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Sharing the Planet



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To Share without Dividing

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article propose une manière de penser l'économie comme division sans partage et l'écologie comme partage sans division. Nous nous référons aux œuvres de Luce Irigaray pour une approche possible de la relation entre économie et écologie ainsi conceptualisée, à l'intérieur du cadre de la différence sexuée, plaçant l'économie du côté d'un mode masculin d'être-au-monde et l'écologie du côté du féminin. Nous suggérons que le fait de libérer le logos de l'écologie de la domination de la rationalité économique entraîne la nécessité de réimaginer le dialogue à travers la différence sexuée comme moyen de retrouver notre demeure (oikoi) psychique, physique, sociale et environnementale. Au cours de cette étude, nous accorderons une attention particulière à la force génératrice du silence, à l'impossibilité d'un métalangage, aux alternatives à la notion de demeure comme propriété et contenant de son corps ou de sa volonté, à la question de méthode et à l'inachèvement d'une ontologie relationnelle capable de préserver la différence.

Keywords: dialogue, dwelling, economy, ecology, Luce Irigaray, language, logos, nomos, property, sexuate difference, sharing, vegetal life

Sexuate difference as the relation between economy and ecology

I offer this contribution from the experience of sharing certain concerns in the philosophy of Luce Irigaray, as well as the authorship of a book, *Through Vegetal Being: Two Philosophical Perspectives* (2016).¹ Such an

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¹ Luce Irigaray and Michael Marder, *Through Vegetal Being: Two Philosophical Perspectives*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

experience exceeds by far a mere intellectual exercise. Indeed, sharing the world and sharing Irigaray's thinking and writings (which promise and urge us to contribute to the germination of a new world) respond to the same "logic," if not to the same *logos*. The logic is one of ecology, in contrast to economy, that is to say, of a sharing without dividing instead of a dividing without sharing our planetary dwelling.

Not by chance, the book that stands in the most intimate relation to our theme, *Sharing the World*, begins with and keeps returning to the dwelling, both as a noun and as a verb. This word, which echoes key moments in Heidegger's thought, is, however, already marked with sexuate difference from the book's very threshold, the introduction. The woman withdraws, "open[ing] within her self a place of hospitality for the other without appropriation, fusion or confusion"; the man endeavors to "acquir[e] an identity of his own with respect to the first dwelling or environment, from which he has received himself" (xiv).² So, what if the split in the dwelling (or, better, in our relation to the dwelling) retraces the lines of sexuate difference? What if the man's separation from the "first dwelling" in the mother and the subsequent recreation of a parallel artificial abode, theorized by Irigaray ever since *The Speculum*, resulted in a cumulative attitude to the world known as *economic*? And what if the woman's non-appropriative relation to the other, not to mention her heightened phenomenological attention to the place within and outside herself, were preconditions for the emergence of an *ecological* approach?

If that is so, then the second half of eco-nomy and eco-logy, respectively, merely abbreviates and formalizes sexuate difference in our stances vis-à-vis the dwelling: *economy* imposes its artificial and, to a large extent, arbitrarily constructed *nomos*-law, while *ecology* heeds the *logos*-articulation of the dwelling and of life itself. A shift from the tired nature/culture dichotomy, traditionally mapped onto women and men, is as subtle as it is momentous. Instead of emotion, it is *logos* (and, therefore, a certain grounded, down-to-earth reason) that guides women's actions and attitudes, even as those of men are directed by the ideal and fanciful constructions of *nomos*, injurious to the earthly dwelling. More than that, *ecology* contemplates and nurtures the articulations of all the elements in addition to the earth, finding the sense of its own "reason" in these very elemental articulation. In turn, reacting to the terrifying image of "mother nature" (of nature as mother and of mother as nature) the economic man is, at bottom,

² All subsequent quotes within brackets refer to page numbers in Luce Irigaray, *Sharing the World*, London & New York: Continuum, 2008.

moved by the emotion of fear that overshadows his efforts at fabricating a perfectly controllable order, oblivious to the elements.

Lest there be any doubts, when I cite the workings of *logos*, I am not invoking the oppressive structures of spirit "[c]ut off from life, from its growth," oblivious to relationships, and neglecting the cultivation of *phusis*.³ That will have been the image of *logos* indistinguishable (or, better yet, copied) from *nomos*. I am, rather, referring to the *logos* of living inherent to life and singularly befitting each of life's unrepeatable instantiations. Taken this way, the thinking of sexuate difference, akin to that of phenomenology, is ecological, insofar as it gives serious consideration to the variations in embodiment and the articulations of the world by each one. The same cannot be said of the economic paradigm that forces every being into a neutralizing mold and thereby constructs the world of interrelated empty universals, such as the paternal law, capital, or the norm. Of sexuate difference there can be no economy, though an exclusively ecological description would also be inadequate to it. A shared world would be a common dwelling where neither economic nor ecological orientations would prevail and where "an active undertaking" would coexist with "a letting be"—"an economy that is too little known in our Western culture" (9), perhaps because it is no longer a matter of economy alone.

What this means is that "in our Western culture" we have not yet discovered how to dwell, since the active and passive dimensions of dwelling have been segregated from one another, assigned to men and women respectively, and, finally, crudely reconciled on the grounds of matrimonial laws, heteronormativity, and family property. Needless to say, this forced reconciliation did not happen on equal terms but culminated in the institution of patriarchy and the nearly unquestioned reign of economic concerns (for instance, anxiety about paternity had much to do with the goal of passing inheritance on to the man's true progeny). Men's and women's experiences were consequently defaced, to the extent that neither was permitted to enjoy the combination of activity and receptivity indispensable for a healthy dwelling, living, and thinking. Confined to the house (the physical dwelling) and assigned the task of caring for interiority (this time not only of the physical variety), women could dwell better and perceived what was entailed in giving space and in being received in a place. More importantly, they did not get a chance to put themselves in the place of a part that could stand for the whole of humanity—the synecdochal role that was usurped by men. Against the false universal of the human as a man, they participated in a relation that

³ Cf. Luce Irigaray, *In the Beginning, She Was*, London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2013, 58ff.

transcended them in such a manner that they could preserve sexuate difference (i.e., relationality) itself: "I am not the whole: I am man or woman. And I am not simply a subject, I belong to a gender [...], which means to a sexed universal and to a relation between two universals" (Irigaray 1996: 106). With this, they guarded the other possibility of dwelling, which did not fit on the Procrustean bed of economy, the possibility of being in the world without appropriating it, of talking without sublimating violence in the forms of law, of seeking the *logos* of the dwelling without dominating it as a nomothetically established domicile.

In her works, Irigaray aims to invent a language that would voice the non-absolute universal—the universal *qua* universals—of sexuate difference. Such inventiveness is vivid in *I Love to You*, a book whose very title restyles the verb *to love* such that the beloved would not be an object, in the philosophical or grammatical senses of the term, but a co-participant in a relation. There, she configures the dyad of passivity and activity, traditionally mapped onto women and men, in terms of attention and fidelity to growth, on the one hand, and disregard toward the "physiological, spiritual, and relational" manifestations of growth, on the other. Thought under the heading of fidelity, the receptivity of women is attuned to the innermost articulations of the dwelling; it is ecological awareness that, at times, borders on vegetal rootedness in the earth and in all the other elements ("And so one might well wonder if women are closer to the vegetable world than to the animal world..."). Significantly, Irigaray expresses this insight by resorting to the language of "a different economy," "the natural economy, especially the cosmic one, with which her equilibrium and growth are more closely associated" (Irigaray: 1996, 38). We might ask: In that case, wouldn't sexuate difference itself be nothing more than the economy of two economies, a meta-economy, skewed toward the mode of dwelling (which destroys the dwelling) favored by men? Things are a little more complicated than that, however: sexuate difference is a relational economy-ecology that renders the human dwelling internally heterogeneous⁴ even as it vacillates on the boundary between the external operations of *nomos* and the internal arrangements of *logos*, between "ecstasy" and "instasy" (70).

Examined the other way around, sexuate difference does not constitute a dialogue if this word implies a more or less symmetrical division, a bifurcation within the same *logos*. "There is no metalanguage of dialogue, no more than there exists a metalanguage of poetic saying" (Irigaray 2002: 42). Irigaray's own invention of another language, useful for the elaboration of a

⁴ "They [man and woman] do not live in the same world, even when dwelling in the same house, sleeping in the same bed, joining their bodies, indeed their souls, in love" (70).

relational ethics, one that is "more communicative and less subjected to information" (Irigaray 2002: 42), refrains from speaking for the other, from putting words or modes of expression in his mouth. All it strives to do is to regain what has been consigned to oblivion by the economic language of denomination and classification that passes for knowing.⁵ She attempts to recuperate the feel for the inner measure (yet another variation on *logos*) of our embodied, local, and planetary dwellings, without invalidating the external measurements of the law or the norm—only hemming them in and deflating their imperial ambitions. In other words, far from dispensing with the nomothetic law or denomination, Irigaray puts them in their proper place, where they appear as only one of the faces of sexuate difference and of human universality, in closer proximity to the dwelling that their excesses have almost demolished.

Eco-heteronomy and eco-dialogics

What do *nomos* and *logos* have to say or to indicate to one other, given that they do not speak the same language and, indeed, do not agree on the articulation of language with the thing it names or describes and, in particular, on the inverse influence of the named or the described over the naming or the describing? Despite their seeming polarization and unequal responsibility for the environmental and other crises, economy and ecology can help *nomos* and *logos* band together around the endangered dwelling they preoccupy themselves with. Having said that, not every approximation of the two is constructive or desirable. For instance, the tendency of *nomos* to subsume *logos* (in some sense, to envelop the enveloping) spills over into an economic voicing of ecological problems, which from another angle, precludes the possibility of dwelling.

The extreme difficulty of combining economy and ecology in a project, whose success or failure is crucial for the future of humanity, has nothing to do with the calculative balancing of "economic benefits" and "environmental damage." The instant we resort to calculations such as this, we forsake the ecological approach, making it disappear under layers of numeric homogenization, the contemporary wordless incarnation of impositions jointly pointing back to *nomos*. If to be human is to be (at least) two, then it also entails an irreducibly double orientation toward the dwelling, the economic and the ecological. But whereas, in all its suppleness, ecological thought commences with the insight that the world is "irreducible to a single world:

⁵ Cf. also Chapter 15 of Irigaray and Marder, *Through Plant-Being*.

there are always at least two worlds" (x), economic dictates spread their force of law onto an environment they homogenize, gather into the unity of the same, globalize. At the extreme, the *oikos* of economy, the dwelling onto which law was to be imposed, folds onto itself and seals itself off, no longer admitting anyone into its midst. A *nomos* spinning out of control to the point of *anomie* and coming detached from the *oikos* it has so deeply violated—that is the most immediate and the most abiding consequence of our so-called environmental crisis.

It follows that the distribution of tasks between economy and ecology is necessarily unequal: the latter constitutively accounts for its other as other; the former is yet to learn relating to the other, if only as an equal partner in the transactions of exchange, provided that it could reshape itself into an eco-heteronomy. In any event, it would be indispensable for a revised economic attitude to acknowledge its embeddedness in ecology, or, even, in the planetary and other kinds of dwelling, and rid itself of the fear of losing itself in the milieu that it will never master, order, rearrange, or reorganize fully and at will.

How to re-embed *nomos* in *logos*? How to repair the connection between law and life, renewing the possibility of dwelling again? These questions do not anticipate simple, straightforward answers, though the starting point is clearly discernible in *Sharing the World*. The masculine subject should stop repressing his "maternal or uterine origin" (i.e., his origin in the maternal other) across a whole range of economic actions that, broadly construed, constitute "a sort of new placenta in which to be sheltered in separating off from his natural birth" (xi). Even from a strictly pragmatic standpoint, it has become evident that a supplementary, prosthetic shelter no longer fulfills its most basic function, but, on the contrary, exposes us to the ever-growing threats of environmental calamities. To establish haphazard guidelines for decreasing greenhouse emissions is of little help when it comes to changing self-destructive behaviors rooted in psychic and social repression. A much more comprehensive transformation is in order, namely constructing a *nomos* and an economy on the basis of avowing the maternal other and the preexistence (pregiveness *and* withdrawal) of the natural world. Hence, in the words of Irigaray, freedom demands that we "discover an economy compatible with the impetus of the other" (xx), that is to say, an eco-heteronomy.

On the side of *logos*, as well, plenty of work needs to be poured into preparing a turn toward the other. Seeing that the "logic of Western culture ends in a substitution of representation for perception," and that "logos intends to create a sort of analogon of the living world" (Irigaray 2013: 15), it behooves us to presage this intention and to encounter *logos* where it first

gathers itself together: in the practice and contemplation of life's own articulations. Much later *logos* will try to distill life to a structure, which will be then extracted from its "material substratum," or from what its ostensibly accidental trappings, and elevated to an ideal foundation for the analogical reality of *nomos*. Irigaray is aware of the pre-analogic stage of *logos*, observing that it "is not always hypostasized from life, but only on the way to being so. It is not always already parallel to the living, but most often claims to be its doubling" (Irigaray 2013: 35). Whilst *logos* is still preoccupied with the articulations of life in the middle of living, it remains sexuited and dia-logic, or further individuated and pluri-logic. A living *logos* cardinally faces other *logoi*, which are the *logoi* of others, and even the others of the living *logos*, that is to say, *nomos* on the one hand and silence on the other. That is what I call *eco-dialogics*.

Dwelling, understood as ordering and being ordered by one's place, cannot happen unless eco-heteronomy and eco-dialogics proceed in concert. The accomplishment of "the destiny of humanity," stressed by Irigaray, does not have to be anything grand; in fact, the greatest mistake of human history was to exaggerate our destiny, to blow it out of proportion. Learning how to dwell, how to live with ourselves, with each other, and with other living beings already goes a long way toward discharging this task, in the course of which "the man-human and the woman-human each have to fulfill what they are and at the same time realize the unity that they constitute" ((Irigaray 2002: 105).

Nevertheless, the "man-human" has traditionally usurped the universal "humanity" for himself. There is, to my mind, no better description of an economy oblivious to ecology than man's "partial and biased" projection of the world, which "comes before any representation, [or] judgement [...], even prior to any word and a fortiori prior to any possible dialogue" (xi-xii). The exclusion of the word from man's synecdochal projection is, by the same token, the exclusion of *logos* by "a prioris, laws, ideals" (xi), of which the *nomos* of economy is made. The order of private property, reaching all the way down to our bodies and safeguarded by the most cherished laws of our dwelling, does not communicate anything, save for the exclusion of the other from the possession of already appropriated things. In a purely economic universe, to share with the other is to diminish one's own portion of belongings, to divide a whole into trimmed down parts, and to regulate the interactions between its subsections through a network of extraneous (legal, symbolic) ties. Unavoidably, divisions of property lessen the quantity of whatever is divided and, more importantly, give the impression of an ontological diminution of reality. But, filled with possessions as it may be, the

world itself, similar to the other and to "my" death, is not a possession; it cannot be appropriated, apportioned, or divided—only said. Sharing the world in saying, in *logos* or in multiple *logoi*, far from decreasing, augments the being of what is said. On my reading at least, this is the cornerstone of Irigaray's ecologic, or eco-dialogic, notion of sharing without dividing.

What we know (or think we know) about ecology and economy comes to us courtesy of the economic, "partial and biased," interpretation of these terms. The fine inner differentiations of our dwelling places, their inherent *logoi*, pass unrecognized in the face of the crude distinctions enshrined in *nomos*. When economic rationality prevails, we witness the "[l]aying down [of] a masculine law—at a linguistic, civil or religious level—on a nature that is supposedly undifferentiated, be it the mother or the child [...]" (4). The ensuing "commonsense" image of ecology as a mesh of fixed relations belonging on the same uniform plane is consistent with the view of nature as a network, modeled on economy's self-representation. Sexuate difference is styled as a partition, "dividing humanity into two poles" and "reducing the union of these two poles to a return to mere naturalness" (33). Now, the essentially economic division of humanity is as detrimental to sharing as that of resources and possessions. Nor does a forced reconciliation of the divided parts under the aegis of "mere naturalness" permit a dialogue between them to flourish, as it would in ecologic interactions. The restriction of ecology and of sexuate difference to "mere naturalness" above all prevents men and women alike from dwelling in the world, whence we are expelled by the predominant, and predominantly worldless, economic rationality. It does not let us hear the silent word of the world that ecology is before the interventions of global communication networks, circuits of capital, and the much older, almost timeless, metaphysical noise they represent.

Dwelling, silently

Eco-dialogic sharing without dividing is predicated on the silent *logos* of the natural world, just as the economic transmission of information and numeric codification of everything that it depends, whether it likes it or not, on the ecological articulation of the dwelling. The word, the *logos*, of ecology is thus suspended between two silences: the one that inaugurates, shelters, and nourishes speech and the other that deafens, due to the clamor in which it drowns the word and its unspoken root. Tellingly enough, by refusing to cultivate silence in memory of their first dwelling, in a show of respect for *phusis*, or with the promise of speech in mind, purely economic subjects have invalidated their business transactions, as well. They have floundered in

establishing the basic relation of exchange in sexual economy, "the exchange between her and him is lacking as an origin of speech, of its meaning" §(Irigaray 2013: 52). And they have, thereby, failed to grasp the relational meaning of exchange, untranslatable into the abstract equality of value. That is because the power of *nomos* is limited: it can set up formal guidelines for transactions, but contributes nothing to substantive communication or to an integrated context for these transactions. Its silence is foreign to dwelling, seeing that it cannot put together the fragments of the world it formalizes. Self-interest, the need in all its muteness, is the sole motivating factor for the approach to the other as a potential object of satisfaction. Needs are at best mutual, introducing a smidgeon of balance into a wordless and worldless economic paradigm. Despite this illusion of equality promoted by classical economic thought, with Adam Smith and David Ricardo for its emblematic representatives, a paralyzing silence fatally affects the core of economy, the relation "where there are not two subjects but rather the workings of the incomplete economy of a single subject" (Irigaray 1996: 65).

Conversely, with regard to the inaugural silence, it is wise to say that it is "the speaking of the threshold" (5), awaiting an encounter between the two. Note that the threshold is, precisely, the part where the house begins. "The speaking of the threshold" is, therefore, the beginning of eco-logy.

There are too many instances of silence wherein language can resonate (or withhold itself) in Irigaray's work to be enumerated on these pages. Standing out from these is the caress, a silent "gesture-word" that can signify "an invitation to rest, to relax, to perceive, to think, and to be in a different way" ((Irigaray 2000: 27). Dedicated to rest and relaxation, the caress is subtracted from the economic relation, including that of sexual economy, intent on using everything it traps in its nets as means, usually for extraneous ends. Aristotle's effective causality—which is eco-nomic through and through, in that it enforces ends unrelated to the form, matter, or end of the thing it uses—does not apply to the caress. A mere brushing of surfaces, its silence anticipates the *logos* of the flesh, of flesh's in-between. As "a gift of safety" and a yes-saying beyond words (Irigaray 2000: 26, 27), it accepts the dwelling in and of the caressing and caressed bodies. The caress, then, participates in the silent *logos* of the bodily, sexuate dwelling, which can be released into its full-fledged environmental context, as it is in Irigaray's most recent works that invoke the elemental caress, such as that of the wind or the warmth of the sun against the skin.⁶

⁶ Cf. Irigaray and Marder, *Through Vegetal Being, passim*.

The second silence, however, is produced by the excess of discourse that "substitutes itself for the original world in which life has begun" and constructs a "fabricated house, which is supposedly safeguarding Being, as much [as it] prevents Being" (121, 122). The incessant chatter of instant messaging is yet another example of the house of being where being itself suffocates, walled in by economy's silence. Whereas ecological attunement will happen "[o]n the borders of our own dwelling," where "thresholds will prepare a meeting with the other" (9), economic concerns blatantly disregarding all other considerations will thwart such a meeting, police the threshold, and, instead of treating it as a living-breathing membrane, render the distinction between the inside and the outside rigid and nearly impermeable. They will encrypt life: confine it to a crypt, as Irigaray's reading of the tragedy of *Antigone* suggests,⁷ and convert it into a code, be it genetic or symbolic. Thus, the question is how to break free from economic captivity that has, imperceptibly to some, substituted our most intimate dwellings with prison walls.

Of course, the careful regulation of thresholds was fundamental to the circumscription of the economic domain in Xenophon's Socratic dialogue *Oikonomikos* and in Aristotle homonymous treatise. Not only was the primordial division of labor sexual, allocating the duties of procuring income to the husband, and of preserving wealth and managing the expenses to the wife (cf., for example, Xenophon, *Oecon.* 3.15), but this division was also understood in spatial terms relevant to the inside and the outside of the dwelling. The woman's proper place was in the interiority of the house, the man's—in the exteriority of public space, and what mattered was the movement of goods across the threshold and their arrangement inside the dwelling. That is to say: in the "natural" economy elaborated by the ancients, man essentially did not dwell and it was the woman who laid "the first claim on," or provided "the first care for" (*prōte epimeleia*), the household (Aristotle, *Oecon.* I.iii.1). A meeting between the two was rendered impossible from this contrived beginning, seeing that one of the participants in a possible encounter did not know how to dwell, whereas each must "dwell in their own subjectivity" so as to "be able to meet with the subjectivity of the other" (3). That is also why sexual division of labor was not really a sharing; it exhibited no traces of an ecological compartment within a strictly economic scheme of things.

Furthermore, from early on, the naturalization of relations in the economic sphere silenced a budding dialogue between its two leading protagonists. Instead of ecological sharing that responds to the call of freedom,

⁷ Cf., among other texts, Irigaray, *In the Beginning, She Was*, 113ff.

the law of the household was that of necessity, at the heart of which "the union of the sexes" was ensconced. "Nothing is more natural than the tie between female and male," Aristotle continues, "whence the union [*koinōnia*] of the sexes has of necessity [*anangkē*] arisen" (I.iii.1). The medium of such a union is deafening silence, the silence of nature as the "uncultivated familiarity that was preserved inside the walls of the private dwelling place" (133). An alliance justified with recourse to nature that solidifies into law (including the law *of* nature) cannot pass into a more promising *koinōnia*, or sharing the common in the absence of "a prioris, laws, ideals." So much so that all of nature, together with the crudely naturalized sexuate difference, is stripped of its freedom, of its ontological expressions and meaningful silences, and slides down into the realm of necessity due to its economic framing. A dwelling becomes nothing more than the habitat.

A *logos* to-come

Behind the theoretical scenes, *Sharing the World* interprets the formalization of *phusis* in *nomos* as a violation of relational, ecological possibilities by the pre-established economy of the same. "Standardization from below" refers to "this predetermined belonging to the same world," where "the relations themselves between individuals pre-exist the meeting between two particular individuals. They are inspired, dictated, ordered by norms, habits, styles that surreptitiously lay down the law, including in love and desire" (65). Could there be a more apt diagnosis of what *nomos* (norms, habits, laws) does to *phusis*, to the event of growing, flourishing freely, together with other growing beings? Unable to promote a relational ecology, we economize on relations by truncating and minimizing them, substituting them with non-relational realities, and cutting them down to the already invented, narrow forms that the law and the norm sanction. We forget how to speak about and to our relations, as Heidegger lamented in his essay on "The Nature of Language": "We immediately conceive the relation in terms of the things which in the given instance are related. We little understand how, in what way, by what means, and from where the relation comes about, and what it properly is *qua* relation" (Heidegger: 1971, 83). If we conceive them in terms of related things, then we already approach relations economically, subjecting them to the law of what we know, rather than ecologically, calling them forth into being through *logos*. We *divide* them into related objects, instead of *sharing* them and participating in them on the hither side of the division. Or, to put it slightly differently, we confine them to a structure,

whose parts are bound to one another, instead of releasing them to their destiny as events that do not comfortably fit within any structure whatsoever.

For all intents and purposes, economy differs from ecology in that its *nomos* prescribes how, where, and when the dwelling is to be constructed, even as *logos* leaves the entire project, its shape and every detail, to the participants in living relations themselves. When we read that "the future is not defined here by the past, and the house, notably of language, is not yet built" (7), we should hear this phrase in two distinct tonalities. On the one hand, a shared house, an *oikos* hospitable to all, is not yet built because of the imposition of economic reason's inflexible divisions, its repression of the maternal dwelling, and its casting of relations in the form of laws and norms. On the other hand, and at the same time, "our" house is not yet ready because, to remain successful, it must persist as a work-in-progress, said, invented, and reinvented by each in relation with the other and with others, in a persistent negotiation between ecological and economic frames of mind. Were its constitution legislated in advance, it would have merged with the dwelling that is at the core of economy. "It is not in some immutable dwelling in which we have reserved a place for just any guest that we must welcome the one who is calling us. The place in which we could welcome this other is still to be discovered, to be opened, to be arranged" (22). That is, *ecology* is still to be discovered: the dwelling that will spring up afresh with every relation and with every word calling it forth into existence.

The term *eco-dialogic*, which I have proposed a little earlier, may stand as a reminder that the dwelling we are to construct cannot be fixed once and for all. Only a dialogue, the *logos* or the heedful *logoi* of the two, can articulate the world, "bring together, for each one and in each one, earth and sky, morals and divinities" (13), in the same instant that they bring the speaking and listening two together. Yet again, there is a double complication here, in the valorization of dialogue. First, the *logos* to-come must find its roots in the speaking-listening other *as well as* in a refreshing, welcoming silence, while continually renewing, recovering, and reaffirming its unspoken, unspeakable rooting, even at the risk of losing itself. The "search for words that correspond to reciprocal abandon" (6), on the two ends of the eco-dialogic relation, is faithful, precisely, to the ongoing recovery of silence on the way to language. Second, the *logos* of the two who have embarked on a quest for a shared dwelling cannot ignore the third who or that does not speak human languages and on human terms, namely the natural world. Having nothing in common with the neutral third that sets the a priori ground-rules of the economic game, *phusis* exudes the sense of possibility and even singular justice, dispensing to each her own or his own and promoting sharing: "Nature is a universal that is shareable by all, males and females, men and women, and

can thus be of use in mediating between all" (67). But the speaking of this universal, more than of any other, is the speaking of the threshold, and, hence, of silence. In what amounts to more than a limited example, the silence of the vegetal world subtends any attempt at expressing an eco-dialogic approach, because, like the uterine milieu, plant life is our first (and unsurpassable, at that) shelter and environment. An eco-dialogic relation remains tautological, confined to the logic of the same, unless in its reciprocal abandon it hears, also, the silence of the natural world.

And so, I return to the beginning: *Through Vegetal Being*, a book I not so much co-authored as shared in composing with Luce Irigaray, is an experiment in an eco-dialogic orientation to each other, mediated by and equally turned toward the vegetal world. Could it be that in our correspondences, whether postal or those happening in thought, that made their way into this book we have started to build a dwelling in a shared *logos* or *logoi*, one that does not exclude the outside world of plants but is sheltered in it? Could it be that this ecologic or eco-dialogic comportment went beyond the economy of exchanges, with its annoying dictates (e.g., the formal rule of reciprocity), impositions of norms, and *nomoi*? One thing is beyond doubt: the beginning is there—and I cannot ask for more, because final outcomes belong to an economy, not to an ever-recommencing ecology. It was an exercise in listening to the listening of the other and to plants, summed up, in advance, in an opportune line from *Sharing the World*, which says, "[...] it is the conjunction between the two listenings that can prepare the beginning of a common dwelling" (14).

Steps towards "the other beginning"

Writing a "how-to" manual on the ecology of sharing without division would be a self-defeating endeavor. After all, wouldn't a prescription—regardless of what it prescribes, be it a break with the normative impositions on relations—lapse into an economic worldview, eager to prepare blueprints for a world erected on pre-existing foundations? Still, it is worth trying to indicate a few steps toward an ecological beginning ("the other beginning," as Heidegger has it), steps that do not add up to a path and certainly not to a method (*meta hodos*, "the way after") which just about anyone could tread. We should note in passing that a method is, in fact, always economic; it redirects us to the dwelling already prepared by the *law* of method. And, though it seems that methodology couples a method with *logos*, it actually detaches "the way after" from the things themselves, by formalizing the

approach and undersigning the operations typical of *nomos* with the name of *logos*.

As we have seen, or heard, in the beginning was not *logos*, or the Word, but silence, through which thresholds spoke. We would need to take care not to disturb this speaking of silence, not to obstruct it with words that are worldless, that are not conducive to dwelling. Whose silence was it and in what beginning did it resonate?

It is paramount to liberate the beginning from a determinate temporal moment. Not because beginnings are outside the order of time but because to insist on an authentic and universally applicable commencement is to legislate an inflexible ontological and political order, an all-encompassing *archē*. Starting from a uniform beginning, one can only utter worldless words, those that, presumably neutral, belong to no one in particular and to anyone. Who would be able to dwell in such words that carry and spread around deadly worldlessness? A divergent point of view transposes discontinuous beginnings onto every newborn, onto every existent (Arendt), or onto every relation between two that the human is (Irigaray). In both cases, speech is imbued with a meaning, which is not averse to silence, such as that experienced when one is in solitude with oneself, as opposed to being alone in the middle of a crowd. Arendt, to be sure, does not allot much attention to the curative potential of silence, which she situates, in the form of muteness, on the side of violence. "[V]iolence, as distinguished from power," she writes, "is mute; violence begins where speech ends."⁸ Nevertheless, like Irigaray, Arendt echoes Edmund Husserl's critique of language that veers far away from the world of phenomena and of our daily (and nocturnal) life-worlds.

Irigaray's philosophy searches for alternatives to empty words that no longer articulate anything, that do not bridge either the elements or the one and the other. Rather than silence, it is such words that stand for and in the void, wherein dwelling is precluded: *logoi* without and against the *oikos*. They are reminiscent of what Husserl criticized as "mere words," "*bloßen Worten*," grounded on "a merely symbolic understanding." For Husserl, the mereness of words pertains to "[m]eanings inspired [*belebt*] only by remote, confused, inauthentic intuitions" (Husserl 10) and thus detached from the things themselves. We might say that they are words traded in the economic circuits of symbolic exchange, losing track of finite life and of the desire for a shared dwelling. If we are to recover this life and this desire, we must begin again,

⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954*, edited by Jerome Kohn, New York & London: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1994, 308. I have explored the relation between *logos* and phenomena in Arendt elsewhere. Cf. Chapter 4 of my *Phenomena-Critique-Logos: The Project of Critical Phenomenology*, London: Rowman & Littlefield, Int'l, 2014.

learn speaking and listening anew, feel the void in places that have been hitherto deemed full, and experience plentitude in what has been dismissed as the void. That will have been the "other beginning," which, in a shorthand, Heidegger called *Ereignis*, the event.⁹

In contrast to the words of economy, translated into notations and subordinated to *nomos*, there are also those that preserve a life-giving silence and facilitate an encounter. The *logoi* of ecology do just that, insofar as they perform "a wedding between body and word(s) that each must both secure as one's own in the present and expose to a meeting with the other" (4). A non-economic exchange of vows, the avowal of this bond follows on the heels of a betrothal, the relation of and in truth, the fidelity we have already glimpsed. It is on the soil of these vows and this avowal that a future ecology may germinate. Ecology as an event declares faithfulness to a place, neither as a station, through which one passes on one's errant itineraries, nor as mute matter for manipulation by the forms of law, norm, habit, or custom. Fleeting affinities are as detrimental to dwelling as the fixed molds of imposed rules, which is why a tree, whose roots are both flexible and tenacious, may be in the best position to teach us a lesson about the ecology to-come.

At the same time, the temporal modality of the "wedding between body and word(s)," also discussed in *To Be Two*, swerves away from Husserlian phenomenology. Ecology pursues not a *return* to the things themselves but the speaking out of what is not yet, "words [...] to be invented" (51), relations to be created. Probably the foremost difficulty of this situation is that the two cannot repose in their presence to themselves, to one another, and to the natural world: they must follow the outlines of a future *oikos*, a dwelling still under construction. All the more suitable in this case are silence—the speaking of the threshold, which avoids indicating the thing that is wholly there, available for grasp—and the words mindful of silence, committed to their bond with the body and with the natural world. The words that listen to and say silence are yet to be invented; were they to be found readymade, they would have become the objects or implements of an economy, in the service of subjects still incapable of dwelling. Just as sexuate difference "reduced to an implement" would be "considered in terms of possessing or not possessing the adequate instrument in order to make love or procreate" (84)... The other beginning is always—still—to be begun.

⁹ In his *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger aligns two cardinal points in the history of Being: "the first beginning," *die erste Anfang*, of "Being as emergence [*Aufgang*] (*phusis*)" and "the other beginning," *die andere Anfang*, of "Being as event [*Ereignis*]." Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen XII-XV (Schwarze Hefte 1939-41)*, GA: 96, Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014, 157.

Ecology: A capacity for capaciousness

With economy, we are assailed by an excess of instruments and information, means without ends, ends without regard for others, noise, and empty clutter: "the place in which we live [...] is both enclosed and partly cluttered with our own emptiness" (24). (In the words of a poet, as well, a bus can be "full of empty people", Amichai, 146). The house of economy is out of order; disorganized despite the illusion of the most controlled arrangement; containing the artificially induced too-much of everything in a poor imitation of the untamed excess of vegetal growth. Assuming that ecology broaches some space in the violent impositions of economy, it does so by virtue of turning the dwelling into a place that shelters us and that permits us to shelter the other within and next to ourselves: "In our own world, we could and even should, welcome the other in a place for guests, a room for guests. A space left vacant for the other would be preserved in ourselves and, above all, in our dwelling. But this space would be part of the very architecture of our world, of our subjectivity" (21-2). There is no such vacancy in the crowded dwelling economy orders, disorders, and ultimately closes shut. Although economic space contains too much, it admits too little, lacking the roominess presupposed by a habitable place. Denying room to the other, it expels from the possibility of dwelling even the subject of appropriation who claims the world for himself alone.

The capacity for spacing, for capaciousness, for giving a place and making room belongs to language, a kind of *logos*. But *logos* is wounded: the language that "as a whole" relayed "the totality that the child lived in relation with the mother" has been mutilated by the subject who wishes "to substitute for the first one another world, a world that intends to do without it through mastering it" (122-3). In contending with the disfiguration of language, we do not wistfully yearn for a homecoming from all the substitutes to the first other, the mother. Such a path would be quite linear and predetermined—more rigid than any method. If there is anything to be recovered from the initial relation, it is the in-between of *logos* as an articulation (in the spatial and expressive senses of the term), that is, as a jointure existing between two singularities without subsuming either of them to the totality of a relation, which is nothing but an ensemble of related things. The imperative to rearticulate life is a corollary to the thinking of language as a "dialogue in difference" (121) and to the desire to learn how to dwell in the in-between, without betraying "our own dwelling," "[t]aking shelter, [and] gathering within the self" (10). In keeping with the signification of the Greek verb *legein*, this gathering, too, is an effect

of *logos*, one that does not fabricate a totality closed off to the other. *Nomos*, conversely, motivates a totalizing gathering of parts on the grounds of a law that leaves no space for the in-between and that, however paradoxically, maintains and even solidifies the divisions isolating these parts from one another. Transforming everything and everyone it touches into property, it fashions, among other dwelling places, the house (but also the psyche, consciousness, memory...) into a hermetically sealed container for holding appropriated objects.

Contemporary ecological discourses, with their emphasis on the need to conserve and protect the environment, including various endangered species of plants and animals, rashly and thoughtlessly reproduce the economic worldview I have just described. They do not involve themselves in the painstaking work of articulating "from within" the relations between different living beings; in most instances, they limit themselves to the desideratum of keeping our planetary dwelling well stocked for present or future generations. With this lapse into environmental economism, conservationists elect the same "easy way out" as those who favor, as Irigaray puts it in an unmistakably Platonic vein, "a physical begetting in love because of its easiness" (35) over a spiritual and embodied elaboration of an encounter between the two. Our planetary dwelling is altered—enriched or impoverished—depending on how we approach it and are affected by it. When various species are transformed into figures in the accounting book of what is lost and what is gained (though mainly, alas, the former is the case), we do not stand a chance of treating living beings as singularities. When our relations are envisioned and judged based on the physical fruits, costs and benefits, advantages and disadvantages they provide for utility-maximizing parties, then our human dwelling shrivels to next to nothing: "Scarcely having built a rudimentary common dwelling—thanks to a few words—we enter [...] into the night" (44).

We cannot afford to commit the mistakes of the past either by ignoring ecology with its restricted and general overtones or by economizing it (and on it). Irigaray's living thinking of life gives us the breath that may be voiced as words for emerging from the night, while not repressing its void, and for joining the two approaches to dwelling otherwise. Provided that, at some level, economy and ecology constitute sexuate difference, the cultivation of this difference, recommended throughout the philosopher's works, will bring about a much-needed jointure of the dwelling's *nomos* and *logos*, ordering it and being ordered by it. Certainly, such a project exceeds the physical scope of *Sharing the World*, though it overlaps with the dream and the work that go into sharing the world. It reverberates in Irigaray's numerous texts that address the insufficiency of constructing a dwelling in the absence of the encouragement for the "cultivation of the living" (Irigaray: 2002, 144), not to

mention the cultivation of love, desire, and relations between two (Irigaray: 2013, 159). Since *cultivation* is originally an agricultural term (and for many other reasons besides that), I like to believe that our apprenticeship in vegetal life, our learning from plants, uncovers another perspective on the articulation of economy and ecology. A perspective that keeps me in the condition of perpetual surprise, of philosophical wonder, regarding everything we share with plants and, through them, with each other.

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La planète en partage

Sharing the Planet

La planète en partage

Partager la planète, c'est d'abord la diviser avec l'intention de se l'approprier. Se pose aussi la question de ce qui devrait être partagé par tous les membres d'une communauté autant que par le monde humain et non humain. Les essais présentés dans ce volume proposent d'abord de revenir sur différents moments de l'histoire moderne où est apparue la nécessité de dépasser une vision anthropocentrique de l'habitation de la planète. Ensuite, des analyses de définitions diverses de l'habitat mettent l'accent sur la multiplicité des relations définissant l'acte même d'habiter un lieu, qu'il s'agisse de relations entre écosystèmes ou de rapports inter-humains. Une troisième partie s'interroge sur les relations inter-espèces et notamment sur ce que nous partageons avec le monde animal, tandis que la dernière partie aborde le débat sur la préservation des espaces naturels et la valeur que peuvent prendre les espaces sanctuarisés dans la culture nord-américaine. Ces essais portent aussi bien sur l'imaginaire que sur des réalités géographiques et historiques dans une approche interdisciplinaire de la notion de partage, notion fondamentale tant sur le plan éthique que politique et scientifique.

Sharing the Planet

To share the planet is first of all to divide it up with the aim of taking possession of it. Another question concerns what should be shared between the members of a community as well as between humans and non-humans. The first articles collected in this volume look back at different moments in modern history when it seemed necessary to go beyond an anthropocentric vision of how to inhabit the planet. Then, considerations of different definitions of habitat emphasize the multiplicity of relations that define the act of inhabiting a place, whether it has to do with relations between ecosystems or between human beings. The third part concerns the relations among the species and in particular examines what we share with other animals. A final cluster of essays investigates the debate over the preservation of natural habitats and the value of wilderness sanctuaries in North American culture. These essays deal with the imaginary as well as with historical and geographical reality through interdisciplinary approaches to the concept of sharing, a concept that is fundamental to ethics, politics and science.