

Téma: *Náboženství v genderové diskusi*

Ten years ago, an essay of this type would have begun with a confident explanation of the distinction between sex and gender as analytical concepts, something on the order of "gender is the set of social roles, symbolic functions, and so on, that are assigned to the anatomical difference between the sexes in different cultures/societies." The task of writing the entry would have been much simpler in those halcyon days, as religion is clearly for many if not most cultures one of the primary systems for the construction of gendered roles as well as for the interpellation of sexed subjects into those gendered roles. Things are not quite as simple anymore, however, and the distinction between "sex" and "gender" is no longer as clear. One important group of recent feminist theorists (materialist feminists) has argued that the set of distinctions summoned in the sex/gender opposition invokes the terms of the nature/ culture opposition upon which so much of Western misogyny is based. Thus to speak of a natural sex upon which culture operates to construct gender is to reinvokethe Aristotelian myth of the female as unformed matter to which the spirit of the male gives form. "Gender" has thus been redefined by Judith Butler in a by-now classic passage: Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning upon a pre-given sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive," prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts. (1990, 7).

Accordingly now when we study gender within a given historical or existing culture, we understand that we are investigating the praxis and process by which people are interpellated into a two- (or for some cultures more) sex system that is made to seem as if it were nature, that is, something that has always existed.

The perception of sex as a natural, given set of binarily constructed differences between human beings, then, is now seen as the specific work of gender, and the production of sex as "natural" signifies the success of gender as a system in imposing its power. Materialist feminist Monique Wittig has perhaps articulated this most sharply:

The ideology of sexual difference functions as censorship in our culture by masking, on the ground of nature, the social opposition between men and women. Masculine/feminine, male/female are the categories which serve to conceal the fact that social differences always belong to an economic, political ideological order. Every system of domination establishes divisions at the material and economic level. ... For there is no sex. There is but sex that is oppressed and sex that oppresses. It is oppression that creates sex and not the contrary. The contrary would be to say that sex creates oppression, or to say that the cause (origin) of oppression is to be found in sex itself, in a natural division of the sexes preexisting (or outside of) society. (1992a,2)

It is the socioeconomic needs of particular groups of people that generate the necessity for reproductive sexual intercourse, and that necessity is best served by the ideology of sexual difference, of sexual dimorphism as the primary salient feature for the classification of human beings, and the charge of desire for intercourse that it is designed to produce. As Christine Delphy has observed,

"The concept of class starts from the idea of social construction and specifies the implications of it. Groups are no longer stitigeneris) constituted before coming into relation with one another. On the contrary, it is their relationship which constitutes them as such. It is therefore a question of discovering the social practices, the social relations, which, in constituting the division of gender, create the groups of gender (called 'of sex')" (1984,26). (Compulsory) heterosexuality, then, is at least one of the social practices that constitutes sexual difference and not the opposite (Butler 1990,25). Like any ideology, the ideology of sex works best when it is invisible, precisely because it appears simply to be natural. Has there ever been in history a culture within which gender did not operate in this way to produce so-called natural sex?

I wish to put forth the suggestion that early Christianity is just such a culture.

Indeed, I will propose that the most current dilemmas of feminist theory reproduce dialogues within Western culture that go back to its origins in the split between rabbinic Judaism and the hegemonic Christian tradition. Early Christianity demonstrates an awareness of precisely the ways that gender and sex (both the difference of bodies and sexual practice/desire) conspire to produce a juridical conception, which Christianity itself resists. We understand the radicalism of Christianity in this matter by observing its contrast to one of its main contemporary rivals: Early rabbinic Judaism is fully committed to a completely naturalized "sex." The division between Christianity and early Judaism is reproduced in the split between different schools of feminist theory in our time, which will be exemplified here by typical representatives Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray, respectively. The point is precisely to show how each of these representative thinkers reproduces in large part both the promises and predicaments that some of the earliest Western thought about gender had already encountered.

The problems that plague the respective social systems of Christianity and Judaism in their search for an ethical society can be shown to haunt the feminist systems of thought corresponding With their respective articulations of the relations between gender and sex as well. Rather than presenting religion here as an ideological system for the inculcation and mystification of the relations of sex/ gender, I will treat two monotheistic religious traditions as bodies of thought about those relations that bear strikingly on our contemporary theoretical emergency.

Let us begin, then, at the beginning.

One of the foundational thinkers for the version of Judaism that was to become Christianity was Philo, a Jew of Alexandria and a slightly older contemporary of Paul of Tarsus. Although Philo's work was completely ignored by the later rabbinic Jewish tradition, it was a generative and important source for later orthodox Christian thinking, to the extent that Philo is frequently listed as one of the fathers of the church. An eye-opening legend developed in the Middle Ages that claimed he had actually converted to Christianity (which he hadn't) (Bruns 1973). Philo was preoccupied with sexual difference. In accordance with one of the characteristic features of his discourse, he articulated his concern as part of a commentary on Genesis, specifically on the dual accounts of the creation of humanity and sexual difference that we find in the first two chapters of the Bible:

*Genesis 1 :26-28*

[27] And God created the earth creature in His image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female He created them.

[28] And God blessed them, and God said to them: Reproduce and fill the earth.

[7] And God formed the earth creature of dust from the earth and breathed in its nostrils the breath of life, and the earth-creature became

*Genesis 5: 1-2*

[1] This is the book of the Generations of Adam, on the day that God created Adam in the image of God He made him. [2] Male and female He created them, and He blessed them, and called their name Adam) on the day He created them. a living being.

[20] And the earth creature gave names to all of the animals and the fowls of the air and all of the animals of the fields, but the earth-creature could not find any helper fitting for it. [21] And God caused a deep sleep to fall on the earth-creature, and it slept, and He took one of its ribs and closed the flesh beneath it. [22] And the Lord God constructed the rib which He had taken from the earth-creature into a woman and brought her to the earth-man. [23] And the earth-man said, this time is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, for from man was she taken.

In the first story it seems clear that the original creation of the species humanity included both sexes, while the second story is seemingly a narrative of an original male creature for whom a female was created out of his flesh. The contradiction of the two texts accordingly presents a classical hermeneutic problem.

In the interpretation of Philo, the first Adam is an entirely spiritual being, the non-corporeal existence of whom can be said to; be male and female, while the second chapter first introduces a carnal male Adam from whom the female is constructed. Bodily gender-structurally dependent, of course, on their being two-is thus twice displaced from the origins of "man":

"It is not good that any man should be alone," For there are two races of men, the one made after the (Divine) Image, and the one molded out of the earth .... With the second man a helper is associated. To begin with, the helper is a created one, for it says "Let us make a helper for him": and in the next place, is subsequent to him who is to be helped, for He had formed the mind before and is about to form its helper. (1929, 107)

Philo here regards the two stories as referring to two entirely different creative acts on the part of God and accordingly to the production of two different races of "man." Thus both myths are encompassed in his discourse: a primal androgyne of no sex and a primary male/secondary female. Since the two texts, from Genesis 1 and from Genesis 2, refer to two entirely different species, Philo can claim that only the first one is called "in the image of God," that is, only the singular, unbodied Adam-creature is referred to as being in God's likeness and his male-femaleness must be understood spiritually. That is to say that the designation of this creature as male-female really means neither male nor female. We find this explicitly in another passage of Philo:

Mater this he says that "God formed man by taking clay from the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life" (Gen. ii. 7). By this also he shows very clearly that there is a vast difference between the man thus formed and the man that came into existence earlier after the image of God: for the man so formed is an object of sense perception, partaking already of such or such quality, consisting of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal; while he that was after the Image was an idea or type or seal, an object of thought, incorporeal, neither male nor female, by nature incorruptible. (107)

Philo's interpretation is not an individual idiosyncrasy. As Thomas Tobin has shown, he is referring to a tradition known to him from before (1983, 32). The fundamental point that seems to be established is that for many Hellenistic Jews, the oneness of pure spirit is ontologically privileged in the constitution of humanity. Putting this into more secular terms, we could argue that for Philo and thence for those who follow in his wake, the essence of the human subject precedes its accidental division into sexes. The "true self"-we would say the "subject"-exists before being assigned a gender. This is symbolized within Philo's writing as though it is historically dual creation of humanity, such that the ontological secondariness of the division into sexes is reproduced, as it were, in the actual order of creation.

Although Philo doesn't quite come out and say it, one can also detect here the presence of another foundational myth, namely, the myth of a "fall." The dual creation of the human, primarily as a subject undifferentiated by sex and then secondarily as a sexed creature, inscribes a hierarchy of value whereby the unsexed is superior to the creature marked by sexual difference. The latter already implies the Fall, for it is the very twoness of sexual difference that is disturbing according to this ontology. Humanity as divided into male and female is corruptible, always already fallen, while humanity undivided by sex is immortal. In his *On the Contemplative Life*, Philo describes a Jewish sect living in his time on the shores of Lake Mareotis near Alexandria (Kraemer 1989). It is clear from the tone of this entire depiction of this sect and its practice that he considers it an ideal religious community. The fellowship consisted of celibate men and women who lived in individual cells and spent their lives in prayer and contemplative study of allegorical interpretations of Scripture (such as the ones that Philo produced). Once every seven weeks the community came together for a remarkable ritual celebration. Following a simple meal and a discourse, all of the members sang hymns together. Initially, however, the men and the women remained separate from each other in two choruses. The extraordinary element is that as the celebration became more ecstatic, the men and the women joined to form one chorus, "the treble of the women blending with the bass of the men." I suggest that this model of an ecstatic joining of the male and the female in a mystical ritual re-creates in social practice the image of the purely spiritual masculoteminine first human of which Philo speaks in his commentary, indeed, that this ritual of the Therapeutae is a return to the originary Adam (Macdonald 1988,289). Although obviously the singing and dancing are performed by the body, the state of ecstasy (as its etymology implies) involves a symbolic and psychological condition of being disembodied and thus is similar to the condition of the primal androgyne.

The society and religious culture depicted by Philo do permit parity between men and women, as well as religious, cultural creativity for women as for men so long as women renounce that which makes them specifically female. Autonomy and creativity in the spiritual sphere are predicated on renunciation of both sexuality and maternity. Spiritual androgyny is attained only by abjuring the body and its difference. I think two factors have joined in the formation of this structure, which are repeated over and over in the history of Western religion, including at least one instance within early modern Judaism (Rapoport-Alpert 1988). On the materialist level, there is the real world difference between a woman who is bound to the material conditions of marriage and childbearing/childrearing and a woman who is free of such restraints. Even more to the point, however, is the symbolic side of the issue. As the category "woman" is produced in the heterosexual relationship, so in Philo a female who escapes or avoids such relationships escapes from being a woman. In Tertullian's *On the Veiling of Virgins*, precisely the issue between Tertullian and his opponents is whether virgins are women or not! (D'Angelo, 1995) This division in Philo is also reproduced in his interpretations of the status of female figures in the Bible, who fall into two categories: women and virgins (Sly 1990, 71-90). See, for example, the characteristically Philonic usage, "When a man comes in contact with a woman, he marks [Le., makes her marked-notice the semiotic terminology] the virgin as a woman. But when souls become divinely inspired, from being women they become virgins" (Quaestiones in Ex. 2: 3). Those biblical figures defined as "virgins" by Philo are not women and thus do not partake of the base status that he accords women. By escaping from sexuality entirely, virgins thus participate in the "destruction of sex," and attain the status of the spiritual human who was neither male nor female. A passage from the Hellenistic-Jewish novel *Joseph and Aseneth*, cited by MacDonald (1988,289), also supports this reading, for Aseneth is told, "today you are a pure virgin and your head is like that of a young man." When she is no longer a virgin, only then does she become a woman. We begin to see in this passage, however, something else, something that will be crucial a bit further on. While a virgin, Aseneth is a virtual man, notwithstanding that she is described as "a virgin hating men." The transcendent androgyne is male. This paradoxical figure of a

transcendence of gender that is still, as it were, male is not a factitious by-product of male domination but is, I will suggest, crucial to the whole structure of gender transcendence itself. All theories of transcendence are already appropriated by the male.

### **(Some Lesbians and Nuns Escape): Monique Wittw and the (Christian) Thinking of Gender**

Following in the wake of Philo and thinkers like him, much of early Christianity beginning with Paul seemed to be dedicated to seeking a transcendence of gender, for example, Paul's famous and stirring declaration in Galatians: "For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ [saying]: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is no male-and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus'" (3:26-9). Putting on Christ, baptism, meant for Paul, among other things (at least ideally), an eradication of gender, becoming like Philo's Therapeutae an avatar of the first Adam for whom there was no male or female.

Wayne Meeks (1973) and more recently Dennis Ronald MacDonald (1988) have demonstrated that Gal. 3: 28 encapsulates a very early Christian mythic formation and its liturgical expression in the pre-Pauline church. According to Meeks, the original baptism was a "performative" ritual utterance in which, "a factual claim is being made, about an 'objective' change in reality which fundamentally modifies social roles" (1973, 182). Pauline baptism seems more similar to the initiatory rites of the Mysteries, in which, as Meeks himself argues, "the exchange of sexual roles, by ritual transvestism for example, was an important symbol for the disruption of ordinary life's categories in the experience of initiation. This disruption, however, did not ordinarily reach beyond the boundaries of the initiatory experience-except, of course, in the case of devotees who went on to become cult functionaries" (170). Following the researches of MacDonald (1987) we can further assume that the expression "no male and female" originally referred to a complete erasure of sexual difference in some forms of earliest Christianity and is cited by Paul here from such contexts. In such groups, the declaration that there is no male or female may very well have had radical social implications in a total breakdown of hierarchy and either celibacy or libertinism. The key to my interpretation of Paul here is that he did intend a social meaning and function for baptism, namely, the creation of a new humanity in which all difference would be effaced in the new creation in Christ, but-and this is a crucial but-he did not think that this new creation could be entirely achieved on the social level yet. Some of the program was already possible; some would have to wait.

Paul could never imagine a social eradication of the hierarchical deployment of male and female bodies for married people. While it was possible for him to conceive of a total erasure of the difference between Jew and Greek, he could not imagine that male and female bodies would be in any condition other than dominant and dominated when they were in sexual relationship with each other. It is (hetero)sexuality, therefore, that produces gender, for Paul as for Philo and also, as we shall see, within crucially paradigmatic texts of the Christian cultural tradition. Marriage is a lower state than celibacy (He who marries a virgin does well and he who does not marry does better [1 Cor. 7: 38].), but it is not by any means forbidden or despised. However, and this is the crux, any possibility of an eradication of male and female and its corresponding social hierarchy is only possible on the level of the spirit, either in ecstasy at baptism or perhaps permanently for the celibate.

The crucial text for strengthening this interpretation, or at least for rendering it plausible, is arguably 1 Cor. 11: 1-16. In my reading of this passage, Paul makes practically explicit his theory of gender as produced in the sexual relation:

I would have you know, however, that every man's head is Christ, but a woman's head is the man, and Christ's head is God. (1 : 3)

For a man must not veil his head, since he is the image and reflection of God but a woman is the reflection of man. For man did not originate from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman's sake, but woman for man's. (1: 7-9)  
Of course, in the Lord there is neither woman without man nor man with woman. For just as woman originated from man, so, too, man exists through woman. But everything comes from God. (1: 11-12)

These verses have been discussed from many points of view. It is far beyond the scope of this article to analyze either the theological or hermeneutic issues involved in the text, but however we interpret them, it is clear that Paul explicitly thematizes two (partially opposed) forms of conceptualizing gender, one in which there is an explicit hierarchy and one in which there is none. Paul himself marks this difference (the gap between the hierarchy asserted in verses 7-9 and the sentiment expressed in "there is neither woman without man nor man without woman" of verse 11) as the situation of "in the Lord". I do not think it is going too far nor is it unprecedented in Pauline interpretation to connect this "in the Lord" with the "in Christ" of Gal. 3: 28, reading them both as representations of an androgyny that exists on the level of the spirit, however much hierarchy subsists and needs to subsist on the fleshly level in the life of society even in Christian communities. These two levels may well correspond to the two myths of the origins of the sexes found in Genesis 1 and 2. The no-male or-female that is "in the Lord," or "in Christ," would represent the androgyne of Genesis 1, understood, as in Philo, as neither male nor female. The man who "is the image and reflection of God," and the "woman [who] is the reflection of man," which Paul cites here, would be a reference to the story in Genesis 2, "For man did not originate from woman, but woman from man" (interpretation suggested by Karen King, personal communication). "In the Lord" might even be seen then as an allusion to "in the image of God," and the latter human of Genesis 2 would be "in the flesh" in contrast. According to this reading, Paul's interpretation of Genesis is virtually identical to Philo's. This perhaps speculative proposal is dramatically strengthened if Josef Kitzinger's suggestion is accepted that 1 Cor. 11: 11 means, "In the Lord woman is not different from man nor man from woman" (1978). Ultimately, as Karen King suggests (personal communication), the two myths of gender "are quite compatible in that both imagine the ideal to be a unitary self, whether male or androgynous, whose nature is grounded in an ontology of transcendence and an epistemology of origins" and thus, I would add, always masculine in its configuration.

In early Christianity, just as in Philo, virgins were not women but androgynes, representations in the appearance of flesh of the purely spiritual, nongendered, presocial essence of human beings. For these forms of Christianity, as for the Hellenistic Judaism of Philo, this dualism is the base of the anthropology: equality in the spirit, hierarchy in the flesh. As Clement of Alexandria, a second-century follower of Paul expressed it, "As then there is sameness [With men and women] with respect to the soul, she will attain to the same virtue; but as there is difference with respect to the peculiar construction of the body, she is destined for child-bearing and house-keeping" (1989a, 20). This quotation suggests, and Christian practice reveals, that this version of primal androgyny provided two elements in the gender politics of the early church. On the one hand, it provided an image or vision of a spiritual equality for all women, which did not, however, have social consequences for the married; on the other hand, it provided for real autonomy and social parity for celibate women, for those who rejected "the peculiar construction of the body," together with its pleasures and satisfactions. As Clement avers in another place, "For souls themselves by themselves are equal. Souls are neither male nor female when they no longer marry nor are given in marriage" (1989b, 100).

Much of the paradigmatic literature of early Christianity involves this representation of gender and its possibilities. Elizabeth Castelli has described the situation with regard to one of the earliest and most explicit texts of this type, the Gospel of Thomas:

The double insistence attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas saying- that Mary should remain among the disciples at the same time as she must be made male-points to the paradoxical ideological conditions that helped to shape the lives of early Christian women. At once they are to have access to holiness, while they also can do so only through the manipulation of conventional gender categories (1991,33).

One of the most striking and powerful narrative representations of this "paradoxical - ideological condition" is the story of Paul and Thekla from the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles. In this account, the young woman refuses the marriage bed, cuts her hair, dresses like a boy, and becomes Paul's ~Jose companion in his travels and apostleship. In another text of the same genre, we find a strikingly similar moment of erasure of gender through celibacy. In the Acts of Andrew, the apocryphal apostle begs Maximilla to remain steadfast in her decision to cease having sexual intercourse with her husband in the following terms, "I beg you, then, O wise man, that your noble mind continue steadfast; I beg you, a invisible mind, that you may be preserved yourself" (Elliott 1993, 257, emphasis added). Here it is absolutely and explicitly clear that through celibacy tile female ceases to be a woman and becomes a man. The "manipulation of conventional gender categories" seems to produce an androgyne who is always gendered male.

Castelli notes with regard to this and similar stories: "It is striking that in all of these narratives, the women who perform these outward gestures of stretching dominant cultural expectations related to gender are also embracing a form of piety (sexual renunciation and virginity) which resists dominant cultural expectations vis-a-vis social roles" (1991,44). If my reading of Philo and Paul and of the general cultural situation is compelling, however, this connection is not so much striking as absolutely necessary. Insofar as the myth of the primal, spiritual androgyne is the vital force for all of these representations, androgynous status is always dependent on the notion of a universal spiritual self that is above the differences of the body, and its attainment entails necessarily a renunciation of the body and its sexuality. From Philo and Paul through late antiquity, gender parity is founded on a dualist metaphysics and anthropology in which freedom and equality are for pregendered, presocial, disembodied souls and are predicated on a devaluing and disavowing of the body, usually combined with a representation of the body itself as female. As Philo put it, "The helper is a created one, for it says 'Let us make a helper for him': and in the next place, is subsequent to him who is to be helped, for He had formed the mind before and is about to form its helper" (1929, 107). The "helper," then, that is the woman, is the body itself. Transcending of this "female" body is for both men and women a virilization. (This point does not deny the argument made by Verna Harrison [1991] that there were valued female characteristics and metaphors for male Christians as well.)

On my reading, then, these Christian imaginings of gender bending don't even really comprehend a "destabilization of gender identity." Rather, insofar as they are completely immured in the dualism of the flesh and the spirit, they represent no change whatsoever in the status of gender. All of these texts are mythic or ritual enactments of the "myth of the primal androgyne," and as such simply reinstate the metaphysics of substance, the split between Universal Mind and Disavowed Body, which constitutes a reinstatement of masculinism: The androgyne in question always turns out somehow to be a male androgyne. Mary is made male, Thekla becomes a virtual boy, and the celibate Maximilla is a "wise man." These are mythic representations by Christianity of its understanding that the metaphysics of substance that subtends the notion of transcendence is itself a masculinist inscription of the abstract (spirit) over the concrete (body), in other words what Jean-Joseph Goux has called "metamorphosis into the masculineneutral," a neutrality or universality that in its drive toward that neutrality, is already masculine. The early Christians understood this well and remarked on it explicitly; therefore, I would claim that Goux is quite mistaken in seeing this as a modern phenomenon, that is, as "the immanent logic of modernity" (1994,178).

The parallels between the mode of thinking gender that we find in these prerabbinic Jewish and early Christian texts and that of the feminist thought of Monique Wittig are stunning. Wittig takes Simone de Beauvoir's notion that "one is not born a woman" to its logical extreme. Like Philo and Paul and the traditions that they represent, she considers sexual intercourse to be what produces women. Wittig, realizing this connection, explicitly connects lesbians and nuns: "One might consider that every woman, married or not, has a period of forced sexual service .... Some lesbians and nuns escape" (Wittig 1992a, 7). She calls for a "destruction of sex" as the necessary condition for liberation of the class of people called "women." Butler demonstrates clearly how dependent Wittig's "destruction of sex" is on the same metaphysics that generated Philo's destruction of sex "in the beginning," and is thus finally also predicated on the same masculinist ideologies of transcendence: Hence, Wittig calls for the destruction of "sex" so that women can assume the status of a universal subject .... As a subject who can realize concrete universality through freedom, Wittig's lesbian confirms rather than contests the normative promise of humanist ideals premised on the metaphysics of substance .... Where it seems that Wittig has subscribed to a radical project of lesbian emancipation and enforced a distinction between "lesbian" and "woman," she does this through the defense of the pregendered "person," characterized as freedom. This move not only confirms the presocial status of human freedom, but subscribes to that metaphysics of substance that is responsible for the production and naturalization of the category of sex itself. (1990,20)

The consequence of Butler's incisive analysis is that Wittig ends up being almost entirely a reflection of the patristic ideology of freedom as pregendered and of non gender as male. Wittig's lesbian is another version of the woman of Hellenistic Judaism or early Christianity made male and thus free through celibacy, although to be sure with the enormous difference that sexual pleasure is not denied Wittig's lesbian. Metaphysically speaking, nothing has changed. Thekla and Philo's virgins are not women, and Wittig's lesbian is not a woman (Wittig 1992b,32).

What, however, is to become of a human being born with a "vagina" who happens not to be a lesbian or a nun? Is she condemned to be a woman, and is heterosexuality always and only "forced sexual service"? In Wittig's writing, not being a lesbian, that is, "being a woman" seems finally as pejorative as it was in Philo and patristic writings. Diana Fuss makes a related point when she writes, "One implication of this ideality is that Wittig's theory is unable to account for heterosexual feminists except to see them as victims of false consciousness" (1989,44). The problem seems to be that Wittig does not distinguish between "heterosexuality" (compulsory by definition) as a political regime and "heterosex" as the relation of desire /pleasure between sexes that would not be compelled but would exist along a continuum of genital (and non-genital) practices, including love between women and love between men. "To speak of 'compulsory heterosexuality' is," indeed, "redundant" as Louise Turcotte has argued (1992), but only if we understand hererosexuality precisely as "the production of a population of human[ s] ... who are (supposedly) incapable of being sexually excited by a person of their own sex under any circumstances" (Halperin 1990,44).

According to certain thinkers, all sexual activity involves domination, so that it is not only the "destruction of sex" as a taxonomy of human bodies but a destruction of desire/pleasure itself that can produce parity. In this view, only nuns, and not even lesbians, would escape. Andrea Dworkin poses this plight directly (if, I suspect, inadvertently) when she cites the Gospel to the Egyptians, and writes, "it would be in keeping with the spirit of this book to take Christ as my guide and say with him: 'When ye trample upon the garment of shame; when the Two become One, and Male with Female neither male nor female'" (1974, 173). Dworkin cites this passage in support of an early vision of gender equality, little realizing, it would seem, that the "garment of shame" to be trampled on is the body, male or female, that garment of skin that Adam and Eve put on after their Fall and shamefaced realization of their nakedness (Smith 1966). As Meeks has put it, "'Male and female' are to be



made 'one,' but they are by no means treated as equals. Rather, if the female is to become a 'living spirit' and thus be saved, she must become male—and that, of course, through celibacy" (1973, 194). Fiorenza's translation of this as, "a Christian ought not to look at other Christians as sex objects, as males or females, but as members of the same 'family of god,' as brothers and sisters" (1983, 212) exemplifies the problem. The point of the textual complex around "the two becoming one, neither male nor female" is the destruction of sex, not the transformation of sexual partners into subjects, or as Marc Shell has put it rather pithily, when all are brothers and sisters, all sex (even "lesbian" sex) is incest (Shell 1988).

The Insistence/Assertion of Sex: Luce Irigaray and the Rabbinic Thinking of Gender

In sharp contrast to Philo's and Paul's interpretations of the ratio between Genesis 1 and 2, interpretations that initiated the Christian reading of gender, stands the exegesis of the rabbis (the authorities of Palestinian and Babylonian Judaism of late antiquity). The dominant rabbinic interpretation insisted that the first male-female human was a physical hermaphrodite. According to these midrashic texts, the primordial Adam was a dual-sexed creature in one body. The story in the second chapter is the story of the splitting of the two equal halves of an originary body:

And God said let us make a human etc .... R. Samuel the son of Nahman said: When the Holiness (Be it blessed) created the first human, He made it two-faced, then He sawed it and made a back for this one and a back for that one. [The Rabbis] objected to [R. Samuel]: but it says, "He took one of his ribs (tsela)." He answered [it means], "one of his sides," similarly to that which is written, "And the side (tsela) of the tabernacle" [Exod. 26:20]. (Theodor and Albeck 1965, 54-5)

The first Adam, the one of whom it is said that "male and female created He them," had genitals of both sexes, and the act of creation described in Genesis 2 merely separated out the two sexes from each other and reconstructed them into two human bodies. Far from gender (and woman) being a secondary creation, we have in the second creation of humanity an Aristophanic separation of an androgynous pair of joined twins, physically sexed from the very beginning.

The myth of the first human as androgyne is, of course, well known from Greek literature as old as the pre-Socratic Empedocles, and it is mocked in Plato's Symposium as well. The Rabbis, however, were much more likely to have encountered the myth in its widespread form known among both Jews and Gentiles in late antiquity, the myth of the spiritual, primal androgyne. As I have already proposed, for Philo and many early Christians the return to the original and perfect state of humankind involved putting off the body and sexuality and returning to a purely spiritual androgyny (King 1988, 165). In the rabbinic culture, the human race was thus marked from the very beginning by corporeality, difference, and heterogeneity. For the Rabbis, sexuality belonged to the original created (and not fallen) state of humanity. Humanity did not fall from a metaphysical condition, nor was there any Fall into sexuality in rabbinic Judaism (Pardes 1989). The midrashic reading of the text cited above presents the originary human person as dual sexed, as two sexes joined in one body. Thus, according to the rabbis, it was the splitting of the androgynous body into two sexes that ordained (hetero)sexuality ("therefore a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his woman") and not, as in Hellenistic/Christian and Jewish thought, heterosexuality that produced the two sexes.

For all its problematic aspects (which I will focus on presently), I wish to locate in this version of the creation myth a rabbinic opposition to what Goux has called "the utopia of the neutral sex": the utopia that I identified above as Philonic-Christian in its origins in that it reads sexedness as always already fallen. Actually this vision of utopia is much older than either Philo or the Christians. In Aristophanes's *Ecclesiazusae* the breakdown of distinctions between male and female leads to a situation in which "private property is abolished and all is held in common. Exclusive relationships between men and women are forbidden; sexual access is open for all. Dichotomies between male and female, public and private, old and

young no longer control the relations of citizens and all (except, of course, slaves) become part of one unified family, eating, drinking, and sleeping together," thus restoring a sort of primeval utopia before the "fall" into gender (Saxonhouse 1992, 2-3). I have suggested that this narrative of a fall haunts the metaphysics of gender exemplified by Wittig. Rabbinic discourse on sex/gender refuses this narrative of oneness fallen into twoness, insisting on a twoness of humanity in the flesh from the very beginning, from the conception by God, as it were. To the extent that there is a fall in the rabbinic reading, it is a fall into sexual domination, a/k/a gender, and not into sexuation or sexuality. Two sexes exist from the beginning and sexual joining does also; what ensues from the "eating of the apple," the primal disobedience, is not sex but male domination and the apparent essences of maleness and femaleness. It is these, and not the division into sexes, that are to be overcome in the drive to redemption.

In their refusal to read sexual difference as secondary and fallen, the Rabbis anticipate, I suggest, the same refusal on the part of the feminist thinker who typifies the tradition of opposing the (masculinist) metaphysics of substance, Luce Irigaray. "The human species is divided into two genders [sic] which ensure its production and reproduction. To wish to get rid of sexual difference is to call for a genocide more radical than any form of destruction there has even been in History" (Irigaray 1993, 12). What precisely does Irigaray mean by this surprising statement? Can she simply mean that the suppression of sexual difference through the achievement of even a masculine-neutral androgyny will lead to an end to physical reproduction? Even disaggregated bodies, however, can get pregnant, even the body of the radical constructivist theorist who claims that "she" "has" no vagina could presumably give birth. The radical decentering of desires/pleasures that Wittig calls for does not preclude desires and pleasures that would result in human births in sufficient numbers to forestall "genocide"-indeed, the result might be births in sufficiently reduced numbers to make another kind of genocide, ecocide, less likely. This, then, can't be what Irigaray means. I suggest, therefore, that the genocide to which Irigaray refers is not the end of humanity but the end of women, their disappearance into the "masculine-neutral," which would be the ultimate triumph of the masculinist economy and the fulfillment of a masculinist dream of a world without women.

Perhaps in tacit recognition of the collapse of the most obvious reading of this Irigarayan passage, Goux reads this apocalyptic formulation as effectively providing a near mythic statement of her philosophy of gender which he, with his usual clarity, reduces to two strong statements of conviction: "1. To overthrow patriarchal and phallogocentric power does not mean denying the difference between the sexes but living the relation between them differently. 2. To assert the difference between the sexes is not at all the same thing as positing an essential femininity (or masculinity) .... It is sexuation that is 'essential,' not the content of dogmas fixing once and for all, in an exhaustive and closed definition, what for eternity belongs to the masculine and what belongs to the feminine" (Goux 1994, 181). Another way of saying this would be that while there is no fixed essential nature to either woman or man (indeed, there is no woman per se, no man per se), there are material differences between being a man and being a woman that are productive of different (but not fixed or essential) subactivities and relations to language and sexuality: "Woman's being is acquired, won, determined, invented, produced, created. Not by totally denying its biological preconditions (which would be both absurd and dangerous-not to say unjustified in its complicity with an ancient patriarchal ideology that has devalued in advance this natural substratum), but through an elaboration of the sexuante" (Goux 1994, 182). Different attitudes of the body in sexual intercourse (one enclosing, the other being enclosed), the capacity to menstruate, gestate, and lactate, all of these form a sort of material base for a subjectivity that is different from that of men but do not prescript what that subjectivity will consist of or how it will be lived. As a final way of conceptualizing this, I propose the following formulation: There is nothing in the being of a male or female body that prescribes a particular way of

conceiving of the world or a particular relation to language, but the use of the male genital (the sex that is one-already a heavily ideologized construct in its eclipse of the testicles) as the primary symbol of language and thought has produced, of course, the masculinist economy of the same. As Irigaray herself has put it, she invokes not anatomy (as destiny) but the "morphology of the female sex" (1990, 51) as the organizing metaphor. Imagining a symbolic organized around female genitals ("this sex, that is not One") could lead to a different subjectivity and thus to a different politics of desire and of the social organization of the life of sexual difference (including "love") (Burke 1994,43-4). Irigaray's project of the installation of a female alternative to the phallus and the logos has been read as a classically Derridian move. By reversing the polarity of the valued and devalued terms of a binary opposition, the very terms of that opposition are set into oscillation and destabilized. In other words, Irigaray's insistence on the irreducibility of sexual difference while at the same time reimagining a symbolic (not an imaginary) of fluids, lips, and concrete language to displace the symbolic of the column, the unit, the abstract and transcendent phallo-logos is not an essentialism but a deconstruction (Schor 1994). Rabbinic Judaism, it can plausibly be claimed, operates without the notions of logos and phallus that inscribe the male genital as the anchor of the symbolic system. Thus Goux's Beauvoirian/Wittigian, ultramodern masculine neutral, which is resisted by an Irigarayan postmodern, is revealed as the logic of an ancient Christian drive for the universal that is resisted by rabbinic Judaism, just as midrash, for instance, has been interpreted as an ancient resistance to the logos (Boyarin 1990).

Rabbinic Judaism did, however, implacably and oppressively prescribe women's roles even as it avoided and resisted the essentialist dualism that in the West almost always constructed the spirit as masculine (even in a woman) and the body as feminine (even in a man) (Lloyd 1984). Owing to its ironclad insistence on universal marriage (for men and for women), it differentiated gender roles more sharply certainly than Christianity, perhaps even than many cultures have done. When we compare it with much of historical Christianity, we find that within historical Judaism women have been much more powerfully constrained to occupy one and only one position entirely, namely, that of wife and mother. Interestingly enough, this constraint did not preclude public economic activity (Boyarin 1997b, xxii-xxiii and passim), but unfortunately this fact only disproves the hopeful contention of Schor in the name of de Beauvoir that "by leaving behind the unredeemed and unredeemable domestic sphere of contingency for the public sphere of economic activity, women too can achieve transcendence" (Schor 1994, 63). Even if any theory of transcendence were already appropriated by the male, there was somehow in the Christian world an opportunity for women to achieve it (Burrus 1987). Not so in Judaism. There are virtually no Jewish equivalents of Thekla, Hildegard, Claire, or even Heloise. While the theory of dualism was lacking in Judaism, in practice women were nevertheless confined exclusively within bodily realms, while men were afforded the realms of the body (sexuality, parentage), the intellect (study of Torah), and the spiritual (full religious lives). There was no pregendered, postgendered, androgynous, or even male space to which a woman could escape. A story like the famous one of Yentl (by Isaac Bashevis Singer and Streisand) who dressed as a boy in order to study exemplifies the frustrations and pain felt by many women occupying this society as late as the nineteenth century (Boyarin 1997, 172-85). Women were trapped within the category of gender precisely because it was understood as ontologically primary, as definitional for what it is to be a human being. Difference, opposition to the universal same, it seems, potentially (perhaps always) also portends enormous dangers for women, the dangers, precisely, of essentialism (Plaza 1980), while universalism seems to threaten an end to woman entirely.

The two representative feminist thinkers that I have concentrated on here seem to closely reproduce the terms of a very ancient dilemma of our culture with respect to gender. Insistence on the value of sexual dimorphism, with its recognition of sexual intercourse as pleasure for both male and female, of the value of the female body in reproduction, indeed of

reproduction itself, seems fated always to imprison women within a biological role, while transcendence, liberation of the female, seems always to be predicated on a denigration of the body and the achievement of a male-modeled androgyny, a masculine neutral. The latter seems as implacable as the former. See for instance the inscription of this dualism in the following statement: "For them [the Shakers], celibacy implied communal familial and economic systems, unified social classes, and, most important to this discussion, equality along with genuine, spiritual (rather than false, physical) unity of males and females" (Kitch 1989, 3, emphasis added). I am neither unconvinced nor unmoved by Kitch's demonstration of the genuine feminist commitments of the Shakers. The opposition between "genuine, spiritual" and "false, physical" seems to me, however, no comfort but simply a reinstatement of masculinism by other means. My "old Adam," it appears, is not superseded. If we speak of a pregendered person, a universal subject, necessarily, it seems, disembodied, then we are implicitly valorizing the very metaphysics that causes all of the gender trouble in the first place; and in the bargain, we are problematizing (hetero)sex (and perhaps sexual pleasure itself) beyond retrieval. If, on the other hand, we insist on the corporeality and always already sexed quality of the human being, then it appears that we trap (one half of) the human race in the (necessarily?) hierarchical category of gender. I question whether this is necessary, because empirically it seems that no society has yet been found in which gender is not a hierarchical category. The question of whether hierarchy is a necessary consequence of "intercourse" or only a contingent one remains (for me) open. I certainly hope that it is the latter, for otherwise we may indeed be led to seek such extreme "solutions" as those of the Shakers. I refer again to Kitch (1989, 23-73) and especially her comment that "in fact, women's exclusion from cultural prestige systems is a direct result of reproductive/sexual relationships to men" (32). If that be the, are Irigaray's apocalyptic fears valid after all in their simplest and most direct sense? I hold out some hope here that the empirical given that men dominate women in almost all societies is factitious, that is, contingent on specific historical, material conditions. That, for instance, Irigaray essentializes only sexual difference itself but does not ascribe an essential nature to either male or female holds out much hope for change in an altered material world, hope that indeed the sexual relation may not have to be destroyed but may be livable in a radically different fashion. Until that (messianic?) moment, it seems we are required to maintain the two poles of this dialectic, the "Christian" and the "rabbinic" understandings of gender, in tension and in suspension such that neither of them can overwhelm the other. "Christianity" and "Judaism" are names, then, for the poles of an irresolvable antinomy or aporia; neither can sublimate the other, nor is there yet any third term that can clearly resolve this antithesis. Even in the absence of the synthesis, the thesis and the antithesis themselves can perhaps protect us each from the excesses of the other.

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