

**This is an Author's Original Manuscript of an article published in *Women: A Cultural Review*, Special Issue on 'Feminist Matters: The Politics of New Materialism' (Guest editors Peta Hinton and Iris van der Tuin), Vol 25, No. 1, 2014, pp. 9-26.**

## **Pushing Dualisms and Differences: From 'Equality versus Difference' To 'Nonmimetic Sharing' and 'Staying With the Trouble'**

*Abstract: Critically revisiting the 'equality versus difference' dualism that is inscribed in the feminist canon of the last decades is an important task for feminist ethico-political discussions today. The theoretico-political tension between claims of equality and difference still troubles feminist discussions and thus needs to be addressed by contemporary research. Yet, moving beyond the persisting antagonism cannot be done by either moving outside the problematic relation or by choosing one term over the other. It is, as Joan W. Scott noted, impossible to choose between equality and difference, so that other ways of tackling the problem are needed. This article suggests a new line of flight for feminist politics in respect to this founding paradox from a feminist new materialist/posthuman(ist) perspective. Via an affirmative reading of Irigaray's cosmopolitan concern of *Sharing the World* (2008) and a critical investigation into the structuring 'anthropological limit' (Derrida) of her sexual difference thinking, the author pushes the dualistic framework of equality versus difference towards a thought of 'nonmimetic sharing' and 'staying with the trouble'. In her argument, she turns to the differential worldings of Grosz's 'differing', Barad's 'quantum' and Haraway's 'terran' in order to open up ethico-political alternatives to engage difference(s) differently. The article ultimately argues that by affirming all multifaceted (im)material worlding entanglements, significant new insights can be gained for both theorizing differentiality as ethico-onto-epistemological 'becoming-with' and for practising this world of/as difference(s) in a more 'response-able' manner.*

**Keywords:** ethico-onto-epistemology, Irigaray, Haraway, Barad, Grosz, sharing, post-humanism, cosmo(po)logy

When we speak of feminism as a practice that matters, realms of thought and action are not to be separated in clean ways. And while by now this can surely be seen as one of the greatest strengths that feminist engagements have to offer to both academic and political practice, navigating the relation between the realm of philosophical and scientific truth claims feminists are engaged with and the creation of a feminist politics has in no way become easier over time. As the famous title by Joan W. Scott – used here as epigraph – exemplifies, a constitutive paradox characterizes feminist engagements at their heart; one that truly does not offer ‘problems easy to resolve’, as the French revolutionary Olympe de Gouges already phrased it in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Scott 1996).

This specific characteristic of feminist engagements that matter, or to say it more precisely, of such *critical* feminisms (cf. Butler/Weed 2011), is maybe still best exemplified by what is called ‘the problem of difference’, i.e. the theoretico-socio-political complex of how to instigate more diversity and difference to be lived, without however at the same time to belittle the structures of inequality that make up this world of difference(s). In feminist research and activism we have inherited this question also as the ‘equality-versus-difference’ debate from second wave feminism. In its most basic outline, the paradox here is that feminism’s major claim for (sexual) difference(s) is, on the one hand, a rejection of determinist and essentialist understandings of sex/gender and a demand for equality and equal access, yet this demand can, on the other hand, only ever be brought about by emphasizing precisely the specificity of (sexual) difference(s). As Scott said, it is ‘an impossible choice’ between the two strands of thought that make up the kernel of feminist politics:

Feminists cannot give up ‘difference’; it has been our most creative analytic tool. We cannot give up equality, at least as long as we want to speak to the principles and values of a democratic political system. (Scott 1988: 172)

Fortunately, as the feminist legacy shows up until today, the consequence of this condition was never to falter in the face of this paradox.<sup>1</sup> Rather, the insistence on not giving in to a dichotomous structure of thinking grew stronger. Instead of being ‘forced into preexisting categories’ (172), as Scott continues her argument in the

seminal article on *The Sears Case*, feminists contest the categories themselves, and thus gain new space for socio-political negotiations.

It is such a project of critical investigation into the ‘problem of difference’ that I will focus on here. Taking up this special issue’s main question of ‘How feminist is new materialism?’ (which I would like to read as ‘How feminist *can it be at its best?*’), I want to revisit the ‘equality-versus-difference’ debate from a new materialist/posthuman(ist) perspective.<sup>2</sup> In this article, I argue that the theorectico-political tension between claims respectively equality and difference still trouble feminist discussions and thus need to be addressed by our contemporary research, also in a new materialist/posthuman(ist) perspective. I show how a new materialist/posthuman(ist) framework continues the feminist legacy and provides further inspiration for the feminist working through of dichotomies that aim at a ‘different difference’ – one that resides, as this article wants to exemplify, *diesseits* of the divide between equality and difference.<sup>3</sup>

The aim of my discussion is to push difference in a feminist way further towards this ‘different difference’; towards a difference that no longer focuses on a ‘differing from’ but shows ‘difference differing’ or ‘difference in itself’ (cf. Deleuze 1994, Grosz 2004). I will follow through such an image of difference in its significant ethico-political implications, and in my discussion will tackle two interrelated aspects in order to question the persistent oppositional parameters of the equality-versus-difference-debate. The pursuit of a politics of difference that continually attacks power structures that foreclose further equality, and yet never aims at overcoming differentiability as such, needs to critically attend to a still dominant conceptual framework of ‘transcendence’ and ‘human exceptionalism’ to be found even in the most convincing philosophical engagements (cf. Levinas 1969). Both the demand of the absolute otherness of the other (transcendental difference) and the focus on purely intersubjective relations between self and other (anthropocentric differences) are yet to be deconstructed as the seemingly unquestioned ethico-political *telos* of a conceptual engagement with difference(s). My argument will show that new materialism’s/posthumanism’s affirmation of entangled and immanent ontologies combined with a non-anthropocentric viewpoint provide alternative lines of flight for

thought, and enable a feminist practice of difference ‘in-difference’ to the still effective opposition of either a politics of equality/equal rights or a politics of difference as exclusive identity politics.

### **Sharing the World: The Ethics of Sexual Difference Becoming Cosmopolitan**

In this endeavor to further ‘difference in itself’ as the line of flight for feminist politics, to whom else to turn than to Luce Irigaray’s sexual difference philosophy that inspired so many engagements with ‘the problem of difference’ in the feminist legacy? Elizabeth Grosz’s most recent classification of Irigaray’s work, which as she writes ‘can be divided, not without some arbitrariness into three broad phases or orientations’ (Grosz 2011: 102), can give guidance here. She sees Irigaray’s first phase ‘more psychoanalytically oriented...[t]he second, more philosophically directed...[and t]he third, current phase (developed since the publication of *I Love To You* [1992])...directed more to an elaboration of the social, cultural, civic, and epistemic conditions’ (102). It is with the third phase and what comes after, that my discussion here will take issue. My investigation will closely engage with Irigaray’s book *Sharing the World* (2008a), which I read as her most recent attempt to push her ethico-political thought of sexual difference to a speculative level, a level that I want to call ‘cosmo(po)logical’.<sup>4</sup> After books such as *I Love To You* (1996) and *Democracy Begins Between Two* ([1994] (2001)) in which, as we just heard Grosz say, ‘social, cultural, civic and epistemic conditions’ are taken into account, in the new millennium Irigaray’s most foundational claim of sexual difference is addressed again in broader philosophical registers (cf. also Irigaray 2001; 2002), and with *Sharing the World* this reaches the processes of worlding themselves. As Gail Schwab says:

*Sharing the World* is a meditation on how we might seek to move beyond...illusions [about nature, culture, and technology], as well as beyond our isolation and alienation, and develop what [Irigaray] calls our human “becoming” – that is, come to a more realistic understanding of our rightful place on the planet and in the universe, and grow as a species – through the cultivation of an authentic relationship to the other (Schwab 2011: 329-330).

This specific level of sexual difference thinking, the cosmo(po)logical level that with Karen Barad we can also call ethico-onto-epistemological (cf. Barad 2007), I would like to make fruitful in the following argument for an approach to a different

difference, and thus a new line of flight for ‘the problem of difference’ in feminist thought and politics.

But let me move slowly. Before attending to these cosmo(po)logical questions that will bring us also to the critical dimensions of transcendence and human exceptionalism as aspects requiring critical attention, it is essential that the specific nature of sexual difference in Irigaray be recapitulated. Only thus does ‘The Force of Sexual Difference’ (cf. Grosz 2005) not become too easily misplaced. For Irigaray, sexual difference on the one hand always was, and it still remains in this recent work, perhaps the only ‘universal’ there is. Like in so many others of her publications, she begins *Sharing the World* by writing:

Nevertheless, one difference *at once appears as universal*: sexual, or better sexuate, difference. Of course, it is worked out in various ways by different cultures but it maintains constant dimensions with regard to the connection between nature and culture, especially concerning that which already exists and that which is still to be constructed of the relations of one’s own body to the self and to the other. (Irigaray 2008a: 2, emphasis added)

On the other hand, however, this specifically *ontological* anchoring of sexual difference – sexual difference as in certain respects the only ‘given’ – is no simplistic essentialism on Irigaray’s side.<sup>5</sup> Rather, what I see happening in Irigaray’s thought of sexual difference is that she manages to unhinge ontology, traditionally understood as the logic of Being as ‘given’, into an asymmetrical endeavor that itself cannot escape the force of differentiation. Thus, instead of reducing sexual difference merely to a level of ‘what is’ – essentialist form of ontology –, her work argues for an understanding of sexual difference as a(n) (ethical) project in which ontology itself becomes transformed within the parameters of sexual difference thinking. I agree with Grosz, who to me is one of the most astute interpreters of Irigaray in this regard, that ‘Irigaray’s project is nothing short of the elaboration of a new understanding of the real, a new conception of the dynamic forces of the universe itself’ (Grosz 2011: 100). Putting (sexual) difference first, the world is transformed into a dynamic becoming that ‘brings with it a transformation of the ways in which we understand [...] epistemology, ethics, and politics’ (100).

Sexual difference in this sense never *is*. It is not of the order of Being, since the latter is itself only conceivable when the ‘phallogocentric order’ (cf. Lorraine, 1999: 43) of the o/One is presupposed. Sexual difference with Irigaray suggests a different ontology, one in which differentiality – the more than o/One – is primary, and by being primary it is prior precisely to the divisiveness of separate entities (e.g. man/woman). Emphasizing the force of differentiation in this manner makes also Grosz’s own move in her work no longer so surprising, where she aligns Irigarayan sexual difference with Gilles Deleuze’s ontology of becoming in which ‘[d]ifference in itself must be considered primordial, a non-reciprocal emergence, that which underlies and makes possible distinctness, things, oppositions’ (Grosz 2011, 93).<sup>6</sup> Rather, both the exemplification of sexual difference as ontological force and the insistence on difference(s) as that which only ever brings about distinctness and separate entities help in my opinion to ‘thicken’ Irigaray’s conceptualization of sexual difference. They prevent sexual difference thinking from being misunderstood as a merely quantitative more than o/One. Everything (has to) change(s) when we start with primary differentiality and an asymmetrical universe. And the central ethical dimension in such re-conceptualization of ‘what is’ as continuous ‘becoming-different’ is apparent: difference is the force constituting everything, and so it matters at every turn and every moment ‘how’ and ‘what for’ our engagement with the world is, and how we account for the effects of our differential becomings (cf. also Thiele 2008).<sup>7</sup>

Referring this back to the debate of equality-versus-difference, what has been argued so far is that feminist engagements stressing difference in no way oppose themselves, or even better could be opposed to a striving for further equalization. To the contrary, they provide the necessarily *complex grounding* for all such claims. Equivalence, not equality, is the issue to be criticized harshly from a sexual difference perspective: ‘[I]n order for an ethics of sexual difference to come into being, we must constitute a possible place for each sex, body, and flesh to inhabit’ (Irigaray [1984] 1993: 18). It is the acknowledgment of differentiality first and foremost, without giving up the demand for ‘a possible place’ for every-body, that instead of opposing combines the claims of equality and difference.

Now, in *Sharing the World* Irigaray engages once more such a non-oppositional approach when discussing the relation to the o/Other as a relation structured precisely by (sexual) difference(s), but in view of a living-together on this planet. In order to avoid the focus on the divisiveness of differences she relies on the vocabulary of ‘sharing’ that *spacess* the discussion of ‘the problem of difference’ in a significantly different manner. And in order to develop this mode of sharing as living-together, she also in this book returns to ‘the couple’ – the sexually differentiated or sexuate self/other relation – as the first differential unit with which to start her philosophical speculations. Such beginning in difference should not be understood as fixing the destiny of humanity in a heteronormative ‘two’ (masculine/feminine). Rather, this differential beginning is to be more productively read as a continuous strategy to break open the dominant logic of the appropriation of the other (any other) into the self-same o/One (i.e. phallocratic order).

Appropriation has dominated the rules of construction in a monosubjective culture. Recognizing one’s own limits, as well as the existence of the other as irreducible to one’s own existence, and searching for the means of entering into relation with him, or her, will then substitute for appropriation. (Irigaray 2008a: 2)

Refiguring the transcendence of the other so that ‘time and space are kept in a dialectical process between us in an always indefinite and open way’ (Irigaray 2008a: x), this is Irigaray’s cosmo(po)logical project in which, instead of property and appropriation, coexistence and sharing in difference become imaginable.

For a new materialist/posthuman(ist) intervention into the ‘problem of difference’, this move towards the cosmo(po)logical level in Irigaray’s *Sharing The World* is significant for two reasons: First of all, she convincingly exemplifies once more that instead of merely arguing against equality and egalitarian politics, sexual difference thinking stresses the need to envision another mode of *relating to the other*, one that no longer emerges from a monosubjective culture, but from the acknowledgement that there are ‘at least’ two (if not more) possibilities for everything – only thus is ‘the transcendence that the world represents...no longer one, nor unique’ (x).<sup>8</sup> Secondly, however, with Irigaray it can also be shown that only if we dare to superimpose this very *singular relating* to the other with the *ontological condition of differentiability* as making up this world, i.e. only when we – in Foucaultian or Deleuzian/Guattarian terms – let micropolitics have the greatest (global) impact (cf. Foucault 1996;

Deleuze/Guattari 2000), will we set in motion any assumed opposition of a feminist politics aiming at equal rights within the dominant order, and a feminist philosophy of difference that is said to have no ‘real’ political effect (or if so, it is to be considered conservative rather than ‘queering’). A central passage of *Sharing the World* expresses these dimensions in their inseparability:

One of the urgent questions posed by our times – dominated by technology, long-distance communication, international markets, globalization ... - is: how to reorganize being with the other? Because coexistence can no longer take place inside and through a single world. We do not all belong to the same world, unless we designate the earth itself in this way. But, even on this earth, we do not all live in the same way. (Irigaray 2008a: 68)

This passage will be looked at more closely in what follows. To me, it encompasses both the immense ethico-political potential of Irigaray’s feminist legacy and the dialectical limitations that I see in need of further questioning when approached from a new materialist/posthuman(ist) perspective. Thinking through this passage and the ‘different difference’ that Irigaray suggests is thus the task ahead. In addition to a thick understanding of ‘sharing’, it will also lead to the critical dimensions of transcendence, and therefore human exceptionalism that I want to address in this discussion.

### **A Different Dialectics: ‘A Third World...Between Us’**

It matters how we engage critically in a feminist argument. It is, therefore, important to stress that while my reading of Irigaray at this point will move towards limiting aspects that I see in relation to her philosophical embedding within the psychoanalytical and phenomenological (humanist) tradition, such a move is only ever possible because of a foundational sharing with her: a sharing of the problem, the vision, and the thought of difference in itself. Only by thinking *with* Irigaray about the more than o/One and its consequences for the relation to the other will it be able to seriously argue for a step further in the conceptualization of a different difference. Only thus is a feminist cosmo(po)logy from a posthuman(ist)/new materialist perspective concretized that steps out of the negative relating to what came before and affirms the whole feminist genealogy.

So, how does Irigaray develop her claim that today we need to ‘reorganize being with the other’? How exactly does she transform the inherited idealist philosophical heritage to recognize and respect the transcending and therefore separate other into a primary condition for what it means to be human? Again, we can follow Grosz who as we already saw argues that it is essential to place sexual difference, such as Irigaray proposes it in all of her works, as an ontological force: ‘[N]ature itself is sexed, made up of (at least) two types of being’ (Grosz 2011: 104). From the start this differential ontology constitutes the more than one world of which Irigaray speaks when she claims in the above quoted passage that ‘[w]e do not all belong to the same world’. From the perspective of this sexually differentiating condition, the o/One is always already manifold (or (at least) several). And it is on this basis of a differential nature to begin with that sharing the world becomes for Irigaray the step by step process to learn to encounter and co-exist with the other, and ultimately to envision a horizon in which ‘[s]exual difference entails that each subject not only occupies its own morphological, perceptual and associative relation to the world but that it can indirectly access other morphological, perceptual and associative relations’ (Grosz 2012: 72).<sup>9</sup> This understanding of sharing the world based on the recognition of one’s own partiality on the one hand seems to join the classical philosophical heritage from Hegel’s dialectical recognition of the other (cf. Hegel 1977) to Levinas’ phenomenology of otherness as ‘first philosophy’ (cf. Levinas 1969).<sup>10</sup> Yet, by defining nature itself as differential, dynamic, and sexed, and thus as providing a *productive* grounding for differential worlds, Irigaray’s unique twist of the *history* of philosophy on the other hand transforms the common philosophical negative gesture vis-à-vis nature – a gesture that engages with nature only in order to have it overcome by culture – into an affirmative one. In this specifically Irigarayan *mimicking* move,<sup>11</sup> she also then crystallizes the negation of nature as the origin of the totalizing fantasy that creates ‘the problem of difference’ in the first place. Instead of behaving like a master towards nature, a nature that can be used, exploited, and objectified, for Irigaray:

[n]ature represents possible inter-worlds – it belongs to all living being and to none...In fact, nature, as a space of life, must serve the becoming of each one as well as a coexistence in difference. 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. (Irigaray 2008a: 66-67)

While, as will be shown in the following, the *recognition* of the other – the prerequisite for the coexistence with others and the sharing in difference – remains also in Irigaray the model to address the transcending relation to the other, with her recognition no longer describes an ascending step from nature to culture, an overcoming of nature by culture as in the phallogocentric myth of cultivation or civilization. Rather, in her cosmo(po)logical project of *Sharing The World* Irigaray multiplies what is called ‘world’ from the start and links nature(s) and culture(s) in non-exclusive manners. The passage from the one to the other is no longer one of mere surpassing, as it is imagined in the Hegelian master/slave dialectic according to which recognition of the other surpasses killing of the other. It is not, as also Kirby articulates in her reading of Irigaray with Merleau-Ponty, the well-known protective maneuver of ‘man’s need to grasp and commodify the origin, his need to render it accessible and controllable while nevertheless maintaining it safely in the past’ (Kirby 2011: 116). To the contrary, in multiplying worlds and thus putting difference(s) first, nature is torn away from its merely one-sided interpretation – phallic domination – and made dynamic. It is thus that it becomes the necessary space of life that ‘we’ are able to share. Let me again refer here also to Grosz’s reading of Irigarayan ontology in which she summarizes this significant point in the following manner:

Irigaray is seeking a new conception of nature, one very different to that found in the history of Western philosophy, that instead of seeking in nature a point of origin or departure for the social, sees in nature itself the site of productivity. (Grosz 2012: 74)

In her affirmation of the (dis)continuity between nature and culture in which the former becomes itself dynamic and productive, Irigaray transforms the Hegelian *vertical* dialectic based on splitting, overcoming and forcing the particular into the universal, into a more open *horizontal* dialectical process in which ‘the other participates by what they [sic] bring but also by what they remove as possibilities of life, both natural and transcendental’ (Irigaray 2008a: xxi).

And yet, the movement of recognition in Irigaray remains Hegelian in that sense that it remains being based on the *transcendence of the other* – both when it comes to the relation of self/other and the relation of nature/culture. The starting point of her analysis, her hypothesis that we do not share worlds to begin with, i.e. that ‘we do not all belong to the same world, unless we designate by that the earth itself’, remains a

categorical transcendental positing needed by this dialectical perspective, and it is this pre-given scenario that cannot but beg the question from a new materialist/posthuman(ist) perspective: Why, or better, how do ‘we’ not all belong the same world, and what does the separating of ‘world’ from ‘earth’, that Irigaray stresses, ultimately effectuate? The Irigarayan mimicry notwithstanding, the continued categorical claim of the transcendence of the other, his/her irreducibility as not belonging to ‘my’ world, keeps in place the transcendence between nature and culture and thus, following from there, also an opposing of self and other.

In order not to be misunderstood, the question that I claim as in need of asking is not directed against Irigaray’s evalution that ‘our’ world has to be diagnosed today as a mostly *non-sharing place*, and that, therefore, it is high time that we ‘reorganize being with the other’ (human and non-human). Unfortunately, this diagnosis cannot be refuted when looking at our global realities in social, economical and ecological terms. The question I am asking is on a more foundational level: I wonder if Irigaray’s project – by repeating the ever-same question ‘how to learn to share and coexist with the other’, and by assuming that self and other are categorically separated, separated to begin with and living in different worlds that need to be shared – must not necessarily repeat once more the originary splitting that all transcendental philosophizing in the anthropological tradition from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards saw as prerequisite for any philosophical engagement (cf. Foucault 1970). This question can also be formulated differently and much shorter by asking again why, according to Irigaray, ‘world’ needs to be kept distinct from ‘earth’? Such distinction is in no way harmless, for surely it carries the privileging of a (human) intersubjective encounter which – if we approach it from another side – is to be seen as precisely the non-egalitarian (‘human exceptional’ teleological) beginning that has construed difference to be understood as something that needs to be tamed in order ‘for us’ to live-together.

Of course, Irigaray is in no way unaware of her specifically phenomenological and sexually differentiated contextualization of the questions at stake (and coming with that a specifically humanist approach to them). Her project is in this sense clearly flagged as an engagement with intersubjective relations towards primary co-existence

and interdependence, which are no mere cultural achievements but the proper ontological condition of all significant human worldings (the only meaning of true ‘human freedom’ Irigaray would like to put forward, ‘a specifically human transcendence’ (Irigaray 2008a: xiii; cf. also Schwab 2011 and Still 2012)). And I also do not mean to claim here that equalizing ‘world’ (intersubjective) and ‘earth’ (posthuman(ist) planetary) can just be done like that. Quite a few theoretical shallow waters have to be circumnavigated in such a move in order to fall neither into base naturalism, nor reductive ecology. And yet, what I want to argue in this intervention for a feminist new materialist/posthuman(ist) approach is that when the problem of difference(s) is considered as one of the most ‘urgent questions posed by our times’; when it becomes in this sense a cosmo(po)logical question because it addresses how we approach worlding itself, then we need to address the hierarchical distribution of agential forces involved so that structural blindspots within our conceptual frameworks become undone. A new materialist/posthuman(ist) approach departs from phenomenology at this point, because it sees the claim for the transcendentality of the other and the anthropocentric logic on which the former is based as foundational to ‘the problem of difference’ itself. It thereby allows for pushing further the founding dualism of self and other, and is able to envision differing difference(s) ‘in-difference’ to the Levinasian ‘absolute’ and the Irigarayan ‘irreducible’ other.<sup>12</sup>

To unpack this claim as one that matters for a feminist politics to-come, I now move to the specificities of such new materialist/posthuman(ist) approach. Rather than finding merely a better answer to the urge for co-existence, the aim of this final part of my essay is to shift the question itself towards a thought-practice of *worlding-with-others* that starts from immanent relatedness and thus is able to undo the humanism of the transcendental self/other (in as much as nature/culture) relation. It is such a move that I see as a most significant theoretico-practical enrichment of feminist politics by new materialist/posthuman(ist) approaches.

### **‘Nonmimetic Sharing’ and ‘Staying with the Trouble’: Terrapolitan Visions of Becoming With**

In philosophy, it is always a question of ‘where to begin’. And in my current concern for a renewed feminist intervention into the ‘equality-versus-difference’ debate, this is

also the case. As was argued in my reading of *Sharing The World*, Irigaray begins her discussion from the phenomenologically structured field of at least two subjective entities that are utterly different and, therefore, demand both an end of monosubjective culture and an ethico-political vision for co-existence in difference with the other on a cosmopolitan dimension. It is the different beginning of new materialist and posthuman(ist) approaches (cf. also Dolphijn/van der Tuin 2012), in which worlding-forces are a) not necessarily subjective, and certainly not only human, and b) not merely placed *within* the world, but to be considered as performances *of* this world in its dis/continuous worlding, that enable an engagement with differentiality ‘on this side of’ dichotomies and the opposition of self and other. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Barad emphasizes this different beginning, this different ontological condition:

Bodies are not situated *in* the world; they are part *of* the world...The world is an ongoing intra-active engagement, and bodies are among the differential performances *of* the world’s dynamic intra-activity, in an endless reconfiguring of boundaries and properties, including those of spacetime. (Barad 2007: 376)

Taking the fascinating example of brittlestars – the brittlestar whose very morphology is active and generative in a sense that it *is* nothing but eyes (cf. 369ff) – Barad specifies that in order to make a difference in how we envision and practice worldings, the realms of being and knowing – ontology and epistemology – can no longer be taken as separated, mutually excluding perspectives onto, or even of the world. In this different beginning they (must) entail one another (onto-epistemology). This is so significant in our context, because instead of bringing to share separate (differentiated) worlds, sharing – that is primary entangledness and relationality in an onto-epistemological sense – becomes *all there is*. A diffractive quantum ontology, based on wholly immanent intra- and no longer only inter-activity, does not multiply the logic of the o/One by supplementing it with a ‘differential two’, but rather approaches the world itself as nothing but an entangled dis/continuous process of worlding (diffraction of the o/One).

[I]n my agential realist account, intelligibility is an ontological performance of the world in its ongoing articulation. It is not a human-dependent characteristic but a feature of the world in its differential becoming. The world articulates itself differently. (Barad 2007: 379-380)

It matters that we stress the specific quantum nature here because, as Barad argues, space (world) as ‘preexisting Euclidian container’ (376) needs to be given up for an appropriate understanding of agential realism. It is only the ‘strange’ quantum causality (quantum *queerness*) that undoes ‘*dicho-tomy* – the cutting into two – itself (including the notion of ‘itself’!)’ (Barad 2010: 246). *Diesseits* – ‘before’ or ‘on this side of’ – the divisionary vision of difference(s), Barad develops a *relational ontology* in which agential cuts cannot but only ever ‘cut things together and apart’ (Barad 2007: 381). In a different philosophical register, the conclusion of ‘the world articulates itself differently’ can be explained also as the composition of a plane of immanence in which immanence is no longer immanent to something else: ‘a “dative,” Matter or Mind’ (Deleuze/Guattari 1994: 44). It is an immanence ‘immanent only to itself and consequently [it] captures everything, absorbs All-One, and leaves nothing remaining to which it could be immanent’ (45). In such perspective, from the very start it ‘matters to the world how the world comes to matter’ (Barad 2007: 380) (ethico-onto-epistemology).

If we now return with these lessons to the cosmo(po)logical question of ‘how to share and co-exist with the other’ that gives guidance to my discussion of ‘the problem of difference’: What if this question from now on is no longer taken up from a field with pre-given individualized subjective entities (the (at least) two in Irigaray) that need to learn to share and create a ‘third world...between us’? What if we begin with the purely relational – i.e. always already shared – ethico-onto-epistemological constitution that in the Baradian diffractive sense makes “each of us”...part of the intra-active ongoing articulation of the world in its differential mattering’ (Barad 2007: 381)? ‘Sharing’ is then no longer the sign of a specifically human transcendence (i.e. ‘freedom’), a sharing achieved for and amongst equals. Rather, it becomes (in a more Spinozian sense) the *necessary* enactment of being earthly creatures/critters (cf. Haraway 2008). ‘Sharing’ becomes a condition that no-body on earth can ever avoid – even if we as humans seem to believe this at times. From there, the problem of ‘sharing the world’ as co-existence with the other gets diffracted once more and the so far ‘merely’ ethico-political concern of sharing the world in inter-subjective ways is transformed into an ethico-onto-epistemological *different* articulation of worlding itself. Instead of only overcoming separation as the primary

condition of (non-)human co-existences, the concern is to learn how to ‘share well’ with-in-each-other.<sup>13</sup>

Such an approach ultimately also transforms the ‘problem of difference’ that we need so urgently to address in our heres and nows. Rather than focusing on a discourse of rights and equal access by further inclusion and recognition, new materialist/posthuman(ist) engagements with primary differentiability as *ethico-onto-epistemological relationality* show another kind of responsibility ‘at the table’ (*cum panis*) of our theoretico-political practices. Donna Haraway’s most recent work on companion species *terrapolitan* engagements show this in an exemplary manner.<sup>14</sup> In this articulation of companion species worldings that address sharing the world on a multi-species level, Haraway does not counter unequal structures by merely lifting ‘objects’ into ‘subjects’ via a discourse of inclusion and rights. While she of course also does not oppose herself to a concern for furthering a debate on rights in order to achieve concrete societal changes, she significantly develops ‘nonmimetic sharing’ (cf. 75ff) and ‘staying with the trouble’ (cf. Haraway 2010: 53) as most significant practical formula via which recognition and responsibility for the other become a *mattering response-ability for-and-with others* (human and non-human). Companion species worldings as modes of co-emergence and co-existence in ‘ongoing intra-action’ (Haraway 2008: 71) exemplify the *necessarily* entangled naturcultures that constitute this world. They, thus, avoid the danger of categorically separating (human) world(s) from earth, such as we still could see it at work in Irigaray’s project:

Companion-species worlds are turtles all the way down. Far from reducing everything to a soup of post- (or pre-) modern complexity in which anything ends up permitted, companion-species approaches *must* actually engage in cosmopolitics, articulating bodies to some bodies and not others, nourishing some worlds and not others, and bearing the mortal consequences. (88)

While my discussion of a new materialist/posthuman(ist) intervention into the ‘problem of difference’ must find a conclusion here, it is essential to point out that instead of categorical (transcendental) separations that pre-structure a politics of difference and silently run the risk of repeating (human exceptional/transcendent) hierarchies of difference(s), a wholly immanent working through of sharing the world ‘on this side of’ human exceptionalism offers a (re-)new(-ed) perspective for a

(feminist) cosmo-politics to-come. This can be again shown by the following passage that continues Haraway's positioning of primary relatedness into her political practice:

I act; I do not hide my calculations that motivate my action. I am not thereby quit of debts, and it's more than just debts. I am not quit of response-ability, which demands calculations but is not finished when the best cost-benefit analysis of the day is done...Calculations – reasons – are obligatory and radically insufficient for companion-species worldliness. (88)

A significant shift in sharing this world is laid out in this terrapolitics. It is still not about finding the right answer to the constitutive paradox of equality and difference in feminist politics (as already Scott has shown), one that would finally solve the riddle that every inclusion also draws a limit constituting yet another 'outside'. But it is also not about multiplying the world by (at least) two so that each sex, body and flesh finds 'a possible place' (Irigaray 1993: 18). It is rather about learning the insisting practice of respect and politeness that does not avoid 'the complexities for all of the actors' (Haraway 2008: 83), and *stay with the trouble* of continuously asymmetrical power relations. If we ask now about the more general significance for feminist politics and/or political activism, it is, as also Stengers formulates it in 'The Cosmopolitan Proposal' with which Haraway's companion species becoming-with is in close conversation, the realization that:

Equality does not mean that [the protagonists] all have the same say in the matter but that they all have to be present in the mode that makes the decision as difficult as possible, that precludes any shortcut or simplification, any differentiation a priori between that which counts and that which does not (Stengers 2005: 1003).

In place of the all-too-human concern for the recognition of difference(s) amongst ourselves, a logic that as I have shown in this article remains dependent too strongly on both dialectics and a transcendental point of view, learning the practice of nonmimetic sharing and staying with the trouble helps us to rethink 'the patterns of relationality' (Haraway 2008: 17) as such, instrumental relations in as much as relations of care, or even better, instrumental relation as relations of care (cf. Puig de la Bellacasa 2011; Barad 2012). This learning process that is first of all also a process of 'unlearning' (cf. Spivak 1990), I claim, enriches the political agenda – 'for us', but

never exclusively ‘for us’. It is here that I see most promising avenues for thought and politics emerging from current feminist new materialist/posthuman(ist) scholarship.

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<sup>1</sup> I thus want to stress that Scott’s historical reflections on the ‘equality-versus-difference’ are meant as a deconstruction of this oppositional scenario.

<sup>2</sup> I will use this double formula throughout this article in order to signal both the difficulty of correct ‘labeling’ and my specific focus on a critical investigation into what Jacques Derrida has called ‘the anthropological limit’ in/of philosophy (cf. Derrida 2006).

<sup>3</sup> *Diesseits* is to be understood as the immanent version of *jenseits* (‘beyond’), and this wording is of conceptual significance to the argument made in this article. It is the untranslatable ‘other’ of *jenseits*, encompassing both the dimensions of ‘on this side of’ and ‘before’. For my specific take on the ethico-political dimensions of the feminist statement of ‘a different difference’, cf. Braidotti (2006), Ettinger (2006), Grosz (2004), Haraway (1997, 2008) who in their works draw on sexual difference feminisms and queer theory, the legacy of Marxist materialist feminisms, psychoanalysis, critical race studies and postcolonial studies, and 20<sup>th</sup> century continental philosophy.

<sup>4</sup> My use of ‘speculative’ follows Sehgal in ‘A Situated Metaphysics: Things, History and Pragmatic Speculation in A. N. Whitehead’ (forthcoming). She frames her discussion of speculation within the context of Haraway (1988) and Stengers (2011). In the spirit of this speculative level, I will also speak of a ‘cosmo(po)logical’ and not simply a ‘cosmopolitan’ impact of Irigaray’s philosophizing.

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<sup>5</sup> Here, I follow Grosz's interpretation of Irigaray in which the ontological force of sexual difference is her most central claim. For a differentiated account of 'Sexual Difference and the Problem of Essentialism' cf. Grosz 1995: 44ff; and for emphasizing 'the ontological force' cf. Grosz 2005, and Butler/Cornell/Cheah/Grosz 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Grosz's move towards Deleuzian thought-horizons results from her non-Hegelian (phenomenology) and non-Lacanian (psychoanalysis) interpretation of Irigaray's work that she pursues throughout her work. For a discussion between the two feminist thinkers, cf. Irigaray 2008b: 129ff.

<sup>7</sup> We can already put this in relation to Barad's 'agential cuts' for which she states that 'our intra-actions contribute to the differential mattering of the world.' (Barad 2007: 178)

<sup>8</sup> This central claim can, of course, be found throughout Irigaray's whole philosophical work. Cf. exemplary *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985) and *The Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993).

<sup>9</sup> For a similar evaluation directly concerning Irigaray's *Sharing The World*, cf. Judith Still (2012).

<sup>10</sup> On the central issue of Irigaray and the Hegelian dialectics, cf. also Catherine Malabou's and Ewa Ziarek's recent dialogue (2012).

<sup>11</sup> 'Mimicry' is known as Irigaray's strategy for engaging with the philosophical 'masters' that are re-read by her 'through the Looking Glass' (cf. Burke 1981). It is introduced most explicitly in *This Sex Which Is Not One* [1977] (1985).

<sup>12</sup> 'To recognize the existence of another subjectivity implies recognizing that it belongs to, and constitutes, a world of its own, which cannot be substituted for mine; that the subjectivity of the other is irreducible to my subjectivity.' (Irigaray 2008a: 1) The reference to Levinas is also fruitful, given the proximity between the two philosophers in respect to the priority and radical otherness of the o/Other. For Irigaray's (critical) readings of Levinas, cf. Irigaray 1991; 1993. For the metaphor of 'pushing dualisms', cf. also van der Tuin 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Here, I am implicitly referring to (and rearticulating) here Derrida's 'Eating Well' (1994).

<sup>14</sup> Haraway's longstanding commitment to the undoing of reductive dualisms, dichotomies and bifurcations is not to be overlooked here. Already in her early entry on 'Gender' written for the *Marxistisches Wörterbuch* in the early 1980s, she emphasizes 'a need for a theory of "difference" whose geometries, paradigms, and logics break out of binaries, dialectics, and nature/culture models of any kind' (Haraway 1991: 129). For a definition of Haraway's most recent terrapolis: 'Terrapolis is a n-dimensional volume in naturecultures...Terrapolis is of and for humus, the stuff of *guman*, an old earthy Indo-European word for workers of the soil, not the stuff of *homo*, that figure of the bright and airy sacred image of the same.' (Haraway 2012: 4-5)