against hastily delineating the Symbolic and the Imaginary, he does suggest that we may be able to distinguish these two orders at the moment of the emergence of each.¹¹⁵ As previously mentioned, the Imaginary emerges at the mirror stage. The Symbolic emerges with the Oedipal phenomenon.

At around the age of 18 months the infant's identificatory representation undergoes a transformation from a perceptual presence to repression. Ragland-Sullivan explains that at this age a further split occurs giving rise to the subject.¹¹⁶ While the first split occurred

at the mirror stage, a second split occurs as the infant enters the symbolic. In other words, in a structurally similar way the phallic signifier, which gives rise to the Law of The-Name-of-the-Father, imposes a further split in being. By 'Phallic Signifier,' Lacan means the symbol or representational agent of separation. By the Name-of-the-Father, Lacan means that the father is perceived as an implicit "no" (*non*) to total identification with the mother. The Law seems to be a play on words in the French where '*nom*' and '*non*' are homophones. In English, the former means "name" and the latter "no."

Lacan explains the infant's entrance to the Symbolic mathematically via the idea of the necessity of a third term. It is usually, yet not necessarily, the father (a third term) which appears to the infant as an obstacle to a symbiotic unity with the mother. The Name-of-the-Father thus teaches the infant that the mother and itself are two beings. This, according to Lacan, is the true passage from nature to culture, and corresponds approximately with the infants' ability to symbolize or represent experience through language.

Since the infant has already suffered a sense of splitting through the mirror stage and the mother provided the infant with a unifying sense, separation from the mother is an extremely traumatic event. It is so traumatic, explains Ragland-Sullivan, that Lacan metaphorically terms it castration.¹¹⁷ When Lacan speaks of castration, he means the psychic impact of loss, the imposition of difference and individuation.

The moment in which this occurs is the Oedipal phenomenon. This is a universal transformation of the human being. It characterizes the subject's transition from the mirror relationship to the relationship to the Symbolic. It is a socially produced dialectic imposed

by the fear of castration or, in more specifically Lacanian terms, the fear of not having an identity.

Jameson stresses that the understanding of the Lacanian notion of the Symbolic lies in his attempt to create a scheme mediating libidinal and linguistic frameworks.¹¹⁸ Lacan achieves this by transforming Freud's Oedipus Complex into a linguistic phenomenon. Lacan designates this as the 'Name-of-the-Father.' Jameson explains that it entails transforming an "Imaginary relationship to that of the imago which is the physical parent into the new menacing abstraction of the parental role as the possessor of the mother and the place of the law."¹¹⁹

The Real

In this section I will discuss two interpretations of Lacan's concept of the Real. In the first case, I will argue that Žižek's understanding of this Lacanian term is similar to Hegel's concept of 'negativity. In the second case, I will examine Serge André's interpretation of the Real as the body. Both these interpretations of Lacan's Real are of importance in the understanding of Irigaray's reading of Lacan and for the understanding of her image of 'woman'. What will become evident is that the Real, negativity, and body are a cluster of concepts that all indicate otherness. As I will argue later, it is this cluster of concepts to which Irigaray returns when she claims 'nature' must be rethought in order to get beyond the abstractions that occur within the master-slave dialectic. Before discussing these concepts, it is helpful to briefly outline Lacan's concept and how it fits in to his system.

As we have seen, Lacan borrowed the Imaginary and the Symbolic from Wallon. These concepts, however, are radically changed in Lacanian theory. Roudinesco suggests

that in 1953, when the Symbolic and the Imaginary are grouped for the first time with the Real, they took on a different value.¹²⁰ As such, in the category of the Symbolic, Lacan included all the revisions he had adopted from Levi-Strauss's system. Lacan thus reinterpreted the Freudian unconscious as the site of a mediation similar to that of the signifier in the realm of Language. Lacan's Imaginary is the order in which the ego is constructed and is connected most importantly with the phenomenon of illusion, or as Lacan calls it "mis-recognition."

Freud uses the term 'reality' for the world external to the human mind. His 'reality principle', Bowie explains, is descriptive of an individual's condition because the world places limitations on the human as he seeks to pursue his pleasures.¹²¹ Lacan's concept of the Real, according to Roudinesco, includes in part Freud's definition of psychical reality, "but also an idea of morbidity, of *reste* (vestige) or *part maudite* (doomed or accursed part), borrowed without attribution from the heterological science of Bataille. [Roudinesco's emphasis.]"¹²² This transformation in meaning, in which Lacan changes Freud's notion of psychical reality, gives rise to a drastically different meaning in subjective reality. Roudinesco clarifies that, whereas Freud viewed subjective reality as based on fantasy, Lacan, with his concept of the Real, conceptualized "a desiring reality excluded from all symbolization and inaccessible to all subjective thought: a black shadow or ghost beyond the reach of reason."¹²³

The Real is the order that precedes the ego and the organization of the drives. Grosz explains that it is an anatomical, 'natural' order, where 'natural' is to be understood as a resistance to symbolization rather than a positive substance. Lacan characterizes the

Real as a plenum or a fullness.¹²⁴ The Real cannot be known as such, however, it is capable of being represented or conceptualized through the reconstructive or inferential work of the Imaginary or Symbolic. Furthermore, the Real, while being constituted by the Symbolic, lies outside the Symbolic.

What distinguishes the Real most obviously from the Symbolic and the Imaginary is that, whereas absence or lack play an important role in the emergence, respectively, of the ego and the subject, the Real is qualified by a complete absence of lack. Lacan refers to the Real as “the lack of a Lack.”¹²⁵ As Grosz explains, it “has no boundaries, borders, divisions, or oppositions, it is a continuum of ‘raw materials’.”¹²⁶ As illustrated above, the Real precedes the ego and the drives.

Elliot says Lacan refers to this order as the impossible since it refers to an ineffable experience of being “impossible” and refers to this order as what is “unassimilatable” in representation.¹²⁷ The Real as a so-called “impossibility” does not lead Lacan to a resigned attitude toward it. On the contrary, Lacan views the Real as a practical analytical tool.

Slavoj Žižek explains that Lacan’s concept of the Real is, in fact, an entity that must be constructed afterwards in order to account for distortion in the Symbolic.¹²⁸ It does not make sense to attempt to discover remnants of the Real in prehistoric reality. Rather, the Real must be interpreted as something that makes sense of the present state of things. Žižek suggests that the Real can be thought of in a manner analogous to Hegel’s “fight to death” that takes place in the master-slave relation.¹²⁹ In both cases, it does not make sense to attempt to discover when in history such an event actually took place. In other words, the fight to death in the master-slave relation must be presupposed, and likewise the

Real must be presupposed. Žižek calls this type of presupposition: “a fantasy-scenario implied by the very fact that people work -- it is the intersubjective condition of so-called ‘instrumental relation to the world of objects.’”¹³⁰

The Real is both the starting point and the result of the Symbolic process. Žižek explains that the Real is “simultaneously both the hard, impenetrable kernel resisting symbolization and a pure chimerical entity which has in itself no ontological consistency.”¹³¹ Žižek draws on Kripkean terminology when he declares that the Real is the following:

[. . .] the rock upon which every attempt at symbolization stumbles, the hard core which remains the same in all possible worlds (symbolic universes); but at the same time its status is thoroughly precarious; it is something that persists only as failed, missed, in a shadow, and dissolves itself as soon as we try to grasp it in its positive nature.¹³²

Interpreted as such, Lacan’s Real appears to be the Kantian *Ding-an-sich* (Thing-in-itself), the inaccessible substance. Kant’s Thing-in-itself is contrasted with the transcendental object. The former is independent of the Subject whereas the latter is perceived as an object of experience. Žižek suggests that Lacan’s notion of the Real parallels this distinction but he maintains that the Real, or what Kant calls the Thing-in-itself “*can be sustained only within the space of desire as structured by the intervention of the signifier* [...] [Žižek’s italics].”¹³³ It is only by the intervention of the signifier that a split arises separating the accessible structured reality of the Symbolic from the inaccessible Real. As discussed above, for Lacan, what we experience as our reality reveals itself against the background of a lack. Lacan views this lack as the driving force of desire. Thus, desire drives us with a mythical hope for the lost object to satisfy our sense

of loss. However, the Real, the lack of the Thing-in-itself, is subject to the paradoxical logic of desire. The paradox lies in the fact that the Thing-in-itself is produced retroactively by the process of symbolization. Zizek clarifies that, in Hegel's words, "there is nothing – no positive substantial entity – behind the phenomenal curtain [. . .]."¹³⁴

When considering Irigaray's analysis of Lacan's dialectic, one very important aspect of Lacan's Real is the idea that it remains the same in all possible Symbolic universes. As will be seen, her critique of Lacan is related to the challenge to patriarchal structures of language. Teresa Brennan points out that Lacan's theory is not only about the patriarchal order of language but also about psychical organization. In other words, it is also about the argument that the Symbolic is the condition of sanity.¹³⁵ It is this latter part of Lacan's theory for which Irigaray takes Lacan to task. This will be elaborated on later but, in brief, Brennan explains that if we assume that Lacan is correct that psychosis is the alternative to the Symbolic, this need not necessarily be a problem.¹³⁶ This apparent problem can be overcome if we can conceive of a Symbolic that is not patriarchal. As will be elaborated in the section on Irigaray, the real problem appears to be that Lacan's theory is based on the structuralist tenet that the patriarchal is the only possible structure of the Symbolic.

The Real precedes the Symbolic, insofar as it is the foundation of the Symbolic. Yet the Real is also subsequently structured by the Symbolic. Zizek explains further that, as a result of the latter sense the Real is also the following:

[...] the product, remainder, leftover, scraps of this process of symbolization, the remnants, the excess which escapes symbolization and is as such produced by symbolization itself. In Hegelian terms, the Real is simultaneously *presupposed* and *posed* by the symbolic. In so far as the kernel of the Real is *jouissance*, this duality

takes the form of a difference between *jouissance*, enjoyment, and *plus-de-jouir*, the surplus of enjoying: *jouissance* is the basis upon which symbolization works, the basis emptied, disembodied, structured by the symbolization, but this process produces at the same time a residue, a leftover, which is the surplus-enjoyment. [Žižek's emphasis].¹³⁷

The notion of the Real as scraps and remainders of what cannot be symbolized, as well as the concept of *jouissance* as that which is in excess of the phallic are important in Irigaray's analysis of Lacan's dialectic. It will be discussed in greater detail later how, as a result of Lacanian theory, the female functions only as remainder, or excess to the Symbolic. It will be shown that what is taken to be an unalterable order, in fact, is not so. As will be seen, some interpretations of Irigaray suggest that she tries to show that there are scraps or debris of what might be an alternative female Imaginary, and thus the possibility of a Symbolic including the female.

This understanding of the Real plays an important role in the second aforementioned interpretation of it, namely the Real as the body. Recalling the importance of Language in structuring the 'Symbolic,' it can be argued that the body is Real. Serge André argues that the fact that the human being speaks makes it such that he is no longer a body.¹³⁸ More precisely, the Symbolic creates a disjunction between the subject and the body, whereby the body becomes an exteriority. The subject becomes separated from the body that is an external entity. The effect of language, therefore, brings about a subject that is distinct from the body.

Language, which structures the Symbolic, intervenes between subject and object. André explains that this intervention consists of both an access and a barrier to the body.¹³⁹

Access to the body is possible only insofar as the body is symbolized. Yet, there remains a barrier to the body insofar as it is not symbolized and thus, Real.

Due to the fact that things which exist in the Symbolic are mediated, André clarifies that the body becomes inaccessible or, more precisely, out of direct reach.¹⁴⁰ The only access we have to the body is mediated through the Imaginary as in the imago, or via the Symbolic and, thus, through logical deduction from language. What this implies is that the only understanding we have of the body is dependent on the Symbolic and how the body or its parts are organized with the signifier. André elaborates:

This does not mean that the body has no reality. The body subsists, of course, but we have to face the fact, we are not really *in* it. On the contrary, more often we hit this [R]eal of the body as an external and impenetrable wall: we hit an obstacle, we get hurt, we fall, we learn about the existence of an unsuspected illness through a test, etc. Only these occasional encounters reveal that our body is also an organism foreign to the idea that we have of it.¹⁴¹

Due to the process of symbolization a disjunction arises between the symbolized body as a location of inscribed meaning, and the unsymbolized Real body. As a result of this disjunction, there remains a left-over, or un-symbolized parts.

The relationship between the subject and the body may be seen to parallel other Lacanian pairs, such as, man and woman, subject and other. André explains that these relations are illustrated in the paradox of Zeno referred to in Lacan's Seminar XX: Achilles never rejoins the tortoise; and analogously the subject never rejoins the body.¹⁴² The body, like the tortoise is situated in a different dimension. Analogous to how the tortoise is beyond the step of Achilles, the body is beyond the signifying path by which attempts are made to rejoin it. This limit is what Lacan refers to as a hole, something outside language, some radical otherness.

The Deviation From Hegel in Lacan's Dialectics

It is useful to outline the major areas where Lacan's dialectic deviates from Hegel's. The major areas also reflect certain elements for which Irigaray, as a trained analyst, criticizes Hegel. These elements have already been briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. They will be elaborated below. What follows are Lacan's deviations from Hegel and, in part, also areas where Irigaray parts with Hegel. Irigaray's criticism of Lacan will be addressed in detail later.

Despite the dependence of Lacan's theory of the Mirror Stage on Hegel's dialectic of self-consciousness, there remain differences between the former's theory and the latter's analysis. These differences can clarify what is specific about Lacan's dialectics. As outlined below, Ver Eecke distinguishes three differences within the dialectics of these two thinkers.¹⁴³

The first difference is that, in Hegel's dialectic, consciousness discovers its own role in knowing the world. In Lacan's dialectic, the subject is ill at ease with himself and is anatomically incomplete. This moment is experienced as turbulent, and by means of the mirror stage, the subject is offered an idealized image of unity that was lacking previously. Ver Eecke explains that "by means of the *Gestalt* of another, Lacan's subject is not just *finding out* who he is but rather is *creating* himself as what he is not yet but in some sense should become. [Ver Eecke's emphasis.]"¹⁴⁴ The difference between Hegel and Lacan becomes quite clear: What is created in Lacan's dialectic is not a self-consciousness, but rather an organizing matrix. Lacan calls this organizing matrix "I."

The second difference between the Hegelian and the Lacanian dialectic is their results. In the Hegelian dialectic, self-consciousness becomes aware of itself as the negative of objectivity. At a further stage in the dialectic, self-consciousness becomes humble in the fear of death. It must be stressed here that Hegel's dialectic allows consciousness to be aware of, and more importantly, give meaning to the other-than-itself. On the other hand, the idealized organizing matrix that emerges from Lacan's mirror stage is not what the subject is; rather, it is what the subject projects itself to become. Ver Eecke stresses that this *Gestalt* is appropriated by the subject without conscious justification.¹⁴⁵ Thus, the difference between the Hegelian and the Lacanian dialectic is that the latter does not attribute to consciousness the role of bringing forth the dialectic move. Instead, Lacan attributes this crucial role to the structural signifiers, namely, the *Gestalt* of another, and the Name-of-the-Father.

The third difference between Hegelian and Lacanian dialectics is also related to their result. In the process of Hegel's dialectic, consciousness becomes aware of itself as *negativity*, and affirms this in reality. Lacan's dialectic, on the other hand, is about consciousness conquering the body as an exteriority. Ver Eecke says that since the mirror provides a visual unity of the body that is lacking in the interior experience of the same body, Lacan's mirror stage is "an instrument to synthesize the subject as *spatiality*. [Ver Eecke's emphasis.]."¹⁴⁶

The differences between Hegel's and Lacan's dialectic point toward a very specific and fundamental difference. Lacan's dialectic can be said to be located at the level of the body, whereas Hegel's dialectic at the level of consciousness. For Hegel, the body is

overcome in consciousness; for Lacan, the body cannot be overcome and causes a split in the subject. The implication of this difference is that Hegel seeks to bring together and overcome the conflicting moments of the dialectic. Lacan, on the other hand, does not believe in the possibility of overcoming the split that occurs within the subject. As a result, in Lacanian theory, the subject will always remain split. This difference suggests that whereas Hegel's dialectic posits Spirit as the solution in the problem of estrangement, Lacan's dialectic does not propose to resolve the subject's alienation.

Lacan understands the subject to be fundamentally split between its conscious and unconscious aspects. Unlike American ego psychology which privileges a humanist view of the subject by rendering the ego into an object and placing it at the centre of man's being, Lacan strongly holds that such a unified concept of the self is an illusion. The 'Spaltung' (splitting) is revealed in psychoanalysis. Lemaire clarifies that it occurs

[. . .] between the innermost part of the psyche, and the subject of conscious discourse, behavior and culture. This split is due to the fact that discourse, or more generally any symbolic order 'mediates' the subjects and thus lends itself particularly well to a rapid turning away from truth.¹⁴⁷

According to Lacan, the subject is a speaking subject, created by the signifier. In this sense, the subject is actually an effect of speaking. Casey and Woody explain that it is at this junction that the unconscious is to be considered, and that Lacan develops this theme by speaking of the dominance of the 'Other.'¹⁴⁸ In "Subversion of the subject and dialectic of desire," Lacan points to Freud's vital discovery of the unconscious.¹⁴⁹ This has great significance for Lacan. It means that the splitting of the subject which occurs at the mirror stage is in fact insoluble. Although the image in the mirror reflects an idealized unity, it does not reflect the subject's desire. This is precisely because, as Lacan determines it,

desire is a lack, something that does not appear in the image. In this sense, a human being can only conceptualize himself when he is mirrored back to himself from the position of another's desire.

Casey and Woody explain that the split which occurs in the mirror stage only gives rise to a more profound split due to the "agency of the letter," that is, due to the subject's entrance into the Symbolic.¹⁵⁰ In the Symbolic, the image is replaced with the 'I'. The speaking subject is subjugated to a split between the 'I' with which we identify ourselves, and the repressed non-I. The distinction between these two is important. In Lacanian theory, the former is the signifier, whereas the latter is the signified. It must be stressed here that Lacan's split human subject is not a divided self that, in a different society, would or could be unified. On the contrary, the human subject, according to Lacan, is created within a split.

The split condition of the subject is designated by Lacan by the symbol \$. Casey and Woody explain that this means that immediate reflective certainty of the Cartesian ego is a mis-recognition and, importantly, this is a radical split that cannot be transcended through the mediated self-recognition of the Hegelian absolute knowledge.¹⁵¹ Therefore, whereas Hegel's dialectic culminates in 'Spirit' and solves the problem of human estrangement, Lacan's dialectic does not. In Lacanian theory, the subject is split in the Imaginary and is subjugated to an even more profound split in the Symbolic. The human subject thus remains alienated. Thus far, Irigaray agrees with Lacan's criticism of Hegel. However, Irigaray does deviate and criticize Lacan. In order to understand where she

deviates, it will be necessary to examine in more detail Lacan's account of psychical development and the underlying patriarchal structures.

Dialectic of Subject and Object:

Object Relations

Understanding psychical development in Lacanian theory requires a clarification of how the infant relates to otherness in its various forms. The notion of otherness is important for understanding my interpretation of Irigaray's image of the lips. As will be seen, the lips are Irigaray's manner of questioning the notion of nature or otherness within Lacanian theory. In Lacanian theory there are two important object relations which he designate as *le A* and *l'objet a*. These object relations are ways in which we relate to the notion of otherness. Raglan-Sullivan explains that Lacan designates the capital A of *Autre* as a mathematical symbol that in itself does not mean anything yet sustains multiple meanings.¹⁵² The Other plays a role in Lacan's theory on many levels. In all levels, the Other is characterized by a dimension of exteriority as well as a determining function in relation to the human subject. It is not possible to give a precise definition of the Other because it has a functional value in Lacanian theory. As outlined below, Anthony Wilden clarifies that the Other in Lacanian theory represents many things: the significant 'other' to whom the neurotic's demands are addressed, which is an appeal to the Other; the internalization of the Other, which is exhibited in our desire for what the other desires; and the unconscious subject himself, insofar as Lacan views that unconscious as the discourse of the 'Other.'¹⁵³ Sometimes it merely denotes the category of 'Otherness'. Lacan also uses the Other to refer to the parents. In this context the mother, in the dual relationship of mother and child,

is the 'Real Other', whereas the father is the 'Symbolic Other'. Finally, Wilden suggests that the Other appears to refer to the unconscious, and is often referred to by Lacan as 'the locus of the Other'.¹⁵⁴

Bowie suggests that Lacan recasts the Hegelian Subject and Object dialectic "in terms of its spoken and unspoken content."¹⁵⁵ Lacan does this by showing how speech, that is, statements, questions, answers, as well as names, are the medium of desire. As such, subject and Other are under pressure from one another and come into being alongside one another. Lacan emphasizes this notion of the Other when he stresses that the structure of language and, likewise, the structure of the subject are expressions of difference. In using a Hegelian dialectic of self and other, Lacan uses the concept of Other to demonstrate that the subject is an articulation of difference. The Other makes evident that the subject is not static, it involves endless displacement. As Bowie explains, Lacan's Other "designates one member of the dialectic couple 'Subject – Other'".¹⁵⁶

Lacan also uses another concept of otherness. Bowie suggests that Lacan realized that the Other, as described above, could reintroduce certain Hegelian qualities of the object that he sought to dispel.¹⁵⁷ Lacan saw the importance in keeping the notion of object mutable. In order to achieve this, Lacan rethinks the Subject-Other dialectic in narrower terms. Consequently, Lacan introduces the concept the *objet a* (hereafter referred to as 'other'). Broadly speaking, the 'other' indicates two opposed terms and is governed by the rules of exclusion. The 'other' stands generally for the world. Its function, however, is tied up with language. The 'other' is the object of desire.

The 'other' is a concept that Lacan derives from Melanie Klein's work. Jameson explains that Lacan's notion of the 'other' is taken from what Klein "termed 'part objects' - organs, like the breast, or objects associated with the body like feces, whose psychic investment is then transferred to a host of other, more indifferent contents of the external world."¹⁵⁸ These objects will later be valorized as either good or bad.

The infant's relationship to the 'other' precedes the constitution of the Other in its world. Anthony Wilden describes the relationship the infant has with what Lacan terms as the 'other', as a primordial relationship.¹⁵⁹ More precisely, it is a relationship to objects that is anterior to the infant's relationship to a person as an object. Thus, the infant's desire, for example, the mother's breast, is at a different level from its desire for the unity with or the identification with the Other at a later stage of its life.

Lemaire explains that Lacan gives the 'other' two meanings. In the first sense, it is the object lost in the self's splitting, "the unnamed, the phallus which the child wishes to be in order to complete its mother, the symbolic compliment of its own lack."¹⁶⁰ In this sense, the 'other' is the cause of desire. The other thus symbolizes that which is lost in the Symbolic (in the sphere of the signifier). Lacan elaborates this sense of the 'other' at a more primitive level as well. When the infant is separated at birth from its mother, the 'other' is the object of the radical lack experienced. Here what Lacan calls part objects, such as the nipple or the breast, become substituted for the object of lack and become merged with the subject. The 'other' is the first image to fill the gap of separation felt by the infant. The second sense in which Lacan uses 'other' is as the representative of the object of lack, that is, the phallus, or the metonymic object of desire, such as, the fetish. In

this sense the 'other' is the remainder fallen from the chain of symbolization. The 'other' is an object that receives its function from the Symbolic as an object of lack. The 'other', however, is incapable of stopping the split inscribed in the subject who is from the start always already overshadowed by the signifier. Thus, the 'other' is the object of desire.

Wilden explains that Lacan would view the newborn child as an "absolute subject," that is, in a completely intransitive relationship with the world.¹⁶¹ As was discussed earlier, prior to the mirror stage, the infant is incapable of distinguishing itself from others. Likewise, in the Imaginary, the infant is just beginning to distinguish between itself and the objects in the world. Lacan argues that for the child to discover the object, the object must be absent. Wilden explains that the "partial object" represents the lack which gives rise to the desire for unity from which the movement towards identification arises.¹⁶² Here, the Lacanian notion of identity and desire arising from a lack clearly parallels the Hegelian model, since identification depends upon the discovery of difference, and difference is a form of lack.

Lacan developed this notion of object relations by adapting Freud's *Fort! Da!* (Gone, There). The *Fort! Da!* is Freud's theory of how the child comes to terms with the absence of the mother, which he developed while watching his grandson play with a spool. Lacan's adaptation of this Freudian idea depends upon the meaning of speech. For Lacan, speech is a movement toward something or, more precisely, an attempt to fill a void. Lacan thus re-interprets Freud's observations as a binary opposition between presence and absence in the child's world. Lacan maintains that the child is repeating a relationship which he discovered at a much more primordial level. It must be stressed that Lacan does

not distinguish between the role of thought and speech. In this sense, speech is articulating what was already in thought. Wilden explains:

It was the relationship to absence which accounts for the rather peculiar fact that Freud's grandson found it necessary to substitute for a phantasy relationship to the lack of object (at one level the breast; at another, the mother's comings and goings) the signifier relationship of speech, at the same time as he employed a substitute (the toy) for the more primordial object.¹⁶³

Lacan's 'other' thus appears as an object of lack. André Green suggests that it is precisely this characteristic of lack in which the 'other' comes forth that makes it operate on two levels: On the first level it reveals the lack of the Other; on the second level it reveals the lack within the signifying process. In other words, that which is missing in the Other is that which we cannot conceive.¹⁶⁴

Having shown how Lacan explains the psychic structure and the place of nature, I will turn a discussion of how 'woman' figures in Lacanian theory. I will show how Irigaray's critique of Lacanian theory builds on existing feminist engagements with Lacan. This will form the basis for my interpretation of Irigaray's image of the lips as a critique of Lacan's notion of nature.

Woman as Object:

Part of Irigaray's critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis has to do with woman's position therein. Woman represents the place of otherness or is the Object in patriarchal society. An understanding of how this occurs becomes clear through an analysis of Lacan's essays "God and the Jouissance of The Woman" and "A Love Letter," two central chapters in his *Seminar XX, Encore*, given in 1972-73. However, I argue that Irigaray is saying more with the image of the lips than merely that woman stands in the position of the other. This will

be developed below. For now, it is important to get a better understanding of how relations of self and other and man and woman function in Lacanian theory. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose note that Lacan's *Encore* marks a turning point in his work.¹⁶⁵ This work embodies Lacan's most direct attempt to undertake the question of feminine sexuality. In part, it is a return to the earlier psychoanalytic debate but, more than this, it attempts to go beyond Freud. It is an important work for understanding feminists' debate about psychoanalytic theory. It is likewise vital for understanding Irigaray's criticism of Lacan. As I will show, it opens the possibility for understanding femininity in such a way that it is not restricted by the phallic definition.

Central to these two chapters in *Encore*, as Mitchell and Rose explain, is the tenet that 'The Woman' does not exist insofar as sexuality based on the phallus designates her to the position of fantasy.¹⁶⁶ By tracing this fantasy via a critique of courtly, religious, and ethical discourse, Lacan theorizes the sexual relation as based on the fantasy of oneness, wherein woman has typically become the support.

In his analysis of this fantasy, Lacan introduces the concept of *jouissance*. *Jouissance* is used to represent that part of sexuality that is in excess of the phallic marker of sexual identity. The question Lacan explicitly explores is that of woman's relation to *jouissance*. Mitchell and Rose clarify the danger inherent in this kind of analysis: On the one hand there appears a possible complicity with the fantasy that is attempted to be exposed; and, on the other hand, there is the possibility of pushing woman's 'otherness' even further, that is, "beyond the limits of language [. . .]."¹⁶⁷ Lacan has been criticized by feminists for both of these reasons.

Lacan exposes 'Woman' as a category constructed by the phallic term. This view, together with Freud's major insight that sexual difference is a Symbolic construct, has led the debate on feminine sexuality to be dominated by attempts to retrieve feminine sexuality from the effects of a complete subordination of the phallic construction.

In the first introductory essay of *Feminine Sexuality*, Juliet Mitchell argues that Freud's theories of the unconscious and sexual difference highlight how desire is appropriated to reproduce patriarchal power relations, and how women are subjected to patriarchy. In using psychoanalysis as a tool against women's oppression, she stresses the historical circumstances of psychoanalysis as being phallogentric. Mitchell writes:

To Freud, if psychoanalysis is phallogentric, it is because the human social order that it perceives refracted through the individual human subject is phallogentric. To date, the father stands in the position of the third term that *must* break the asocial dyad unit of mother and child.¹⁶⁸

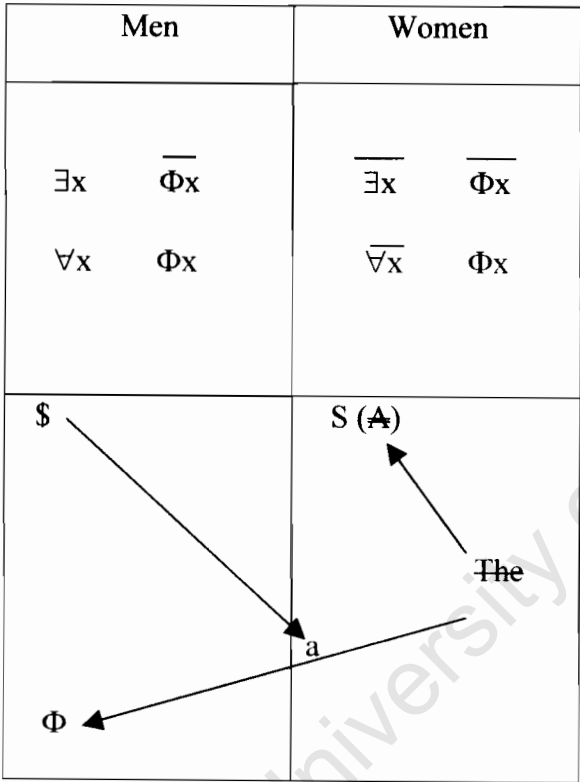
She notes further that Lacan, as discussed above, likewise returns to the same problem when he argues that the relation of mother and infant cannot be viewed outside the structure determined by the position of the father. In this essay, Mitchell defends Lacan in a way similar to her defence of Freud in her earlier book *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. Mitchell argues that the law of the unconscious and the law of the Symbolic Father reflect the law of civilization which is necessarily patriarchal. She suggests that understanding how this law constitutes the subject sheds light on how woman is subjugated to patriarchy.

Mitchell elaborates on Lacan's radically split subject, the centrality of the castration complex, the primacy of the Law of the Father, the construction rather than the naturalness of sexual difference, and the phallogentricism of the human subject. She views all of these as contributing to the demythification of sexed subjectivity.

In the second introduction to *Feminine Sexuality*, Rose suggests that the third term is represented by a particular symbolic position in psychic development rather than a particularly sexed person. However, Rose asks an important question, namely, “why [does the] necessary symbolization and the privileged status of the phallus appear as independent in the structuring and securing of human subjectivity?”¹⁶⁹ Indeed, as Gallop explains, this is a crucial question that delineates a key difference between Lacan’s feminist defenders and his critics.¹⁷⁰ It is true that Lacan’s work provides a description of our cultures both past and present. However, the question remains whether his work is useful in conceptualizing a non-patriarchal society. The question of the value of Lacanian theory for feminists allows us to take a more critical look at Mitchell. Mitchell’s account of Freud and Lacan were very valuable interventions at the time. However, Mitchell holds to the view of a structural neutrality of the phallic in positioning the sexes as subjects. It must be noted that, continued adherence to this view limits moving beyond the confining structures of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Indeed, as Grosz suggests, Mitchell’s belief in the necessity and universality of the phallic Symbolic greatly undermines her ability to see the need for a woman’s structural transformation of society.¹⁷¹ As I point out later, Irigaray provides a different way of thinking about feminine sexuality. Before examining this, however, it is very helpful to outline Lacan’s theory of sexuality. This will provide a better understanding of why Irigaray thought it necessary to move beyond the type of feminist interpretations proposed by Mitchell.

In “A Love Letter,” Lacan uses symbolic logic in the application of sets of binary opposites.¹⁷² Lacan applies this logic to men and women. For logical distinction, each

entity is defined against what it is not. For each group (men and women), he designates an existential proposition and a universal proposition that are in a contradictory relation. An existential proposition tells us something about a single entity (an x), and the universal proposition tells us something about all the entities within the group. Lacan gives the following diagram depicting the logic of sexualisation that divides the field of speaking beings into two:¹⁷³



In Lacan’s logic of sexuality, speaking beings are divided into two groups, men and women. Lacan suggests that the variable x (an entity) stands indifferently for any speaking

being, and thus does not represent a specific sexed being. Furthermore, on both sides (men and women) there is a failure of the Symbolic, insofar as the logic of language is inadequate for the referent. However, this failure is different within Lacan's diagram for men and women. The difference lies in how *jouissance* is accommodated within the Symbolic for each sex.

Within Lacan's diagram, the formula indicating the male existential can be understood as representing an entity that says "no" to the phallic function. Furthermore, the male universal within Lacan's formulation indicates that all entities are subject to phallic function.

On the female side of Lacan's diagram, the formula representing the female existential is to be understood as follows: There is no entity that says "no" to the phallic function. Correspondingly, the female universal comes to be seen as "not all" of the entities that are subject to the phallic function.

As discussed above, the castration performed by the Symbolic is the phallic function. As a product of this process, the Phallus becomes representative of the prohibited *jouissance*, the greater part of the drive for satisfaction that is forbidden to all subjects. In other words, for entry into the Symbolic, this prohibition is a sacrifice required by both men and women. All subjects unconsciously insert themselves into this structure, irrespective of their biological sex. As mentioned above, Lacan stresses that there is only one variable x (an entity), and this means there is only one category of speaking being, or concurrently, any speaking subject can take up the position on one or the other side, that is, either the male or the female side. Lacan writes:

It is expressly stated in Freudian theory, that all speaking beings, whoever they be and whether or not they are provided with the attributes of masculinity [. . .] are allowed to inscribe themselves on this side [the female side.]¹⁷⁴

For the entities which fall into the male side of Lacan's diagram, there is an attempt to identify with the Phallus or, in other words, to see oneself as the master issuing the prohibitions. Although there may be real effects, as seen by the position of men in patriarchal societies, Lacan stresses that this is merely a posture. All men, as mentioned above, are still subject to the phallic function, and thus must yield to symbolic castration.

This rule governing the side of the male in Lacan's account of sexuality is assured thanks to an exception. In other words, universality is guaranteed by an exception to the rule. This exception is the aforementioned existential proposition: There is an *x* that says "no" to the phallic function. This exception, Lacan explains, is related to Bertrand Russell's mathematical paradox, wherein the namer of the set stands outside, and is not defined by what he defines.¹⁷⁵ Lacan links this exception to the Rule with the myth of the primal father in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*. According to the myth, the primal father made no sacrifice of his *jouissance*. More precisely, it is the exception to the rule that represents the illusion on which the symbolic functions. We can clarify this by drawing an analogy between the exception to the rule and Lacan's account of the Real. The lack felt in the Symbolic is built on the illusion of the plenitude of the Real, similarly, the exception to the rule represents the illusion that *jouissance* will be reinstated in full.

On the female side of Lacan's theory of sexuality, woman is 'not-all' identifiable with the phallic function. As mentioned above, she says yes and no to it. As such, the formula characterizing woman highlights the impossibility of totalizing the woman. Thus,

unlike masculinity, femininity is not organized as a universal function. Because 'not-all' the woman is subject to the phallic function, there is no universal affirmation viable on the side of woman. Although Lacan outlines a woman's side in his theory of sexuality, it cannot be defined as a set like that for man, hence Lacan's well-known statement that "The Woman does not exist." Lacan did not mean that individual women do not exist but, rather, since there is no proper definition of non-phallic *jouissance*, there is no proper definition of what it means to be woman.

While woman, like man, is subjected to the phallic function and thus bound to castration, she is also related to the signifier of the barred Other. The bar, or the slash represents a lack in the Other. This implies that the rewards of the Symbolic are not guaranteed. As mentioned above, woman is 'not all' in the Symbolic. As a result, woman has a supplementary *jouissance*, a *jouissance* that castration forgets.

For Lacan, the Phallus serves as an agent of division separating the mother-infant dyad and, thus, shattering the Imaginary stage. In this sense, it 'castrates' everyone, regardless of sex. Concurrently, however, the Phallus, because of its role in severing the mother-infant dyad, performs a privileged role in the infant's ensuing relations to language and culture. Despite Lacan's insistence on the 'emptiness' of the Phallus itself as a signifier, these relations are marked by phallocentrism. In this sense, Lacan appears to want to have it both ways: To deny that sex differences matter since everyone is 'castrated' insofar as they are separated from the mother, while at the same time affirming the Symbolic as a patriarchal order because the Phallus stands for the transition to the Symbolic.

Lacan's treatment of the Oedipal myth is reinterpreted in terms of Language. Turkle explains that, for Lacan, the Oedipal phase begins when the child starts to understand the sexual rules embedded in its cultural terms.¹⁷⁶ It is to be understood in kinship terms: The passing down of the father's name, rather than that of body parts or singular events. Thus, Lacanian theory suggests that it is symbolic agents, rather than bodily parts, which serve as symbolic markers. The Phallus becomes a symbolic marker for both lack and desire. As mentioned above, by the Oedipal phase, with the introjection of the Name-of-the-Father, the subject has been twice divided. By the second (phallic) division, Ragland-Sullivan explains, the ego is developed through its own reflection found via others, "and thus opposes itself in language and in reference to the Law of the Name-of-the-Father to the elemental truth or primary introjections of its own constitution."¹⁷⁷ In other words, because language is a distortion of experience, the pre-subjective perception is repressed. The infant who originally was mother-oriented begins to identify with the father. The introjection of the Name-of-the-Father makes the identification of the father with cultural ideals. Furthermore, identification with the Law ensues that the mother (as Other) remains as the unconscious source of primary identity with objects of desire, while the father becomes representative of conscious, public and social ideals.

Starting in the 1980s, feminist theory began to analyse Lacan's Real. Ragland-Sullivan explains that, in Lacanian theory, woman dwells beyond language and her gender identity is closer to sexuality and pain than her male counterpart who rather identifies with his group.¹⁷⁸ As a result, the Real is an effect felt more by women. Furthermore, a confusion arises that identifies woman with mother, the first lost object. This confusion

arises because the myth of the incest taboo is elaborated to explain an infant's desire to know what the mother wants of it. Ragland-Sullivan suggests that, "woman is the object *par excellence* because she holds out the promise of reparation in the sense that the first order – the Real – is constituted in terms of losses linked to woman *qua* primary other."¹⁷⁹ Whereas sexual incest is possible, psychic incest gives rise to psychosis. The incest taboo is in fact a structural taboo of the Real, insofar as it forbids identificatory fusion with the mother. The incest taboo thus forbids what is impossible, namely, Oneness. In other words, the incest taboo forbids the oneness of mother and infant.

Women are outsiders in the Symbolic as conceived by Lacan. It is not that they are naturally predisposed to this exteriority. Rather, as Michelle Boulous Walker explains, they are socially positioned to this exteriority by a discursive system that constructs spatial and logical arrangements between inside and outside.¹⁸⁰ Irigaray argues that this system prevents women from representing themselves and their relation to one another. The solution she offers is the production of a new Symbolic based on difference.

Irigaray's reading of Lacanian Dialectics

In the remaining part of this chapter I will turn to Irigaray's treatment of Lacan. The first part of this will deal with what Irigaray views as the a-sexual account provided by Lacan. In this part I will focus mainly on Irigaray's essay "Così Fan Tutti". In the second part of this section, I will examine the image of the lips and various interpretations thereof. I will propose a different interpretation of the image. This interpretation is intended to show that the Lacanian notion of nature or otherness is flawed. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that

the image provides a different way of thinking about nature and otherness, a manner in which difference is restored.

In her essay “Così Fan Tutti” in *This Sex*,¹⁸¹ Irigaray questions where women stand in terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis. More specifically, this essay deals with Lacan’s seminar *Encore*. As Elizabeth Weed explains, she queries whether “castration and the Phallus tell us the deep truths of Western culture or just the truth of how things are and might not always be.”¹⁸² These questions are about the relation between psychoanalysis and history.

It is interesting to note that Irigaray’s essay was published in 1975, just a year after the publication of *Speculum* that led to her expulsion from Vincennes and from the *Ecole freudienne*. The title “Così Fan Tutti,” that is, “All men are like that” calls to mind Mozart’s *Così Fan Tutte*, namely, “All women are like that,” and its Don Alphonso. Gallop characterizes the latter as “the cynical old philosopher” who “knows all about women,” and who suggests “communication between the sexes is unreliable.”¹⁸³ Don Alphonso sets up a wager to prove this belief and, due to a lack of trustworthy exchange between the sexes, comes out the winner. In a sense, Irigaray can be seen to draw an analogy between Lacan and Alphonso, both men support and capitalize on the failing relation between the sexes.

In her essay “Così Fan Tutti,” Irigaray criticises Lacan for what she sees as his ahistoricism and social conservatism. She criticizes some of the central elements of his theory, namely, the primacy of the Phallus and the conceptualization of the imaginary body of the mirror stage as a male body. In *Speculum*, Irigaray plays with the idea of the mirror.

Irigaray suggests that Lacan's mirror can only see women's bodies as lacking, as a 'hole.' She thus suggests a different kind of mirror is required to 'see' woman's difference. In her essay "The Poverty of Psychoanalysis" Irigaray suggests this different mirror is the mirror of theory or discourse.¹⁸⁴

In her diagnosis of Lacan's Symbolic, she uncovers a patriarchal order that is sexually indifferent.¹⁸⁵ When Irigaray speaks of Lacan's "phallic economy" she borrows from Marx's analysis of a political economy in which the fruits of the worker's labor are unjustly appropriated through the economic system of wage labor that generates surplus value. Irigaray's description of this economy is extracted from Freud's model of libidinal economy insofar as she refers to a "phallic economy of castration." However, Irigaray reverses the axis upon which Freud's model turns. Ofelia Schutte suggests that Irigaray's analysis can be understood by viewing "the phallic economy as ruled by an operational displacement of the following type: where gender division occurs in the unconscious between 'he' and 'she,' the value that falls on the side of the masculine is surplus value extracted/displaced from the side of the feminine."¹⁸⁶

The phallic economy is described as an economy of castration because it is an economy of lack, or privation. In Freud's sense, it is the fear of loss (of the penis) or, in Lacan's sense, the fear of loss of identity that underlies the economy. The logic underlying this economy is that value is attached to one object and lack is perceived as a sign of valuelessness. As discussed above, in Lacanian theory, the Phallus functions as divider and symbol of value dividing boys and girls. The Phallus symbolizes value, authority, and the Law necessary for culture. Freud, and the psychoanalysts like Lacan who followed him,

hold that the only desire on the part of woman when she realizes that she has no 'sex' is to have a penis, the only sexual organ that is valued in the Phallic economy. Irigaray thus stresses that as long as the Symbolic is phallogocentric, "the 'other' – woman – can only appear as a lack or a negative."¹⁸⁷ This entails that the female sex is the complement and the opposite necessary to the economy of the male sex. This gives rise to the problem that the female sex cannot be viewed in its specificity or autonomy from the male, and thus cannot be viewed in its positivity.

Schutte stresses that this economy is dependent on the repression of non-phallic value.¹⁸⁸ Since difference cannot be tolerated and would rival the authority of the Phallus, everything must be reduced to the 'same.' As a result, Irigaray suggests that women have no identity as women.¹⁸⁹ The sexual indifference implied by Lacan's Phallus means that woman is defined in terms of her relation to men: as mother, virgin, or prostitute. This sexual indifference means that women have no identity as women. Irigaray shows that women are not symbolically represented and argues for the possibility of such a representation.

Irigaray proposes the image of the two lips that, I argue, provides her with a feminist theory for woman's identity that is not tied to patriarchy. This image has been the source of much misunderstanding of Irigaray's work. It is useful to highlight an important mis-reading of this image before examining in more detail how the lips function in Irigaray's theory. The image of the lips is not a biological description of woman, and thus Irigaray is not, as she is often criticized, offering an essentialist definition of woman. Furthermore, before proceeding with an analysis of the image of the lips, it is important to

discuss Irigaray's suggestion of rethinking the dialectic. Her new dialectic is central to the possibility of the proposed function of the image of the lips.

Essentialism Revisited

The early reception of Irigaray's work was at times critical of what appeared to be an essentialist account of women's identity. Although the essentialist charges against Irigaray have largely been dispelled, it is helpful to briefly outline some of the arguments in defence of Irigaray and against essentialism. Although some of the interpretations are contradictory, it is useful to highlight these to show that they have largely been based on reading Irigaray as a philosopher of sexual difference. My own interpretation of the image of the lips entails a different solution to the problem of essentialism. As will be discussed in more detail in the following section, I believe that, with the image of the lips, Irigaray is making a comment on nature. In a way, she is speaking ontologically.

As summarized below, Whitford outlines many different interpretations, all of which suggests that Irigaray is, in fact, not talking about women's biology or in essentialists terms.¹⁹⁰ Irigaray's image of the two lips is interpreted by Carolyn Burke as signifying plurality as opposed to the "One" in Lacan's phallic sense.¹⁹¹ In this sense, the lips are not to be interpreted in an anatomical manner, but rather conceptually figuring another mode that is counter to patriarchal thought. Other interpretations, such as that of Gallop and that of Grosz, suggest that the image should be read as interdiscursive and referential.¹⁹² For example, it may be said that Irigaray is not proposing a truth about female sexuality; rather she is creating a discourse to counter the authority of Lacanian psychoanalytic discourse.

Her image is further interpreted by Rosi Braidotti and Diana Fuss as a struggle concept specifically intended to deconstruct Lacanian theory.¹⁹³ For example, Fuss suggests that Irigaray's image of the lips displaces Lacan's phallomorphism and, furthermore, shifts the emphasis from sight to touch thus challenging Lacan's obsession with veiling.¹⁹⁴ As a result, it appears that the image of lips is a question of symbolization rather than biology.

Many interpretations of the image of the lips suggest that the image allows us to explore the possibilities of rethinking the Symbolic in such a way that women may occupy it as subjects. As such, there are several interpretations of this image suggesting that it is a strategic attempt at reconstructing woman's identity. Maggie Berg, Iris Young, and Anna Munster, for example, suggest that Irigaray's image of the two lips can, in fact, be used to reconstruct an identity for women that is not tied to patriarchy.¹⁹⁵

According to these interpretations, Irigaray's image of the lips is her way of talking about the body through a process of symbolization. For instance, Berg argues that Irigaray's lips are to the labia what Lacan's phallus is to the penis.¹⁹⁶ The reconstructive value of this lies in the fact that an alternative privileged signifier is being offered. According to Berg, Irigaray is not talking about an organ or part of the body or, in Lacanian terms, about the Real body. This interpretation suggest that similar to Lacan, Irigaray is talking about the symbolized body. Yet a different interpretation is offered by Marion Young. She suggests that Irigaray's use of this image is only the beginning since it can get impregnated with layers of symbolic meaning and take on a life of its own. The result is the possibility of creating a woman's culture.¹⁹⁷

These interpretations all suggest that Irigaray's image of the two lips should not be read in the literal or biological sense. Indeed, Irigaray also attempts to dispel the fiction of essentialism. In "Veiled Lips," a section of *Marine Lover*, Irigaray stresses that there is no such thing as an essential identity of woman. Irigaray claims that "[woman] does not set herself up as *one*, as a (single) female unit. She is not closed up or around one single truth or essence. [Irigaray's emphasis.]."¹⁹⁸

While the aforementioned manners of addressing the charges of essentialism against Irigaray are valuable, I believe that a different interpretation of the image of the lips addresses this issue equally well. As mentioned above, the interpretations have largely been based on viewing Irigaray as a philosopher of sexual difference. I believe a better understanding of what Irigaray intends with the image of the lips may be afforded by viewing the image as a comment on nature.

It should be stressed that Irigaray is, in a sense, a Hegelian thinker. Her image of the lips must be interpreted in such a way that reflects both the Hegelian elements she retains and those from which she distances herself from. In the first case, we can interpret the image from a standpoint where Irigaray remains close to Hegel. In this case, it must be emphasized that she philosophizes dialectically. With this in mind, Irigaray's notion of the lips can be seen in the light of Hegel's belief that one cannot talk about the thing-in-itself. In this sense, Irigaray knows that nature itself cannot be accessed in discourse. Although Irigaray may have faith in objects or matter in itself, she knows that she cannot speak of them in that manner, and her philosophical method clearly reflects the restrictions imposed by dialectical reason. She views subjectivity as a mode of identification as well as

differentiation rather than an essential identity. She thus continually stresses the necessity of the multiplicity of potential interactions among women and men. Furthermore, the dialectical nature of her method is present in her image of the lips. The lips evoke an image of a duality of self and other. Irigaray claims: "The/a woman can sub-sist by already being double in her self: both the one and the other."¹⁹⁹ Thus, criticisms of Irigaray for appealing to notions of woman's essence are false.

Nonetheless, we have to be careful not to take Irigaray's similarity to Hegel too far. Although Irigaray is trained in the tradition of dialectical thought, Irigaray distances herself from Hegel. Consequently, in a second case we must interpret the image from a standpoint where she distances herself from Hegel. This is related to Lacanian theory as well. There are certain aspects of the Hegelian dialectic that Irigaray does not completely agree with. For example, Hegel's views on language, and specifically his claim repeated throughout the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that "die Sprache ist das Dasein des Geistes" (Speech is the Dasein of Spirit), is central to his criticism of the idealisms of his day. This is similar to Lacan's idea of the body that is always already symbolized. Furthermore, this Hegelian idea is similar to what Lacan expresses when he claims that language structures the Symbolic. Wilden explains that, by this claim, Hegel meant that all that can be expressed by language is a universal.²⁰⁰ More precisely, Hegel maintained that even if one is to say "this thing here" one is merely expressing an abstraction. One cannot attain the thing-in-itself in speaking of it. An analogy can be drawn to the Lacanian Real and the body. If we speak about the body in the Lacanian sense we must be speaking about the mediated

symbolized body. The Real body in the Lacanian sense, or the thing-in-itself in the Hegelian sense, cannot be spoken about.

Although Irigaray is aware that she cannot think or speak about nature, or more precisely 'woman's' nature except via culture, she does not entirely agree with Hegel and certain Hegelian elements that Lacan retains. According to Irigaray, the implications of how nature is viewed as a result of notions of abstractions and notions of the universal in Hegelian thought are problematic. These will be discussed in more detail in the following section. Irigaray is interested in retaining a certain quality of nature of the thing. It is important to stress, however, that Irigaray does distance herself from the Hegelian model and aspects of which are retained in the Lacanian model. When Irigaray proposes the image of the lips, she is intending to put forth a different view of nature than Hegel. Irigaray wants to retain the metaphysical realization that nature itself cannot be accessed in discourse. Yet, at the same time, through the image of the lips, Irigaray wants to speak ontologically about nature as not unitary, and not the figment of a metaphysical fantasy.

The Two Lips: From Identity Toward Rethinking Otherness

Irigaray's "When our lips Speak Together" in *This Sex* has been widely read and interpreted for its powerful image of the two lips. As I have already mentioned, there have been various interpretations of what Irigaray's aim in this essay is and what the image of the lips are intended to demonstrate. Yet, since Whitford's interpretation, there appears to be some consensus that the lips are Irigaray's way of rethinking the imaginary body. While I do not disagree with such an interpretation, I believe that something more can be learned from this image when it is seen as Irigaray's manner of addressing the problem of a unity of

nature which Lacan appears to have retained from Hegel. I will engage with the idea that the image of the lips can provide a different notion of the subject for women and begin to show how this works with my interpretation of the image of the lips as Irigaray's aim to return to and change the notion of a singular nature. I will discuss the image of the lips and the notion of a unity of nature in more detail in the final chapter.

Irigaray's image of the lips works on many levels of psychoanalytic theory. Most of the interpretations of this image suggest that its aim is to give rise to a possible space in which woman's subjectivity can be elaborated in such a way that it is not subjugated to patriarchy. Under such interpretations, Irigaray's image of the lips can demonstrate that women's bodies are not the "hole-envelope" that the Lacanian Symbolic fashions them to be. This image also allows Irigaray to rethink the notion of subject and object in such a way that 'woman' does not have to occupy the position of the object within the Lacanian dialectic.

Whitford suggests Irigaray works as a psychoanalyst to an ailing Western culture, trying to liberate the repressed from an overburdened unconscious in order to relieve this culture from certain painful symptoms.²⁰¹ Two important things should be highlighted. In the first place, Irigaray achieves this by showing that only certain imaginary objects are symbolized while others are not. Secondly, Irigaray is interested in bringing into culture certain female images that have been neglected. Whitford suggests that with the image of the lips, Irigaray takes previously unsymbolized aspects of female corporeality and sexuality that are lost in patriarchy and brings them to the cultural order through symbolization.²⁰² Such an interpretation suggests that Irigaray's image of the two lips

allows her to represent a positive female sexuality that moves beyond the confining representations of women in the dominant patriarchal discourse. Thus, Irigaray's image of the lips makes visible what remained invisible in Lacan's theory, namely, women's genitalia.

Irigaray's image of the two lips that never become one seems also to parallel the idea of two sexes, male and female, that never become one. Indeed, in her image of the lips, Irigaray evokes a concept that underlies all her theorizing on the notion of sexual difference. Madelon Sprengnether explains that woman's sex is "not one", as Irigaray suggests, partly because of the "two lips of the vulva, continuously touching each other without resolving timelessly into a unity like the phallus."²⁰³

The power of this image also lies in the manner in which Irigaray moves between the different meanings of the lips, namely, between the lips of the vulva and the lips of woman's mouth opening and closing in speech. This image thus provides a psychoanalytic tool against Lacan insofar as the lips are a sexual image intended to replace the 'hole' or lack in woman's sexuality. Furthermore, the lips are a powerful image against the autonomy of the Phallus. In addition to this, the ambiguity of the term lips also refers to woman's other lips, and thus woman's speech. This likewise is an important psychoanalytic tool against Lacan since language and sexuality are so tightly linked in psychoanalytic theory. Since language constructs the Symbolic, and language thus far is patriarchal, the idea of a woman's speech threatens to rival the authority of masculine language and culture.

This dual characteristic of Irigaray's image of the lips is strongly brought out in the concluding essay in *This Sex* entitled "When our Lips Speak Together." Irigaray writes:

Open your lips; don't open them simply. I don't open them simply. We – you/I – are neither open nor closed. We never separate simply: *a single word* [Irigaray's italics] cannot be pronounced, produced, uttered by our mouths. Between our lips, yours and mine, several voices, several ways of speaking resound endlessly, back and forth. One is never separate from the other. You/I: are always several at once. And how could one dominate the other? Impose her voice, her tone, her meaning?²⁰⁴

Irigaray further meshes sexuality and language as she writes:

Speak, all the same. It's our good fortune that your language isn't formed of a single thread, a single strand or pattern. It comes from everywhere at once. . . Why only one song, one speech, one text at a time? To seduce, to satisfy, to fill my 'holes'? We are not lacks, voids awaiting sustenance, plenitude, fulfilment from the other. By our lips we are women: this does not mean that we are focussed on consuming, consummation, fulfilment.²⁰⁵

On one level, the lips can be interpreted as the female sex organs that Irigaray wants to make visible. In addition to this, Irigaray seeks to develop a "speaking woman" who would undermine Lacanian psychoanalytic theory that denies difference in the name of the same. As Drucilla Cornell and Adam Thuschwell stress, by speaking, woman undermines the claim to totality upon which the Lacanian discourse relies.²⁰⁶ In this sense, the feminine can be seen as the revenge of the object against the masculine subject's attempt of appropriation.

There is, however, more to Irigaray's image than this. Irigaray wants to point not only to the materiality of woman's sex, or the possibility of woman's discourse, but also to a reconceptualization of the relation between the sexes that would allow for a positive identity for woman. In fact, this is what Irigaray claims is the aim of her later work, such as *I Love to You*. I will turn to this aim and these works in the final chapter. For the

moment, it is important to return to the image of the lips and what I view as a different approach. As discussed above, most of the interpretations of Irigaray's image of the lips are based on addressing the notion of the subject that has been exclusively masculine. The image is often viewed as providing a manner of rethinking woman's subjectivity. I suggest that something more fundamental is provided in Irigaray's image of the lips. In other words, the fact that the image may be employed to rethink woman's identity is based on what I view in Irigaray as a return to the notion of nature as pre-given or the notion of otherness. I believe that the image of the lips is Irigaray's way of changing the way in which the body as part of the Real or the body as nature is viewed. I believe that the image of the lips is a way for Irigaray to return the notion of difference, that is the two-ness of the sexes, back to the natural.

The Lips: A Dialectic Without Unity

A better understanding of what Irigaray proposes with the image of the lips is best understood in light of how her critique of Lacan functions. I believe that Irigaray's critique of Lacan is analogous to Marx's critique of Hegel. It will be helpful to briefly outline Marx's critique of Hegel. I will then argue that Irigaray's critique of Lacan runs parallel. An understanding of this will require analyzing Lacan's account of the *Gestalt* or the ideal body as developed in "Some Reflections on the ego" in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.

While an understanding of sexual difference and its political stakes are crucial to clarifying Irigaray's criticisms of Lacan, I maintain that a better understanding of her work can be achieved by focusing on the notion of the object, or otherness. I agree with

interpretations that broadly speaking, suggest that Irigaray's criticism of Lacan has to do with his phallogocentric theories. In this sense her critique of phallogocentrism, as Pheng Chean and Grosz suggest, "involves an exposure of the violent logic of the one, a Platonic monologic that reduces the other to a pale copy or deficient version of the same."²⁰⁷ As discussed in the chapter on Hegel, Irigaray views this logic of sameness as the theoretical underpinning of many patriarchal social and cultural structures. However, these interpretations have largely focused on the notion of the subject. At the basis of her critique of Lacan, I believe that Irigaray is not only concerned with the notion of the subject, but also the notion of the object. To clarify, I believe Irigaray is critical of the manner in which Lacan treats the notion of nature or otherness. I am suggesting that in Irigaray's critique of Lacan, she argues analogously as she did against Hegel, and exposes in Lacan the monosexual discourse of psychoanalysis. At the basis of this is her view that Lacan retains a problematic aspect of Hegelianism.

In order to understand how this critique functions, it is useful to see her critique of Lacan as parallel to another. Irigaray's critique of Lacan works in a manner analogous to Marx's criticism of Hegel's dialectic. Just as Marx exposes the problems inherent to abstraction in Hegelian dialectics, Irigaray exposes the problems inherent to Lacanian theory due to abstraction. The problem of abstraction, in Lacanian theory, manifests itself in Lacan's inability to think sexual difference in a positive light. Although we briefly addressed Marx's criticism of Hegel's dialectic in the previous chapter, it is useful to explain it in more detail. This will clarify how Irigaray's criticism of Lacan parallels

Marx's criticism of Hegel. Furthermore, it paves the way for developing an alternative manner of thinking about the image and 'woman'.

In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx clearly formulates his criticism of Hegel's dialectic, arguing that it suffers from both uncritical positivism and uncritical idealism.²⁰⁸ It is uncritical idealism because Hegel denies the empirical, sensible world and acknowledges true reality only in abstraction, that is, in the idea. It is also uncritical positivism because it underhandedly reintroduces the empirical object-world. Hegel's dialectic is, according to Marx, dependent on Hegel first making the 'Idea' as substance, and then showing that reality is merely its manifestation. What Marx describes in *Capital*, namely, the process in which Hegel transforms thought into an 'independent subject' labelled the 'Idea', and the empirical world, which is the true subject, turns into the "external phenomenal form of the Idea." What Marx points to here is the subject-object inversion.

The true importance of Marx's criticism of Hegel lies in the key it affords for understanding Marx's criticism of bourgeois economics. In Marx's "The Metaphysics of Political Economy" in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, he argues that economic categories are only the theoretical expressions, or more precisely, the abstractions of the social relations of production. As Colletti explains, Marx's criticism of bourgeois economics is analogous to his criticism of Hegel, namely, that through abstractions, Hegel reduces "the substance of everything" into mere "logical categories."²⁰⁹ Marx argues that these abstractions are hypostatized into substances. Consequently, real historical relationships are presented as the objectification of such categories. Marx argues that if all accidents are lost in the

abstraction, all we are left with is the logical category. Furthermore, Maurice Dobb suggests that, although the examples Marx cites are mainly drawn from the concepts of religion and idealist philosophy, there is a parallel tendency at work: Seemingly innocuous abstraction of certain aspects of exchange relations in isolation from social relations of production are often made.²¹⁰ What occurs, however, is that once such an abstraction is made it is given an independent existence as if it represents the essence of reality when in fact it only represents one contingent aspect of reality. Dobb thus explains that concepts become hypostatized, and as in Marx's words, the abstractions obtain fetishistic character.²¹¹ This is the crucial danger of modern economic thought that Marx sought to demonstrate.

Colletti stresses that it is not only in Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy* and other early writings that he used this critique. It is also central to Marx's analysis of the method of political economy in his mature work.²¹² As a result, economists substitute generic or universal categories for specific institutions and processes, and the latter come to be seen as realizations of the former.

Marx demonstrates that there is a logical unity that takes the place of real difference. In other words, the universal replaces the particular and the eternal category replaces the historical concrete. Finally, the concrete is smuggled in as a consequence and the embodiment of the universal.

Irigaray's criticism of Lacan works in a similar manner. She maintains that the Phallus and patriarchy are but one possible historical manifestation. Lacan, however, is unable to think female sexed bodies and, as a result, abstracts only from the male body and

then presents it forward as if it were universal. Lacan achieves this apparently unproblematic abstraction because he does not regard sexual difference positively or, to put differently, he does not think of nature or the Real as sexed.

In his account of the mirror stage, Lacan addresses a psychoanalytic problem that perplexed Freud, namely, how the emergence of a separate ego is explained in the development from auto-eroticism to love object.²¹³ Lacan's solution lies in the view of the ego as a corporeally based fantasy. This view has provided many feminists with useful possibilities in the analysis of the sexual specificity of subjectivity.

As mentioned earlier, Lacan's mirror stage posited an ideal ego that was a reflection of an imaginary double, or a narcissistic structure. The mirror stage is the origin for an imaginary ideal of the self as a unified totality. The infant's sexuality is then bound in the dialectic of narcissistic identification with this unified image. Finally, the infant's identification with the image is wrought with an irreparable division since the infant's ideal form of itself is alienated in an other. Vasseleu points out that Lacan is often criticized for his formulation of primary narcissism because as it is an isomorphic prescription applied to the imaginary formulations of male and female infants alike.²¹⁴ It can be argued that the image Lacan refers to sees a reflection of a universalized body. However, it is precisely the possibility of a universal that is representative of male and female that Irigaray puts into question.

Indeed, Lacan employs the concept of an ideal body as a Gestalt and then addresses the question of sexual difference. In doing so, he makes a distinction between male and female Gestalt in terms of quality. Lacan stresses, "[a]ll the phenomena we are discussing

seem to exhibit the laws of gestalt; the fact that the penis is dominant in the shaping of the body-image is evident of this.”²¹⁵ Furthermore, Lacan suggests the dominance of the penis “is a fact and one moreover which cannot be put down to cultural influences alone.”²¹⁶

This seems to be a contradictory thing to say for Lacan who criticized Freud for his account of the female castration complex. As Vasseleu points out, Lacan’s assertion invokes an indisputable, acultural, ahistorical hierarchy of form.²¹⁷ It is not the mirror image itself that is problematic, but rather the fact that Lacan envisions the mirror to reflect the image of only one ideal form, that is, the image of the Phallus. Irigaray stresses that without a mirror that reflects an image of woman’s identity, self-recognition (and even mis-recognition) cannot be achieved by women.²¹⁸

To contest these abstractions and to propose a different way of thinking about woman, Irigaray suggests refashioning the dialectic. Irigaray stresses that we must: “constantly work on a dialectic between subjectivity and objectivity. Patriarchal civilization, apart from our own relationship with the natural world, has put us in the position of objects; we must learn to become subjects capable of speech.”²¹⁹ As will be seen, this entails a change in the way nature or otherness is to be conceived.

In order to achieve this, Irigaray proposes rethinking the dialectic on the level of self and other within the subject, thus rethinking woman’s relation to ‘nature,’ that is, corporeality. This stresses the need for a new dialectic for each sex thereby affording a Symbolic specific to their respective identities. The value in this lies in the possibility of putting the dialogue back into the dialectic that has been virtually lost since Hegel. The aim is to recreate a relation between the sexes, a dialogue between the sexes.

In reworking the dialectic of self and other, Irigaray seeks to place the dialectic within a gendered normative framework which allows, as the title of her book *Je, tu, nous* suggests, for both subjective distinctness and for collective identities among and within internally diverse groups. Likewise, as the title of her book *I Love to You* suggests, Irigaray activates a linguistic interplay of reciprocal relations that respect interpersonal differences, without consuming or eradicating them. The importance of this way of thinking highlights that women must not forget that they are members of at least two groups: women and units of the contemporary world.

On the one hand, rethinking the dialectic within a gendered framework opens the possibility of creating an identity for women not based on masculine ideology; on the other hand, it makes evident the irreducibility of the sexes. Together, these indicate a possibility wherein a single universal cannot be withstood and thus the possibility of an open dialectical relation between the sexes appears.

Irigaray's deconstructive work highlights how traditional Western dialectical thought has reduced woman to the position of the Other. She also argues it has appropriated 'nature' (or the body as part of nature) and constructed it for its own purpose. In the Hegelian dialectic, woman remains part of nature. As seen, I maintain the Hegelian dialectic does this because nature is viewed as a unity.

In the Lacanian dialectic, woman is in the position of the Other or the Object. I maintain that Irigaray exposes in Lacan an aspect of the Hegelian dialectic, that is, a notion of the unity of nature, or the idea that otherness is undifferentiated. Irigaray returns to the self/other relation and examines the cluster concepts of nature, negativity and otherness.

These cluster concepts are descriptive of the feminine within Hegelian and Lacanian dialectics. However, something important must be highlighted in these relations: this occurs because the dialectic that operates on binary oppositions is forged in a history that is already patriarchal. Indeed, if a culture is patriarchal, then logically subjectivity, culture, and self are masculine, while nature, and otherness are feminine. It is precisely for this reason that a return to the idea of corporeality as part of 'nature', and otherness is necessary. As outlined in the chapter on Hegel, Irigaray invokes the idea that nature is not singular; it is always two: male and female. This implies that the Lacanian dialectic, with its binary opposition of self and other, fails to recognize that there would likewise have to be two subjects: male and female, with their respective relation to their own otherness. Thinking through the Lacanian dialectic, I believe that Irigaray proposes the image of the lips to undo the myth of a unity of nature. The image is intended to demonstrate that difference already exists in the material. The implication is that the dialectic, if it is to be useful, must respect and be developed upon a notion of the pre-given that is not undifferentiated. I will return to this idea in the final chapter to discuss how the image in Irigaray's theorizing is different from Lacan's sign and the symbol. Before developing this idea, however, it is useful to return to the idea of desire in Lacanian theory, and demonstrate that my interpretation of the lips as a turn to, and a change in the notion of nature in Lacanian theory may be supported by a different notion of desire.

The Lips: Reconceptualizing Otherness and Desire

My interpretation of Irigaray's image of the lips puts into question Lacan's notion of a unity of nature, or the notion of an undifferentiated Real. I maintain that such a change in

the notion of otherness will entail a difference in the function of desire. My interpretation of the image of the lips functions well with a innovative notion of desire that Kathryn Bond Stockton derives from Irigaray's image of the lips. I believe that this interpretation of desire is valuable as it will allow me to elaborate in the final chapter how the notion of desire in Lacanian theory is driven by the wish for some kind of unity. As I have mentioned, the image of the lips is intended to show that the idea of a unity of nature is made impossible. Furthermore, the notion of desire in Lacanian theory is based on a flawed notion of nature. I will return to this in the final chapter to demonstrate in more detail how the image works in a different manner. For now, I will explore the different notion of desire can be derived from the image of the lips.

As mentioned previously, desire has an important involvement with the concept of the Other. The implication of the Other in the nature of desire links Lacan's concept of the Phallus to feminism. The Phallus is the signifier of desire and, as such, can be read imaginarily as well as symbolically. The imaginary reading, as Casey and Woody suggest, indicates a Hegelian desire in the Phallus, which designates the "transcendence of human need beyond organic need."²²⁰ The symbolic reading, as Ragland-Sullivan explains, exhibits sexuality as determined; here, the Phallus is a medium of exchange that constructs of man and woman two non-natural categories, which "play themselves out as a masquerade around reified myth and inexplicable desires."²²¹ Lacan's revision of Hegelian desire is of importance for feminism. As a result of his account of desire and its relation to the Phallus, Lacan suggests the following of woman's desire-for-recognition:

[. . .] in order to be the Phallus, the signifier of desire of the Other, reject an essential part of femininity, namely all her attributes in the masquerade. It is for that which

she is not that she is desired as well as loved. But she finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of him to whom she addresses her demand for love.²²²

Irigaray seeks to rewrite the phallic character of this central image of desire. She attempts to achieve this within her new gender specific dialectic. She tries to rework the imaginary and symbolic figures of desire.

This work takes the form of strong interference with grammatical structures, especially, as Juliet Maccannell suggests, “the expected male designation of the determinative ‘third person’ form.”²²³ It must be noted that the speaker is the articulator of a network of symbolic values but, significantly, it is also the articulator of an ‘I’ of discourse. As such, it is also the bearer of an essential lack. Refashioning the dialectic, as Irigaray proposes, is valuable because it suggests a different sex specific ‘I.’ This is important, because the Signifier requires links with other signifiers to produce its meaning. Even the most straightforward discourse causes the hearer to take up a fantasy position in relation to the empty speaker of discourse, that is, Lacan’s *Che vuoi*, or ‘what do you want’? Furthermore, discourse also incites one to take up a fantasy position to oneself in the articulation of the desire of the Other, or in Lacan’s words “[w]here do I fit into the signifying place established by the signifier?”²²⁴

Irigaray develops this in the lack implied by the lips. Bond Stockton explains that the lips also conjure a lack, a separation, which Irigaray calls “an unformable apartness.”²²⁵ Irigaray’s lips are in constant contact and yet they are not one and thus there is a space or a gap between the lips. Speaking of this lack within the image of the lips, in *This Sex*, Irigaray claims: “‘She’ is indefinitely other in herself.”²²⁶ In doing so, Irigaray emphasizes the negative within woman, a negative that is constitutive of subjectivity. This lack or

negativity within woman makes possible rethinking woman's identity within a different Symbolic. This is afforded by two implications of this lack. The first manner in which Irigaray rethinks woman's identity lies in her re-conceptualization of desire as pleasure that takes place between the sexes. The second way in which Irigaray rethinks the possibility of woman's identity rests in the reconceptualization of lack within the sexed body. Both conceptions of lack provided by Irigaray's image of the lips intend to forward the possibility of a new Symbolic wherein woman is not the negative or the 'hole' in the process of symbolization.

The first implication of the lack conjured by the lips is described by Irigaray when she stresses that this lack or otherness allows 'woman' to constantly caress herself. By emphasizing the space between the lips, Irigaray seeks to re-interpret Lacan's notion of desire. By embracing lack between the lips, Bond Stockton explains that an alternate logic of loss is intimated by this image, namely "(auto)erotic pleasure."²²⁷ This alternate logic may be seen in Irigaray's image of the lips that is a figure for a touch mirroring a touch. She writes "[t]hus within herself, she is already two – but not divisible into one(s) – that caress each other."²²⁸ Bond Stockton clarifies this as "an identification that enjoys its own splitting, a failure to fuse that enjoys impossibility. In this, Irigaray reinterprets Lacan's notion of desire."²²⁹ Against Lacan's tragic notion of desire, Irigaray offers a different orientation toward lack as Bond Stockton explains, "an orientation to lack that makes desire its own kind of pleasure."²³⁰

Irigaray designates this new kind of female pleasure as *jouissance* (which Lacan termed as a sexual pleasure that exceeds phallic). The image of the lips conjures the notion

of apartness and allows Irigaray to put a new face on Lacan's notion of desire. In Irigaray's image of the lips, desire becomes not wholly other desire, but rather a different orientation toward lack that turns desire into pleasure. It is important to stress that Irigaray views this female pleasure as not limited to a single organ or object.

Irigaray also suggests that this pleasure, which arises around the lack that causes desire, plays a role between desiring bodies. Irigaray thus relocates lack between bodies as she writes:

Kiss me. Two lips kissing two lips: openness is ours again. Our 'world.' And the passage from the inside out, from the outside in, the passage between us is limitless. . . Are we unsatisfied? Yes, if that means we are never finished. If our pleasure consists in moving, being moved endlessly. . ."²³¹

In positioning a lack between desiring bodies, 'woman' no longer has to function as the lack within the symbolic process. By placing the lack between bodies, Irigaray opens holes between bodies and thus 'woman' ceases to be the lack, or the "hole-envelope" Lacanian theory designates her.

The second manner in which desire is different in this account is that the lack within the image of the lips functions at the level of the body. Irigaray argues that the negativity within the individual afforded by the sexed body ensures that 'woman' need not function as the 'hole' or the lack within the symbolizing process. The negative plays an important role in Irigaray's theory. She writes:

[if] I have insisted on negatives: *not, nor, without*[. . .] it has been to remind you, to remind us, that we only touch each other naked. And that, to find ourselves once again in that state, we have a lot to take off. So many representations, so many appearances separate us from each other.²³²

These appearances are the idea that one sex can be used as the negative of the other. Against the abstractions in Lacanian dialectics, Irigaray's lips indicate the lack or negativity already existing within woman. In her image of the two lips, Irigaray firstly stresses how sexual difference ensures that the sexes are irreducibly different. More than this, the lips that invoke a lack within woman indicate a negativity already existing in 'woman'. As such the female cannot be, in Lacanian terms, the 'other', the 'object' the body or the Real for man. As sexed subject, the female has its own relation to the 'other', the 'object', and the Real through her own bodily existence.

Furthermore, by stressing difference as existing in the notion of nature of otherness, Irigaray looks forward to a time and a culture wherein the masculine no longer uses the feminine to perform this task for all of humanity. Thus, the masculine must develop a new notion of its subjectivity with its own relation toward its own otherness, its own bodily object. This parallels the idea of negativity discussed in the chapter on Hegel. As discussed previously, Irigaray argues that Hegel failed to note that nature is always two: male and female, and that negativity always already exists in nature. As a result, the male and the female both have their own relation to nature, their own relation to negativity. For the same reason, Irigaray argues against Lacan. Due to men's and women's sexual specificity, each sex has a relation to objectivity through their bodily existence. In refashioning the dialectic, Irigaray demonstrates that the abstractions in Lacan's dialectic are achieved only through a lack of recognition of the sex-specific difference in corporeality. By invoking the image of the lips, Irigaray proposes a different way to think about nature and otherness. It permits her to rethink the dialectic within a gender-specific

framework. This, in turn, allows us to argue that it is the responsibility of each sexed subject to negotiate its relation to the Other, the 'other', the body, the Real, insofar as these are forms of objects. Irigaray makes this clear in her essay "The bodily encounter with the mother" when she discusses women and the responsibility of negotiating our relationship to the body. She writes that:

It is important for us to guard and keep our bodies and at the same time make them emerge from silence and subjugation. Historically, we are the guardians of the flesh; we do not have to abandon that guardianship, but to identify it as ours by inviting men not to make us 'their' bodies, guarantors of their bodies.²³³

Creating the space in which woman as a sexed subject can be symbolized implies that all forms of otherness cannot be the responsibility of the female while the masculine alone enjoys subjectivity. Each sex must develop its own subjectivity and each sex has its own otherness within it because of its bodily existence.

The image of the lips, therefore, much like the image of blood and the couple is intended to undo the Hegelian notion of a unity of nature that is retained in Lacanian theory. The image of the lips is the means by which Irigaray reminds us that the theorization of the subject must take into account how we think about nature and otherness. The image thus provides a different way to conceive of otherness insofar as it emphasizes the non-unity of nature, or the two-ness of the sexes as already there in the pre-given.

NOTES

¹ Luce Irigaray "The Poverty of Psychoanalysis," trans. David Macey and Margaret Whitford, *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1991) 79-104.

² See Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) 86-105.

³ Sherry Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics: Freud's French Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, Inc Publishers, 1978) 180-181.

⁴ Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics* 181.

⁵ Edward S. Casey, and J Melvin Woody, "Hegel, Heidegger, Lacan: The Dialectic of Desire," *Interpreting Lacan*, eds. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983) 75-112; 76.

⁶ Casey and Woody, "Hegel, Heidegger, Lacan" 77.

⁷ Casey and Woody, "Hegel, Heidegger, Lacan" 78-80.

⁸ Wilfried Ver Eecke, "Hegel as Lacan's Source of Necessity in Psychoanalytic Theory," *Interpreting Lacan*, eds. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983) 113-138; 121

⁹ Casey and Woody, "Hegel, Heidegger, Lacan" 79.

¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977) 26.

¹¹ Casey and Woody, "Hegel, Heidegger, Lacan" 79.

¹² Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, trans. Barbara Bray (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1977) 104.

¹³ Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan* 105.

¹⁴ Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan* 106.

¹⁵ Casey and Woody, "Hegel, Heidegger, Lacan" 77.

¹⁶ Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," *Écrits* 6.

¹⁷ Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," *Écrits* 6.

¹⁸ Casey and Woody, "Hegel, Heidegger, Lacan" 77.

¹⁹ See Henri Wallon, *Les Origines du caractère chez l'enfant* (Paris: Boivin, 1934) 190-207.

²⁰ Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan* 111.

²¹ Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan* 111.

- ²² Lacan, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," *Écrits* 26.
- ²³ Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan* 111.
- ²⁴ Cathryn Vasseleu, "The Face Before the Mirror-Stage," *Hypatia*, 6. 3 (1991): 140-155; 142.
- ²⁵ Jacques Lacan, "The Symbolic Order," *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book I*, trans. John Forrester, ed. Jacques Alain Miller (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991) 220-233.
- ²⁶ Wilfried Ver Eecke, "Hegel as Lacan's Source" 115-117.
- ²⁷ Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," *Écrits* 1.
- ²⁸ L. Harrison Matthews, "Visual Stimulation and Ovulation in Pigeons," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, Series B*, 126 (1938-1939): 557-560.
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CHAPTER FOUR

Irigaray's Philosophy of Nature

In this thesis, I argue that Irigaray's use of images is her way of rethinking the notion of nature. I maintain that this interpretation of her work is best understood when Irigaray's philosophy of sexual difference is seen as a philosophy of sexed nature. In other words, I maintain that Irigaray's philosophy may be better understood when she is viewed as a philosopher of nature. This is important because Irigaray, who is trained in the dialectic method, knows that the notions of nature and the subject are intimately linked. Irigaray's questioning of the notion of nature thus implies that Irigaray approaches the problem with, and the solution to woman's identity through a resolution of the problem of the object. I thus analyze how Irigaray engages with the problem of how the object is conceived by means of how the notion of nature is conceived. In the previous chapters I have suggested Irigaray's use of images, that is, her use of the image of blood, the couple and the two lips, is her manner of rethinking the notion of nature.

In this chapter, I will briefly mention how my interpretation is different from previous engagements with Irigaray. I will then show how Irigaray employs the images to address the problem of unitary nature in Hegelian thought, and in Marxist and Lacanian thought insofar as they have retained an aspect of Hegelianism. I then argue that the problematic notion of nature in Hegel, Marx, and Lacan is tied to their use of the Concept, labor and the sign, respectively. I maintain that Irigaray's use of images is a calculated intervention into discussions of representation, and thus a manner in which she tries to change the way we think about the notion of nature.

From Subject to Nature

Many interpretations of Irigaray's work focus on reading her as a philosopher of sex and/or gender. The sex/gender divide is a distinction that has been valuable in articulating both the need for and the possibility of social, political and economic change. The divide between sex and gender more or less demarcates the world along the nature/culture divide. This has been a useful distinction when analyzing how notions of men and women are developed. It has been valuable in thinking about further differences, such as the opposition between biology and history. According to this distinction, sex, nature and biology line up on one side, while gender is viewed as socially constructed and lines up on the other side of the divide. The sex/gender split carries with it several implications that have been a source of debate in various disciplines. Therefore, according to the distinction, sex refers to a person's fixed biological identity. In a sense, it is an unchanging empirical and ontological reference to the body. Gender, however, is socially constructed. It is produced through a process of learning informed by social and cultural expectations and values. The sex/gender distinction has been a source of feminist debate for many years. It is not important for my purpose to re-examine the pros and cons of feminists endorsing either side of the debate. There remain important socio-economic and political purposes for retaining the distinction between sex and gender. The distinction between sex and gender is, however, sometimes oversimplified. More recent theoretical analysis suggests that it is not very constructive to view the sex/gender divide too rigidly.¹ On the one hand, the categories of sex and nature are sometimes treated as if they were unchanging. It has been argued, however, that notions of sex and nature are not ahistorical. On the other hand,

arguments have been made to the effect that it is not productive to ignore sex and concentrate solely on gender and thus entirely on social and cultural roles.

Although Irigaray's first readers have tended to interpret her as a philosopher of sex, with the change in how the distinction between sex and gender is viewed, Irigaray has often been seen as doing a bit of both. On one level, she has been interpreted as arguing that there is a difference between the sexes and this is more or less 'given'. Whitford, for example, proposes an interpretation of Irigaray as a philosopher of sexual difference. Readers such as Chanter, however, note that Irigaray tends to move beyond the traditional sex/gender divide and thus also provides a critical analysis of gender as a social construction of sexual difference.

The general consensus among the readers of Irigaray is that she is critical of the erasures of the feminine in the history of philosophy. Their interpretations differ somewhat from one another insofar as some argue that Irigaray is providing a deconstructive account of masculine theory or a constructive account to rethink female agency against patriarchal thought. Although there are differences in their accounts, these readers tend to interpret Irigaray as a philosopher of sex and/or gender.

I argue, however, that something new and different may be learned from Irigaray's writing if she is interpreted as a philosopher of nature. This is the idea that the images in Irigaray's work are a way of exposing the problematic notion of nature in Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian thought. They are also intended to provide a different way to think about nature. My interpretation of Irigaray's use of images is dependent upon understanding how Irigaray refashions the dialectic. Her dialectic is a negative dialectic

that functions on the premise that nature is not singular, it is sexed. To this end, I argue that Irigaray is quite different from many feminist philosophers in that she sees the need to keep the sexing of nature in the foreground. In other words, while Irigaray seems to agree with the theoretical value of theories on sex and on gender, I maintain that she appears to want to take this one step further. More precisely, for Irigaray, the role of the philosopher is not just the deconstruction of the social construction of gender, but to oppose it with a sexed symbolization of sexed nature. The aim is to keep the essential two-ness of nature alive in opposition to any dreams of unitary nature, and unitary abstract thought.

The images that appear in her writings, such as blood, the couple, and the lips may be interpreted as a way of questioning the notion of nature. The importance of this kind of inquiry may be seen in a larger picture when thinking of the relation between subject and object, self and other, culture and nature. Since Irigaray is trained in the dialectical method, reading the images as an analysis of how nature is to be viewed sheds light on the notion of the subject. The images of blood, the couple and the lips are all ways in which Irigaray talks about the notion of woman. On the one hand, the manner in which Irigaray speaks about these images highlights the limitations gender imposes on Hegel, Marx, and Lacan. On the other hand, the images suggest a different way to think about nature and thus opens the possibility of a different way of thinking about woman and the subject. This is a powerful means of questioning the theoretical basis of Hegel, Marx and Lacan's conception of nature. Importantly, with the dialectical relation between self and other, Irigaray's analysis of the notion of nature also becomes a compelling way to question the notion of

the subject proposed by some of the most influential figures who have shaped contemporary thought.

Each chapter began with an analysis of the dialectic of Hegel, Marx, and Lacan, respectively. These thinkers have been monumental in the development of contemporary philosophical thought. I show that Hegel, Marx and Lacan are three important authors with whom Irigaray has been in dialogue. Irigaray accepts and builds upon aspects of each of these thinkers. For example, Irigaray acknowledges the importance of Hegel's dialectic insofar as identity cannot be thought without otherness. From Marx, Irigaray employs the problem of general equivalence to demonstrate how women are emarginated in patriarchal society. From Lacanian theory, Irigaray accepts and builds upon the notion of the split subject.

Irigaray, though indebted to and employing much of the theories proposed by Hegel, Marx and Lacan, seeks to build upon them. Irigaray does this as a result of her view that these three authors develop a deficient form of universality. Their notions of universality do not allow for a conception of a female subject. I maintain that Irigaray arrives at this conclusion and offers a solution to it. My interpretation of Irigaray's use of images suggests that the problem and solution to the deficient form of universality lies in how the notion of nature is viewed. It is through her use of the images of blood, the couple, and the lips that Irigaray both tests the limits of Hegel, Marx and Lacan's notion of nature and provides a different view of nature.

Hegel, Marx, and to some degree Lacan as well, treat nature as if it were a whole. Each thinker views the human condition as divided from the wholeness of nature. As

discussed in the chapters on Hegel and Lacan, desire plays an important role in understanding their view of nature. In Hegelian and Lacanian theory, desire is that which drives us to attempt to attain wholeness. A similar theoretical notion is at the basis of Marxist theory. In Marx's account, labor has the ability to transform nature into use-values that reflect the subject's desire. Furthermore, through labor, nature is transformed from alien to ally and man's original unity with nature is mediated and controlled. Underlying Marx's account of labor is the notion of an original unity out of which difference is produced.

Irigaray's dialectic, however, is a negative dialectic. She does not believe that wholeness can be attained. Irigaray differs from Hegel, Marx and Lacan in her view that nature is not whole. More precisely, she maintains that it is sexed. This leads to a fundamental difference between Irigaray and Hegel, Marx and Lacan. Hegel, Marx and Lacan view nature as female and desire as male. For each theorist there is the underlying drive for sublation, or universality, or some form of union. In this case, where philosophy speaks a masculine discourse, nature is viewed as feminine. One could argue that if philosophical discourse were feminine, then nature would be masculine. This, however, is not what Irigaray proposes. Indeed, Irigaray has often claimed, for example, that *parler femme*, is above all not to speak the universal. This may be interpreted in various ways, but I believe that she is suggesting that language must respect the two-ness of sexed nature. In her essay "The bodily encounter with the mother" she explains that "[w]e have to discover a language [*langage*] which does not replace the bodily encounter, as paternal language [*langue*] attempts to do, but which can go along with it, words which do not bar the

corporeal, but speak the corporeal.”² Irigaray thus hopes to allow for a split and sexed discourse that would preserve the split and sexing of nature. It is this difference that leads to her critique of the problematic notion of nature inherent in Hegel, Marx and Lacan and to her proposal of a sexed nature.

Existing analyses of Irigarayan theory build the framework for my examination of the images Irigaray employs. There has been a great deal written on each of these images, most notably regarding the image of the two lips. Although there have been various interpretations of the images Irigaray employs, most interpretations suggest that Irigaray is attempting to dismantle the myth of woman’s identity under patriarchy, and/or rethink and reconstruct woman’s identity. Contrary to many interpretations, I maintain that these images, and thus the manner in which Irigaray thinks about the notion of woman, and woman’s difference, are not only deconstructive and not quite constructive. Rather, I suggest that these images allow her to rethink the way in which we conceive nature or otherness. The images are not quite constructive because Irigaray is not constructing specific identity for woman. Rather, the images suggest that the idea of nature must be rethought. Importantly, a different notion of nature implies a different notion of the subject. What this conception of the subject is to be, however, is not reconstructed by Irigaray. Instead, it is given an opportunity to develop via a different manner of thinking. This different manner of thinking about nature is really at the basis of a very different way of thinking dialectically

While employing valuable feminist interpretation and critique of Irigaray, I also highlight what I view as a different interpretation of her methodology. Through an analysis

of the images of blood, the couple, and the lips, I offer a different understanding of her work. I maintain that these images are Irigaray's way of rethinking a cluster of concepts: the body, the object, and otherness. In a sense, these are all ways in which she returns to the idea of nature. Significantly, these concepts are all dialectically opposed to the subject. I maintain that Irigaray proposes these images in order to change the way we think about nature. The result is the possibility of changing the way we conceive the subject, and ultimately paving the way to changing the notion of the patriarchal masculine subject that has limited woman's identity. In other words, since Irigaray's philosophy is a philosophy not just of woman but also of nature, it is thus also aimed at the male subject.

It will be helpful to revisit each of the images of blood, the couple, and the lips. An analysis of these images makes clear that Irigaray is firstly proposing that the notion of nature employed by Hegel, Marx and Lacan is problematic insofar as it only allows for a limited or exclusive notion of the subject or, more precisely, the subject gendered male. Secondly, the images Irigaray employs allows us to rethink the notion of nature in such a way that may avoid the kind of abstractions that have plagued Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian thought. In the process, Irigaray repeats the symbolizing work of these thinkers, but she does so in a way that tries to return the universal to the corporeal. Finally, the manner in which she employs the images, as seen in her engagement with Hegel, Marx and Lacan, underscores her use of a plurality of methods to try to forge a way of thinking about nature as sexed.

Blood, The Lips and The Couple: Rethinking Nature

Previous interpretations of Irigaray's employment of the image of blood and the lips, as well as her notion of the couple, have tended to focus on the deconstructive or constructive power they provide when addressing woman's identity. While such interpretations are in part Irigaray's project, I maintain that the images suggest something more fundamental in Irigaray's writings. In the sections below, I will argue how the images are employed to return to the notion of nature, and in this sense temporarily away from the notion of the subject. The aim is to demonstrate that Irigaray's images are a different means of changing the constitution of the subject. More precisely, the images are Irigaray's method of changing the way in which the idea of nature as otherness or the object is viewed. Such a fundamental change in thinking opens the possibility for the development of not just a different conception of woman's subjectivity, but primarily a different conception of the subject, and thus the male subject as well.

Irigaray has stated repeatedly that the most important issue of our time is the question of sexual difference. Through the following analysis of her use of images, I maintain that Irigaray addresses this fundamentally important issue by speaking about how the notion of nature has been conceived traditionally, and how she envisions it should be conceived in order to allow for the development of the subject that does not repress the difference between the sexes.

Blood: Rethinking Nature in Hegel

In this section, I will explain how Irigaray's image of blood is her way of rethinking the notion of nature in Hegelian thought. The image functions on several levels. First, it demonstrates that the idea of a negation of negation is not possible. Secondly, it undoes the notion of nature as a singular entity. Finally, closely related to the previous two, the image returns to nature what has been lost in masculine theory, namely, a recognition and respect for what is already given: the two sexes that exist together as part of nature. At the basis of Irigaray's different view of nature is a fundamentally different way of thinking dialectically.

The chapter on Hegel is built on previous interpretations of Irigaray's engagement with Hegel, such as those written by Whitford, O'Brien and Chanter, Battersby, and Schwab. These interpretations dealt with the problem of woman in patriarchal society through an analysis of Hegel's master-slave dialectic. These analyses demonstrate that woman is always the other. I also build on further analyses of the problem surrounding the master-slave relation, such as that of Braidotti. Braidotti, for example, argues that woman's otherness is something that will always remain unrepresentable within the Hegelian framework. In the chapter on Hegel, I elaborate on other writers, like Schwab, who argue that Irigaray's notion of red blood established negativity at the core of existence, and likewise that the notion that one is sexed limits all individuals *vis-à-vis* others. Many feminists view the image of red blood as an attempt to construct a feminine specific identity. Although, as outlined in the first chapter where I state that the image of blood has been interpreted as a method of thinking female specificity or difference, or even as a tool to re-symbolize woman, I argue that it is not quite and yet more than this.

My interpretation suggests that Irigaray's image of blood may be read as Irigaray's manner of both showing the limits gender imposes on the Hegelian dialectic and proposing an alternative way to think about nature and ultimately the subject. The basis for this is my interpretation of Irigaray's image of blood. I maintain that it is intended to question the idea of the singularity of nature and the theorizing that gives rise to such an idea. The thrust behind this interpretation is a proposal of a different way of thinking about the subject's relation to nature. It is intended to pry apart the exclusive association of woman with nature and man with culture or the subject.

I maintain that Irigaray's notion of red blood is a tool for rethinking the notion of nature. An understanding of the function of the image is dependent upon an understanding of how Irigaray refashions the dialectic. Through an analysis of Irigaray's image of blood, it becomes clear that she is thinking in a way similar to Adorno. More precisely, Irigaray appears to suggest that the dialectical relation between subject and object should be considered similar to Adorno's notion of the Negative Dialectic. The similarity with Adorno is seen in her argument that there is no possibility of a Hegelian *Aufhebung*. This, of course, is also influenced by Irigaray's reading of Hegel after Lacan, since the notion of the split subject suggests that the body cannot be overcome in thought. In addition to this, however, Irigaray's image of blood suggests what Adorno thought was so important, namely, the realization that notions of subject and object change together. The image of blood is also Irigaray's attempt to rescue difference from the abstractions inherent to Hegelian thought. Irigaray proposes this in a novel way, she maintains that nature is not only differentiated, it is sexed.

As discussed earlier, Irigaray's essay "The Eternal Irony of the Community" in *Speculum* begins with an epigraph from Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* in which Hegel discusses the effusion of blood in man, and in woman's menstrual cycle. Irigaray makes it clear that Hegel views the difference between the sexes as essential in the stages of becoming human. In discussing Hegel's treatment of Antigone, and his account of the dialectical development of Spirit, Irigaray often notes how woman stands for the essential negativity from which Spirit returns. For example, Irigaray expands upon Hegel's own words, when she writes that: "[j]ust as man must strive to make this negativeness into an ethical action by sacrificing his life for the city [. . .] so woman must be that external and effective mediation that reconciles the dead man within himself *by taking upon herself the operation of destruction* that the becoming of mind cannot manage without. [Irigaray's emphasis.]"³ In this section of *Speculum* and elsewhere, she questions the logic of Hegel's dialectic that places the male and the female as two sexes that stand in opposition to one another. Furthermore, she returns to this issue in her book *Sexes and Genealogies*, where she argues that the Hegelian dialectic reduces the two sexes to a unity, a unity that represents only the male. For example, she writes: "[g]ender becomes the human race, human nature, etc., as defined from within patriarchal culture."⁴ The result is a schism at the core of the nature/spirit relation that condemns the evolution of Spirit to a violent abstraction. Irigaray explains that "[t]he individual is already *abstract* [. . .]" and furthermore "[t]he spirit of the race has for centuries in fact been the spirit of the race of men [. . .] . [Irigaray's emphasis.]"⁵

In addition to understanding that male and female are positioned as opposites and the idea that Spirit is in fact masculine, it is also important to note in Hegelian theory that nature is viewed as a unity out of which Spirit develops by opposition. Indeed, central to understanding the important role that the image of blood plays in Irigaray is her opposition to Hegel's notion of nature. In Hegel's account, nature is viewed as a whole out of which the masculine subject is carved. As seen, in Hegelian theory the subject is divided from the wholeness of nature and desire is that what makes us attempt to attain sublation. In *I Love to You*, Irigaray returns to the problems inherent to the Hegelian dialectic and switches her focus from the subject to the object. More precisely, she turns her focus to the idea of nature. As discussed in the chapter on Hegel, Irigaray is concerned with undoing the myth of a singular nature. It is worth restating what Irigaray claims, that is, that "speculation about overcoming the natural in the universal forgets that nature is not *one* [. . .]. [Irigaray's emphasis.]"⁶ She stresses that "[t]here is no 'Nature' as a singular identity [. . .]."⁷

In her book *To Be Two*, in a chapter entitled "She Before the King," Irigaray returns to the figure of Antigone as treated in Hegelian thought. She stresses the problem that arises from Hegel's notion of nature and the violence that results from the development of Spirit. Irigaray writes: "By imposing upon nature an inappropriate order, this power ruins it. The human being, enslaved to drives and passions, loses the measure of himself as a whole individual in relationship with nature, the other, others."⁸

The violence that thought imposes on the natural, however, has the further implication of affecting the subject. In speaking about Hegel and the role of the family in the development of Spirit, Irigaray explains that: "[t]he relation to the natural is refolded

into the family, into the home, but these are under the domination of the father – who is their head – and they are also at the service of the State.”⁹ In Hegel’s development of Spirit, he is working with a peculiar notion of nature. More precisely, what is termed as natural immediacy is, in fact, already distanced from the natural. In Hegelian theory, we find the idea that the love between man and woman is ‘natural’, and that reproduction is a duty imposed by the State in the name of nature.

I maintain that Irigaray proposes the image of blood to build on the Hegelian dialectic. As seen, Irigaray is critical of Hegel for his view that nature can be overcome in the work of thought and of the Concept. This aspect of her theory demonstrates that she believes the dialectic should be a negative dialectic, one in which otherness cannot be overcome in Concepts. This, however, is only part of what Irigaray attempts to demonstrate with her image of blood. Irigaray’s image of blood suggests that Hegel’s notion of nature is problematic insofar as it is viewed as a whole. The notion of red blood and white blood is intended to suggest that nature is not a whole, it is split and sexed. By making a distinction between woman’s red blood and man’s white blood, Irigaray tries to keep the sexing of nature alive.

In order to fully appreciate the implications of the division Irigaray places in nature with the image of blood, it is useful to remain faithful to Irigaray’s reading of Hegel as one that is informed by Lacanian analysis. I maintain that Irigaray’s method leads her to re-think the category of the imaginary through her innovative use of the image of blood. As discussed in the Chapter on Lacan, the imaginary was the child’s first recognition that its own image contains a split between its Self or Being and its representation. Irigaray uses

the image of blood to show that Self and Being are themselves split and sexed, because nature is sexed.

Hegel's universalism was intended to reclaim the lost unity of nature by establishing the unity of thought. According to Irigaray, nature itself works contrary to this. The way I interpret Irigaray's image of blood suggests that she is changing the way in which we think about the nature. Irigaray's image of blood implies that nature is both male and female. This is significant because the way we think about the subject is tied to the way we think about the nature. Thus, by changing the manner in which nature is to be conceived, Irigaray is laying the groundwork for a different conception of woman. This leaves open the possibility for a different subjective identity. What exactly this may be is still to be determined, or perhaps always yet to be determined. It is a process that stays in motion, in constant negotiation with the notion of nature or otherness.

The aim of the image is to create the possibility of rethinking the way in which dialectical thought is to function as well as to how nature is to be conceived. This interpretation of Irigaray's image of blood demonstrates that a Hegelian synthesis of opposites is impossible. In addition to this, Irigaray is trying to keep the sexing of nature in place. The image suggests that, contrary to traditional patriarchal thought, where culture lines up with the male and nature with the female, both male and female are embedded in nature. In other words, Irigaray is trying to keep the dialectic in motion while at the same time breaking the dialectic between female and male that is mapped respectively onto the nature/culture divide. What is particular about Irigaray's image of blood is that it demonstrates that the dialectic can be a useful tool for thinking about nature only if it is a

sexed dialectic. More precisely, the dialectic, according to Irigaray, should make visible the fact that symbolization and images always correspond to a nature that is split in two by the sexes. The image of blood therefore makes the strong argument that the spiritualization of nature must take into account a nature that is not only differentiated, but also at least both male and female.

The Lips: Rethinking Nature in Lacan

In the following section, I will address the issue of how the image of the lips functions in a similar manner to build on Lacanian theory just as the image of blood operated in Irigaray's development on Hegelian theory. The image of the lips, much like that of blood, is Irigaray's method to return to the notion of nature, through thinking of the body, or the body as part of the Real. The image implies, firstly, that the conception of otherness, or the Real as a unity from which man must distance himself, is deeply faulted. Secondly, the image suggests that, as a result Lacan's account of psychic development, is subject to similar problematic abstractions as Hegelian theory. Finally, the image of the lips, like the image of blood, is Irigaray's way return the sexed two-ness to nature.

The chapter on Lacan was built on important interpretations of Irigaray's critique of Lacan's mirror stage and the symbolic order. The consensus among reader's of Irigaray's engagement of Lacan suggest that she is critical of Lacan's theories because they are a-sexual. I also employ various interpretations of Irigaray's image of the lips. Although these interpretations are often contradictory, there is a certain consensus that the image of the lips is intended to be read as providing deconstructive and/or constructive analyses in response to Lacan's account of the mirror stage and its role in the formation of the

symbolic order. In order to ground my interpretation of the image of the lips as Irigaray's analysis of the notion of nature, I drew attention to two novel interpretations of the Real. These interpretations view the Real as the body and/or negativity. Such interpretations are valuable for understanding Irigaray's image. Finally, I have also highlighted existing interpretations of a different notion of desire that appears to arise from the notion of the lips. Of particular interest is Bond-Stockton's argument that the image of the lips in Irigaray's writing suggests a different kind of desire, one not driven by lack. This interpretation gives support to how I interpret Irigaray's image of the lips.

Similar to how I argued about the image of blood in Hegel, the various interpretations of Irigaray's image of the lips in her analysis of Lacan tend to focus on Irigaray as a theorist of sex and gender. It has been argued by various readers of Irigaray that the image of the two lips "makes visible" woman's sex or that it is a strong image used to counter the Phallus. Such interpretations are made on the basis of a need to develop a female subjective identity, one that is not defined by patriarchal theory. Importantly, although there are various interpretations of the image of the lips in Irigaray's writings, they do have something in common. These interpretations of Irigaray are based on a reading of her as a philosopher of sex and gender. Similar to my argumentation regarding the image of blood, I maintain that this is only part of understanding Irigaray. I maintain that her theory of sex and gender is in fact a theory of split nature. In this sense, the image of the lips, much like the image of blood must be read not as Irigaray's proposal of a subjective identity for women. Rather, I suggest that Irigaray is questioning the notion of nature or the body as part of the Real. My interpretation of the lips builds on and

complements some existing interpretations, because, since notions of subject and object change together in dialectical thought, the result is the possibility of rethinking the notion of the subject.

While most interpretations of Irigaray have focused on her development of a theory of sexual difference based on woman's difference, I believe something more can be learned by analyzing how Irigaray's return to the notion of nature sheds light on her philosophical method. An innovative way of doing this, as discussed in the chapter on Lacan, is to demonstrate that Irigaray's critique of Lacan is analogous to Lacan's critique of Hegel. As seen, in the same way that Marx exposes the problems inherent to abstraction in Hegelian dialectics, Irigaray exposes the problems inherent to Lacanian theory due to abstraction. In Lacan's theory, the problem of abstraction reveals itself in his inability to think sexual difference in a positive light. I illustrate that the basis of this is an aspect of Hegelianism that is retained in Lacan's theory.

As seen, in his critique of Hegel, Marx demonstrates that there is a logical unity that takes the place of real difference in the Hegelian account of the dialectic development of Spirit. In Hegelian theory, the universal replaces the particular and the eternal category replaces the historical concrete. In the end, Hegelian theory smuggles in the concrete as the embodiment of the universal. I argue that a better understanding of what Irigaray's image of the lips is intended to attain is achieved when realizing that Irigaray's criticism of Lacan works in a similar fashion to Marx's critique of Hegel. In other words, Irigaray's critique of the limits of Lacanian theory is analogous to Marx's critique of Hegel. Irigaray draws this analogy when she points out that in Lacan's account of the mirror stage he abstracts

only from the male body and then presents it forward as if it were universal. Through my analysis of Irigaray's critique of Lacan, it becomes evident that she is exposing Lacan for being too Hegelian.

The interesting thing underlying this analogy is the fact that it allows us to question why Lacan thinks he is able to achieve an apparently unproblematic abstraction. The answer to this questions lies in Lacan's account that does not view nature or the Real as sexed. In fact, in Lacanian theory the Real is viewed as undifferentiated. This is seen in Lacan's characterization of the Real as a plenum or a fullness. It is also seen in Lacan's account of desire and his view that the lack felt in the Symbolic is built on the illusion of the plenitude of the Real. Furthermore, Lacan's account of psychic development is based on the idea that there is an originary maternal/pre-Oedipal/preconsciousness that is negated in the movement of difference, but this difference is also the negation of an originary identity. In fact, in Lacanian theory there is the notion of an original unity in nature. Furthermore, desire is seen as that which drive us to attain wholeness.

It is precisely at this juncture that Irigaray deviates from Lacanian theory. I maintain that Irigaray employs the image of the lips to return to Lacan's notion of the Real. The image of the lips is Irigaray's way of speaking about the body, or more precisely the body as part of nature. Significantly, it is intended to make evident that nature is not a whole; it is split into two sexes. In her essay "When Our Lips Speak Together," Irigaray claims: "Without lips, there is no more 'us.' The unity, the truth, the propriety of words come from their lack of lips, their forgetting of lips."¹⁰ As seen, in Lacanian theory the subject is split due to the mediating properties of language. This split, according to Lacan,

cannot be overcome. While Irigaray agrees with Lacan, her image of the lips implies that there is still another split for which Lacan does not account. The subject is not just split along the lines suggested by Lacan. Rather, the image of the lips suggests that the split that runs through the subject is contingent on a further split that characterizes the sexed two-ness of nature. Irigaray explains that “[p]rior to any representation, we are two [. . .].”¹¹ To this end, Irigaray’s image of the lips can be seen as her proposal for rethinking our relation to nature. The need for rethinking our conception of nature is often stated in her more recent writings. For example, in her book *To Be Two*, Irigaray claims this is a necessity because “[. . .] masculine philosophy has always considered objectivity as a constructed reality, at times through auto-reflection, and never as given. As a result, masculine culture has generally ignored the objectivity which exists in the pre-given: the body, bodies [. . .].”¹²

I maintain that in proposing the image of the lips and thus trying to keep the sexing of nature alive, Irigaray creates the possibility wherein one sex cannot be used by the other for the development of the subject, or stand for the other of one sexed individual. Keeping the two-ness of nature in place sets limits on all individuals. In other words, if each sex can begin with an objectivity from within, the other of sexual difference remains outside and cannot be appropriated or objectified. Irigaray explains that “[t]he other of sexual difference is simultaneously contiguous to me and transcendent to me, subjectively and objectively: he is body and spirit, body and intention, inclination and freedom.”¹³

The image of the lips demonstrates that in the dialectical relation between self and other we must keep in mind that the subject is not simply split as Lacan had envisioned.

Irigaray's image suggests that the idea of nature, or Lacan's Real must be rethought in such a way that it keeps the difference of the sex alive in the pre-given. As discussed in the chapter on Lacan, there are many interpretations of the Real. The interpretations that are perhaps the closest to Irigaray's are the ideas that the Real is negativity or the body. The Real, as negativity or the body, stands as the other of the subject. Irigaray's image of the lips thus is intended to show that the body as part of the Real is already sexed, it is both male and female. Irigaray's image of the lips thus makes the strong case that theories on psychic development from the Real to the Imaginary to the Symbolic must account for a pre-given that is not only differentiated, but also at least both male and female.

My interpretation of Irigaray's image of the lips as Irigaray's way of putting into question Lacan's notion of the Real as undifferentiated functions well with Bond Stockton's interpretation of Irigaray's notion of desire.¹⁴ According to this interpretation, Irigaray's image of the lips implies a different notion of desire, one not driven by lack. She makes this suggestion on the basis of the 'openness' implied by the lips. This interpretation is in accordance with my interpretation of the lips as Irigaray's manner of changing the way we think about nature. I think a similar thing may be said on the basis that the image suggests that nature is not unitary. It also suggests that desire should not be driven by the desire for unity. In fact the image of the lips suggests further that the idea of unity is based on a false notion of nature.

The Couple: Rethinking Nature in Marx and Beyond

In this section, I will argue that Irigaray's image of the couple is yet another manner in which she addresses the problem of the conception of nature. In this case, the couple is

treated in addressing the notion of nature in Marx. Similar to how Irigaray builds on Hegelian and Lacanian theory by keeping the sexing of nature in place, Irigaray elaborates on Marxist theory by demonstrating that nature must be thought of as sexed. Analogously to the previous sections, I argue that Irigaray's image of the couple demonstrates an erroneous notion of a singular nature in Marxist thought. Such a conception of nature tends to repeat a difficulty at the core of Hegelian thought. The image is Irigaray's way of returning to nature a respect for what is given: the two-ness of the sexes.

As discussed earlier, Irigaray's relation to Marx is complex. On one level, Irigaray is clearly indebted to Marxist theory; on another, she remains critical of Marx. Her indebtedness is seen in how she employs Marxist theory to interrogate Lacan. In her essays "Women on the Market" and "Commodities Amongst Themselves," Irigaray's deviation from Marx is very subtle. It becomes more evident in her book *I Love to You*. In addressing Irigaray's essays on Marx, it is commonly argued that Irigaray is pointing to an isomorphism between capitalism and commodities and patriarchy and women. Irigaray's essays on Marx are usually read together with a Lacanian approach. As such, these interpretations view the importance in Irigaray's essays to be focused on the notion of exchange. It is generally argued that Irigaray attempts to deconstruct the notion of the symbolic order, the order that founds and regulates symbolic exchange. More precisely, Irigaray projects a Marxist theory of commodity production onto Levi-Strauss' understanding of the patriarchal exchange of women. In other words, the axis of class is projected onto that of sex. These existing analyses are very insightful and helpful for understanding what Irigaray attempts in these essays. I employ these existing analyses and

ask a further question. I ask: Why does the analogy work in the first place? The obvious answer is that there is a similar underlying logic between capitalism and patriarchy. This is only part of the answer. The other part has to do with the limits of Marx. This is something that is not addressed by existing analyses of Irigaray's treatment of Marx. This is the basis for my elaboration of Irigaray's inherent critique of Marx. The critique of Marx is not so clear in the two essays, however, as mentioned in the chapter on Marx, elements of it are present. As discussed, Irigaray's critique of Marx becomes a bit clearer in other writings, such as in *I Love To You*. I argue that the very fact that the analogy works underscores the limit of Marxist theory. This is the basis for my interpretation of Irigaray as a philosopher of nature.

The thrust of the chapter on Marx was to demonstrate firstly why Irigaray's analogy between women and commodities functions, and secondly to demonstrate that Marx's dialectic method is subject to pitfalls insofar as his attempt to reverse the function of general equivalency fails because he does not address the underlying logic of oppositions. As a result, Marx appears to fall back into similar abstractions for which he criticized Hegel. As outlined earlier, Irigaray's critique of Lacan parallels Marx's critique of Hegel. However, since Marx does not question the underlying oppositional structures, he does not address the inherent domination of thought. More precisely, Marx's theories also suffer from the problem of abstraction. The problem, as seen, is related to his notion of nature.

Marx sought to overthrow metaphysics by invoking a method of signification that was not paternal. He does this by appealing to matter. Marx's materialism is a strategy that challenges the logic of general equivalents but it does not put into question the

underlying logic. Marx's historical materialism was intended to reverse the logic of general equivalents. However, an analysis of his account of labor suggests that this materialist direction may simply be a reversal of the Hegelian dialectic that leaves the oppositional structures intact. It appears that Marx's materialism reinstates what the metaphysics of value and idea were supposed to eliminate in their development. The problem with this process is that the matter restored through materialism can also be possessed and subordinated.

In fact, Marx's account of labor gives rise to a notion of nature that is similar to the Hegelian unitary nature. As discussed, Marx builds on Hegel's concept of labor and develops it beyond the limits envisioned by Hegel. By treating production as the form of the struggle for recognition, Marx transforms the notion of production as the mode of human self-genesis. Similar to Hegel, Marx viewed human nature as defined and redefined through a struggle to surmount the otherness of their environment in order to make it an extension of the self. Thus, through this process of labor, Marx maintains that human identity is constructed. Moreover, according to Marx, labor is the force that works on nature to produce 'value.' Therefore, through labor, man is able to transform nature from a force against which he stands powerless to a resource he can control and appropriate. Indeed, in Marxist theory, primarily through the process of labor, whereby man interacts with nature to produce items for use, the human is constructed as a subject. The problem with Marx's account of labor is that it results from the domination of thought inherent to instrumental reason. As discussed, instrumental reason creates a 'nature' that is disinvested from itself and remade into something that serves human purpose. The

problems with the notion of nature created in Marxist thought is that it is viewed as an undifferentiated unity from which man must separate himself, and it is viewed as having value only when transformed through labor.

Marx does not sufficiently address the manner in which the sexed material is viewed in society. This is problematic because the social acts on the natural endowing it with limits and meaning. Since Marx does not address the potential problems underlying this, his theory reinstates what the metaphysics of value and idea were supposed to eliminate in their development. As seen, Irigaray is critical of the abstractions inherent to Hegel's dialectic. Moreover, she is likewise critical of Marx for not recognizing the abstractions that occur within his own dialectical method. In this sense, Marx still remains too Hegelian. Marx repeats the Hegelian problem of unitary nature because his account of labor treats nature as a whole. More precisely, within Marx's theory of labor is the patriarchal Hegelian notion that identity is achieved when man extracts himself from the original unity with nature.

The reason why Irigaray's analogy between women in patriarchy and commodities in capitalism appears to work is because the theoretical maneuvers involved in superimposing nature with the Imaginary and the Symbolic are similar to the steps that lead to a Lacanian theory of gender relations. Revealingly, these are the same steps employed in Marxist theory to derive culture from nature.

Irigaray's image of the couple functions to question the very possibility of a unity of nature. The image of the couple is intended to demonstrate that nature is not singular, it is always already at least both male and female. The image of the couple, much like the

image of blood and the lips, is thus intended to change the way nature is thought about and to remind us that when nature becomes too fixed by thought, it leads to dangerous abstractions and a limited and exclusionary notion of the subject. Irigaray's image of the couple thus makes the strong claim that materialist accounts must be cautious of how matter has been theoretically viewed, and can benefit from a notion of nature that is seen as already differentiated by the sexes.

Although the image of the couple was originally addressed in the chapter on Marx, it is an image that plays a pivotal role in Irigaray's theoretical analysis and thus is central to understanding her as a philosopher of nature. The image of the couple is crucial to Irigaray's thought because it is an image that really brings into play the notion of the two-ness of nature. It will be helpful to examine this image and the images of blood and the lips in more detail in order to understand how Irigaray's images function against the notion of the Concept in Hegelian theory, the notion of labor in Marxist thought, and the notion of the sign and the symbol in Lacanian theory.

Toward an Image of Nature: Blood, Lips, Couple

As seen, the images Irigaray employs are intended to demonstrate that the notion of nature in Hegelian, Lacanian and Marxist thought is flawed. This results in an exclusionary notion of the subject. In the following sections, I will address the question of why Irigaray employs the image as opposed to different approaches, such as the concept, labor, the sign or the symbol. In addition to this, I will also explore how the images function to address a problem in dialectic thought that tends to span across various disciplines. It is not my intention to analyze various disciplines, but rather to highlight how

a particular way of thinking about nature is at the core of thought and thus a problem that extends beyond the relation between men and women.

The Image: Maintaining Difference

In order to gain a better understanding of the function of the images in Irigarayan theory, it is important to clarify a difference between Irigaray's images and the Hegelian Concept, the Marxist account of labor, and the Lacanian sign or symbol. To put it another way, I am asking: Why does Irigaray propose images? The reasons relate to her wish to keep difference alive. The problem with Hegel's Concept, Marx's account of labor, as well as Lacan's sign and symbol have to do with the abstractions that result in the erasure of individual difference.

Irigaray's use of the images differs in an important respect from Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian thought. As discussed, all three writers to some extent develop their theoretical position from the idea of a unity of nature. Irigaray's images are intended to demonstrate that the idea of a unity of nature is false. For this reason, she employs the images to retain the sexed two-ness of nature. Her use of images functions in a unique way because they work differently from Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian thought. More precisely, these three thinkers employ either the Concept, labor or the sign and the symbol in their discussions of the representation of nature.

Irigaray does not follow Hegel in his employment of the Concept as a representation of nature. In Hegelian thought, the Concept is abstracted from nature. Yet, as highlighted above, his notion of nature is unitary and thus does not respect the two-ness of the sexes. Irigaray does not employ the notion of the Concept for similar reasons to Adorno. In

Adorno's account of the Negative Dialectic the Concept does violence to nature because it erases difference.

Irigaray does not trust the Marxist account of labor as an account of the mediation of man and nature. In Marx's theory, nature is treated as a whole, a unity from which man extracts himself. Irigaray views this move as problematic for reasons similar to the Hegelian account. More precisely, Irigaray suggests that Marx's account of labor is based on the domination of nature by thought.

Although Irigaray retains the notion of the split subject from Lacan, she does not follow Lacan in using the sign as the most suitable way to talk about nature. Irigaray views Lacan's sign as inappropriate because it is built on a problematic split between nature and its representation. The sign functions differently from Irigaray's image. In Saussure's linguistic model, it is implied that the sign introduces difference into nature. It thus appears that nature is conceived as rather homogeneous before the sign gets to work on it. This is implied in Saussure's chapter entitled "Nature of the Linguistic Sign" in his *Course in General Linguistics*. Saussure suggests that "[a] linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern."¹⁵ These two parts of the sign are commonly referred to as the 'signifier' and the 'signified'. One of the important principles about the linguistic sign is that the connection between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Saussure explains that this principle is in fact "the organizing principle for the whole of linguistics, considered as a science of language structure."¹⁶ This aspect is important for understanding the function of the sign in Lacanian theory as well. As discussed, Lacan offers an alternative to the reductionistic versions of Freudian

psychoanalysis. Part of this is based on Lacan's emphasis on linguistics. This was discussed in the section dedicated to Lacan's use of metonymy and metaphor as ways to join clusters of signifiers. It is by means of these that Lacan develops his view of the role of the signifier in psychical life.

Furthermore, Irigaray does not want to employ Lacan's symbol. The problem with Lacan's symbol is it that it is built on the idea of the Phallus as transcendental signifier. Both the sign and the symbol in Lacanian theory are developed from a notion of nature that does not respect its two-ness.

Instead of employing the Concept as in Hegelian thought, labor as in Marxist thought or the sign or the symbol as in Lacanian thought, Irigaray proposes the image as a means of rendering difference visible. Irigaray proposes an alternative structure of difference in the image. My interpretation of the function of the images in Irigaray's work suggests that she views difference as already inherent in nature and thus not merely a product of concepts, labor, signs or symbols.

Images of Difference: Plurality of Methods

The image of blood, the lips and the couple all function in Irigarayan theory to highlight the problematic notion of nature in Hegel, Marx and Lacan's thought and to propose a different way of thinking about nature. In this sense, all images function in a similar fashion. In this section, I will return to the image of the couple and expand on how this image comes to play a pivotal role in understanding her writings. Although previous interpretations of this image have often tended to be critical of the apparent underlying heterosexual model it suggests, I maintain that her use of this image implies something different. The notion of

the couple, or rather, Irigaray's manner of speaking about two sexes and the relation between women and men, is an issue that Irigaray focuses on more in her recent writings, such as *I Love Two You* and *To Be Two*. Indeed, as Irigaray explains, the former book is the beginning of the third stage of her thought, where she seeks to develop the conditions under which a relation between the sexes would be possible.¹⁷ In these writings, Irigaray indirectly invokes the image of the couple insofar as she speaks about the possibility of a relationship between the sexes. Through a further analysis of the image of the couple, I argue that the couple suggests the need for addressing the problem inherent to a particular kind of dialectical thought. The kind of dialectical thought is the kind developed in Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian theory where the idea of nature is viewed more or less as singular and where thought abstracts from the individual without respect for difference. The image of the couple demonstrates two important things in Irigaray's method. Firstly, the couple, as an image of duality, becomes an image in Irigaray's writings that suggests the need to respect individuality through a respect for the pre-given two-ness in sexed nature. Secondly, the manner in which Irigaray employs the image suggests a plurality of methods. In other words, it implies the need to employ various ways of thinking to both test the limits of existing theoretical thought and to develop a new way of thinking that respects the duality inherent to nature.

Although the image of the couple was originally dealt with in the chapter on Marx, it is really an image that functions to show the limits of a kind of thinking inherent to Hegel, Marx and Lacan, and proposes a different way of thinking. The image of the couple is a way to question the idea of nature inherent to these thinkers by showing that nature is

always more than the other of this or that subject. More precisely, the image suggests that nature is always more than simply the other of the male subject or the female subject, because it is sexed, it is always already two: male and female.

Through the image of the couple, Irigaray seeks a different way of thinking about nature. She maintains that it is necessary to think about culture in a way that respects the objectivity of human's sexuate being. This requires the recognition of two subjects of different genders. Irigaray envisions this as the way for the natural to become culture without leaving out half the human race. In other words, Irigaray proposes viewing the relation between man and woman as a tie of culture. The couple could represent a relation to otherness that is not based on domination and abstraction.

The image is not simply an elaboration on only Hegel or Lacan or Marx, but really a proposal for a different kind of dialectical thought, that is, one that respects sexed nature. Irigaray views the dialectic form of thinking exhibited in Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian thought as giving rise to a flawed notion of nature. Irigaray maintains that this form of thought goes against what is given in nature and as a result does violence to nature. She thus stresses that: "[t]he history constructed by man resembles a history of enduring violence, of appropriation, of domination, and not of contribution to what is."¹⁸ Indeed, in speaking about how masculine theory subjects the world to man's perspective, Irigaray writes how the notion of nature becomes constructed. She claims that the things man calls the world become for him "[. . .] a type of second nature ignorant of naturalness or of the natural."¹⁹ Irigaray's images thus imply that the dialectic can be a useful tool for thinking

about nature as long as it is a sexed dialectic. In other words, the dialectic must be a negative dialectic that begins with and respects the difference given in nature.

In engaging with Hegel, Marx and Lacan on the issue of the notion of nature, Irigaray appears to be trying to develop a dialogue or a plurality of methods. The image of the couple really shows that our idea of nature has to be informed by various ways of thinking. In Irigaray's development on the limits of Hegelian, Marxist, and Lacanian thought, it becomes evident that each of these methods tends to carve up the world, and comes to theoretical conclusions by means of abstraction. Irigaray is proposing a different way of thinking about the relation between self and other, nature and culture, through a re-thinking of the notion of nature. In addition to this, there is also a warning not to remain tied to only one method of inquiry. Different disciplines prove valuable in testing the limits of others. As seen in the chapter on Hegel, Marx and Lacan are important in testing the limits of Hegel. Similarly, Marxist theory can be shown to have limits thanks to Lacanian theory. Finally, Lacanian theory can also be shown to have limits through insights from analysis of Hegelianism and Marxist theory. Irigaray makes a very interesting point in this regard when she writes about how different branches of science attempt to unveil the mysteries of the earth. She explains that "the earth's fertility remains a sealed mystery and cultivating it signifies, in a certain sense, forcing the mystery to appear."²⁰ However, these forms of inquiry do violence to nature because they fragment the fertility of the earth into various types of technical knowledge. Significantly, she argues that a similar thing happens to us. For example, philosophy, sociology, and psychology attempt to unveil who we are, but they do so by parceling us out of different

kinds of knowledge. These forms of inquiry have meaning insofar as they try to organize a whole, that is, constituting humans into a unity composed of subjectivity and objectivity. Yet, as with science and technology, Irigaray warns of the problems inherent to certain forms of inquiry. Irigaray explains that as a result: “[. . .] they distance us from our to be, turning us inside out, exhausting the reserves of our to be, emptying us of our capacity to be, dragging us to our oblivion.”²¹ Therefore, in the same way that science and technology do violence to nature, certain forms of thought and inquiry do violence to humans.

On the subject of a plurality of methods, it is interesting to note that Irigaray is sometimes read as an eco-feminist. The way in which Irigaray treats the notion nature and the abstractions inherent to thought about nature is often tied together with a more environmental concern. Irigaray’s concern about the destruction of nature often arises in her treatment of various writers. At times when she speaks about Marx, and often when she talks about the masculine subject or attempts to talk about two subjects, she shifts between talking about the destruction of nature, that is, the environment, and talking about man’s appropriation of nature in an intellectual sense. Irigaray’s interest in the notion of nature as it appears in Hegel, Marx and Lacan tends to blur the boundaries between these two notions of appropriation. In this sense, Irigaray appears to draw an analogy between the violence done to the earth and the violence of thought done to nature in terms of abstraction. Therefore, it is not surprising to find her emphasizing the importance of a respect for nature in the dual sense, that is, a respect for the environment and a respect for the two-ness of sexed nature. For example, when discussing various world-wide crises, she writes: “[. . .] various struggles -- students, feminist of difference, ecological movements --

have erupted and re-erupted in our countries.”²² She stresses that these problems cannot be resolved by changing this or that within a given horizon. She argues that the cause of this is our flawed interpretation of human identity. Notably, Irigaray suggests that “[a]nalyzing the relation between men and women can help us to change this situation.”²³

Irigaray employs the images to address the flawed notion of nature at the heart of Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian theory. The images she employs demonstrate that the notion of nature that results from their theories is subject to distortion due to thought. In a chapter entitled “Between us: a fabricated world” in her book *To Be Two*, Irigaray makes a case for the problem of the notion of nature. Although this essay is largely an engagement with Heidegger, she returns yet again to the problem that appears to be inherent a kind to thinking about nature. As discussed, Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian thought, insofar as they retain an aspect of Hegelianism, gives rise to a skewed notion of nature. This form of thinking, according to Irigaray, is at the heart of the problem of our notion of human identity. In addressing the domination of thought, and the domination of nature, both intellectual and physical, Irigaray writes: “[. . .] domination and the instruments which serve this domination: tools, language, intellect, the passions themselves, create little by little, another world which dominates [man] – in the form of History, for example – and which exiles him from himself [. . .].”²⁴ Therefore, Irigaray’s rethinking of nature is not simply aimed at rethinking the female subject or trying to forge the conditions under which the female subject can be thought of outside the constraints of masculine thought. Rather, her critique of the manner in which Hegel, Marx and Lacan view nature, and their theories which depend upon a notion of nature that is not differentiated until it is subjected to

thought, can be aimed at their notion of the subject, the masculine subject. She maintains that not only is it exclusionary, it is flawed.

The image of the couple is Irigaray's method of addressing the relation between men and women insofar as it proposes a different understanding of nature. In her book *To Be Two*, Irigaray indirectly invokes notion of the couple in her analysis of the possibility of a relationship between the sexes. She does so by addressing the relation between the sexes and nature. She explains that we are no longer dealing with a relationship merely between a subject and an object, rather "we are also dealing with a relationship between two subjects, the objective is to leave to the other his or her subjectivity."²⁵

I maintain that Irigaray's image of the couple implies that our approach must be informed by a broader way of thinking. The image is Irigaray's way of keeping the two-ness of sexed nature at the forefront. In doing so, Irigaray develops something important that Hegel has forgotten. In his dialectical development of Spirit, Hegel forgets that man is only half of the world. Indeed, the problematic manner in which the Hegelian dialectic treats the notion of nature suggests that we must remember that each sex is only part of the world. Irigaray explains that "[m]an has created, invented, and given to nature not so much because he was more than her, but because he wished to tame her. Is it not perhaps, because he was less than her?"²⁶ Yet, because Hegel did not take into account a sexed nature, Spirit was developed at the cost of women. Irigaray explains: "The fact of being half enables the whole to be constructed without denying what is. Taking the whole as its point of departure, becoming is forced to deny the whole in order to develop."²⁷ Hegel, Marx and Lacan all tend to forget that natural immediacy is not absolute or simple

immediacy. Because their dialectical method is based on a nature that is not sexed, they do not realize, as Irigaray stresses, that “[i]n nature itself, nature meets its limits.”²⁸

Irigaray’s images of blood, the lips and the couple all, in a sense, are posited to give a picture of sexed nature that challenges Hegel’s unitary nature. Yet there is more to these images. The manner of developing the terms of how to think about what it might mean to introduce sexual difference into nature are given by a combination of disciplines. It is thus worth mentioning how these images contribute to addressing the problem inherent to the Hegelian notion of singular nature. The image of blood in Hegel, the image of the lips in Lacan, and the image of the couple in Marx bring together various disciplines. Each of these disciplines, represented by Marx, Lacan, and even Levi-Strauss, insofar as linguistics is an important element of Lacanian theory, play an important role in understanding how Irigaray works on the notion of nature through images. Each of these images gives Irigaray certain tools to work on Hegel’s unitary nature. I maintain that, in this sense, when Irigaray speaks about the images, it is not simply a question of discussing ‘the matter of inquiry already marked by gender.’ Rather, I am suggesting that these images are Irigaray’s way of working out a method of discussing how to think about nature as sexed. Significantly, these images are also a method of trying to find a way to theorize from a perspective that respects nature as sexed.

This implies that, through images, Irigaray is proposing a different model of thinking. The images entail a way of thinking that goes against the idealistic method proposed by Hegel. Hegel maintains that the Concept introduces difference into unitary nature. This is the same idea that is repeated in Marx with his account of labor. Similarly,

in Lévi-Strauss and Lacan, the sign establish difference into the unity of nature. The idea of gender also works in an analogous manner. Gender, which is theorized through concepts, introduces difference into matter. The way in which I interpret Irigaray's use of images suggests that Irigaray does not want to rely on the kind of maneuvers involved in the Concept, labor, the sign and the symbol, or gender. I maintain that Irigaray's images suggest that philosophy needs to be able to respond to sexual difference in a way that does not rely on these kinds of steps. For example, in her essay "When Our Lips Speak Together," Irigaray claims that "[y]our/my body doesn't acquire its sex through an operation. Through the action of some power, function, or organ. Without any intervention or special manipulation, you are a woman already."²⁹ In other words, the image in Irigarayan theory is her attempt to create a way of thinking that responds to the difference in nature. I believe that Irigaray began theorizing about the notion of nature through the images in the first two phases of her work as seen in *Speculum*, *This Sex* and *Sexes and Genealogies*. In addition to this, I believe what Irigaray shows with these images is part of a larger ongoing project. As seen in the third phase of her writings in books such as *I Love to You* and *To Be Two*, Irigaray is still concerned with how the notion of nature is thought about and continues to develop ways in which to theorize from the perspective of sexed nature.

NOTES

¹ In the first chapter "Sexual Difference as a Basis of Equality" in *A Politics of Impossible Difference*, Deutscher notes that in early texts such as *This Sex Which is Not One*, Irigaray argues that political equality has to be sanctioned while at the same time issuing a critique of the language of equality. Deutscher argues that, like Beauvoir and other equality feminists, Irigaray is concerned with the question of how women and femininity have been represented in Western philosophy and history. Irigaray's language of difference, according to Deutscher, suggests that women no longer have to be viewed as either the other/opposite of men or the same or complement of men. On the basis of what Deutscher interprets as Irigaray's problematization of women's relational identities, Deutscher brings in her notion of 'impossible difference' which is intended to underscore Irigaray's play with paradoxes and claims that: "[o]nce one accepts that there is no 'as woman' embodied in women's historical options of male equivalent, opposite or complement, it is clear that acting or speaking as a woman is an impossible gesture" (12). It is often noted that Irigaray disputes the belief that equality should be the basis for emarginated groups to gain access. Yet, Deutscher makes the insightful observation that "Irigaray means her feminism of difference to act as a useful transformation, not an abandonment of equality politics" (22). See Penelope Deutscher, *A Politics of Impossible Difference: The Later Work of Luce Irigaray* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2002).

² Luce Irigaray, "The bodily encounter with the mother," trans. David Macey, *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1991) 34-46: 43.

³ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum*, 215. Irigaray's emphasis.

⁴ Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 2.

⁵ Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, 137.

⁶ Luce Irigaray, *sexes and Genealogies*, 136.

⁷ Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 35.

⁸ Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 81.

⁹ Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 82.

¹⁰ Luce Irigaray, "When Our Lips speak Together," 208.

¹¹ Luce Irigaray, "When Our Lips speak Together," 216.

¹² Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 90.

¹³ Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 92.

¹⁴ See Kathryn Bond Stockton, *God Between Their Lips*, 49-50. This is discussed in more detail in chapter three.

¹⁵ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986) 66.

¹⁶ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 68.

¹⁷ See for example: Luce Irigaray, "Je-Luce Irigaray: A Meeting with Luce Irigaray," ed. Elizabeth Hirsh and Gary A. Olson, trans. Elizabeth Hirsh and Gaëtan Brulotte *Hypatia* (1995): 91-114: 96

¹⁸ Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 73.

¹⁹ Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 74.

²⁰ Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 75.

²¹ Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 75.

²² Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 20.

²³ Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 20.

²⁴ Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 70.

²⁵ Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*. (London and New Brunswick, NJ: The Athlone Press, 2000), 51.

²⁶ Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, 73.

²⁷ Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 41.

²⁸ Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 41.

²⁹ Luce Irigaray, "When our Lips speak Together," 211.

CONCLUSION

Although interpretations of Irigaray as a philosopher of sex and gender are valuable, I believe viewing her as a philosopher of nature sheds more light on her theoretical aims. In other words, I believe that interpretations of her images as theoretical tools for deconstructing masculine theory and reconstructing a different identity for woman are valuable interpretations. I also agree that the images of blood, the couple and the lips can be employed for these purposes, and the possibility of changing the notion of the subject. However, in addition to this, I believe the images suggest something more profound in the way Irigaray theorizes. This is seen in my interpretation of Irigaray's use of images as highlighting her philosophy of sexual difference as a philosophy of sexed nature.

I interpret Irigaray's employment of images as her way of addressing the notion of nature in Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian theory. This suggests that Irigaray is concerned with the notion of the subject by means of notions of the object. In this sense, I maintain that Irigaray is acutely aware that we cannot address ontological or epistemological questions about the subject without also considering the way in which the object is conceived.

My analysis of Irigaray's images spans several of her works treats the different phases through which they cross. Although there are significant developments in her work, I maintain that there is an important constant that remains and is developed throughout her studies. Irigaray began using images in the first phase of her work and continued to do so in the second phase. In the first stage of her work Irigaray was concerned with showing that the masculine subject had created a world from a single perspective. In the second

stage of her work, Irigaray sought to discern the conditions under which a female subject may be developed. I believe that viewing the images in the first and second phase of her work as addressing the notion of a singular nature, suggests that Irigaray was concerned with showing that the flawed masculine subject and the possibility of a female subject are dependent upon changing the way in which nature is viewed. In the third phase of her writing, Irigaray does not explicitly refer to images to the extent she had done in her earlier writings. She does, however, engage in discussions of the notion of nature, and the problems of how it has been conceived in various disciplines. Thus, although Irigaray's earlier writings focussed on the problem facing the possibility of a female subject while her later writings are concerned with the problem of developing a relation between the sexes, Irigaray has always been concerned with the notion of nature. Therefore, to various degrees, she has always been concerned with theorizing about how the notion of nature is important in our understanding of the subject.

An analysis of how the images of 'woman' figure in the writings of Irigaray establishes her as clearly trained in the dialectic method. Furthermore, it highlights Irigaray's theoretical indebtedness to Hegel, Marx and Lacan while at the same time underscoring those areas in which she sees the limitations of their theories. In this sense, the images of 'woman' in Irigaray's work are employed to demonstrate the limitations of Marxist, and Lacanian theory from a gender perspective.

When Irigaray's images of blood, the couple, and the lips are conceived as a way of rethinking the notion of nature, two very important aspects of her work come to light. Firstly, it demonstrates that the Hegelian notion of a unitary nature that is also repeated in

the work of Marx and Lacan is flawed. Secondly, the manner in which Irigaray employs these images to address the notion of unitary nature in Hegel implies that she is interested in more than simply opposing this Hegelian notion with an image of sexed nature. Irigaray uses these images when analyzing philosophy, political theory, linguistics, and psychoanalysis. Irigaray is employing a multitude of disciplines to try to work out a way of talking about and thinking about nature as sexed. At the basis of this inquiry is Irigaray's attempt to find a way to theorize that respects the difference given in nature.

Irigaray employs the images when addressing the notion of nature in various disciplines. In doing so, she is trying to work out the theoretical basis of what it means to talk about sexed nature. Theorizing from the notion of a sexed nature suggests a fundamentally different way to think about the subject. Much like Adorno, Irigaray views concepts as dangerous when they are too far removed from things. Irigaray thus turns Hegel's idealistic model around. I view the use of the images as a deliberate intervention into discussions of representation. As seen, the Concept, labor and the sign in the works of Hegel, Marx, Lacan, respectively are dependent upon on representations of difference and unitary nature. I argue that Irigaray uses images in order to offer an alternate philosophy of nature.

Irigaray's employment of images is intended to show that our theorization must begin with and respect what is already given, that is, the two-ness of sexed nature. The images thus imply that any theory of the subject must be limited and informed by what is given in nature. Likewise, any theory of the subject that is too far removed from the pre-given is bound to do violence to whatever it attempts to grasp.

This interpretation of Irigaray's use of images sheds some light on her relation to Hegelian and post-Hegelian philosophy. This is important because the question of Hegel's influence on Irigaray's theories is central to an understanding of her work. Furthermore, the manner in which Irigaray rethinks the notion of nature in Hegelian, Marxist and Lacanian thought may be valuable for a better understanding of Irigaray's formulation of questions concerning subjectivity and identity.

The images highlight the problems inherent to the Hegelian, Marxist, and Lacanian notions of nature. In addition to this, Hegel's Concept, Marx's account of labor and Lacan's concept of the sign rely on representations of difference and unitary nature. This gives us reason to question the ideology behind Hegelianism, Marxism, and Lacanianism. This is valuable because these thinkers are central figures in the history of contemporary thought. To this end, Mary O'Brien explains:

Women cannot simply ignore the history of thought because it is, among other things, misogynist. We have to understand why men have created the abstraction Woman [. . .] just as they have created the generalized abstract Man [. . .] Generalized, abstract woman, moreover, is a product of male praxis: thought about women, to be sure, but thought unified with every concrete and practical action to create the social conditions under which this abstract being must inhabit her body and her world.¹

Significantly, in the works of Hegel, Marx, and Lacan, speculative and ideological thought is an activity that defines so-called nature. As illustrated, the notion of nature affects the notion of the subject. The Hegelian notion of unitary nature that is retained in Marx and Lacan gives rise to a unitary male subject. This has far reaching consequences since ideology informs practice. Indeed, it is political and legal activity, informed by ideology, that defines the lived conditions of women.² To this end, an understanding of Irigaray's images of woman, and the fate of the dialectic after Hegel, Marx and Lacan is valuable

insofar as it provides the basis for developing a way of thinking about the subject that is inclusive of both the male and the female.

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NOTES

¹ Mary O'Brien, "Feminist Theory and Dialectical Logic," *Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology*, ed. Nannar! O. Keohoune, Michelle Z. Rosaldo, Barbara C. Gelpi (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982) 99-112; 101.

² For a potential application of Irigaray's theories to contemporary society, see Astrid Friedrich, "Violence against Women: Reflections on Adopting Irigaray in South Africa," *Africa e Mediterraneo* 4/01 (38) Marzo (2002): 10-16. In addressing the problem of violence against women in South Africa, I argue that the premise of sexual neutrality is fraught with inherent difficulties.

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