

## Irigaray's Two and Plato's Indefinite Dyad: The Space of Thinking

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The nostalgia of the one has always supplanted desire between two. This nostalgia takes different paths. It can aspire to fusion: with nature, with a divine figure, with the energy of the other, others. At times, it corresponds to the self-love of Narcissus. Often, it is equivalent to the desire to be or to possess the whole. To remain between two requires the renunciation of this sort of unity: fusional, regressive, autistic, narcissistic. To abide between two is to accept the fact that the whole can never be reached either through progression or regression, annihilation or possession.

Irigaray, *To Be Two* (trs. Rhodes and Cocito-Monoc)

Aristotle was wont to relate that most of those who heard Plato's Discourse *On the Good* had the following experience. Each came thinking he would be told something about one of the recognized human goods, such as Wealth, Health or Strength, or, in sum, some marvelous Happiness. But when it appeared that Plato was to talk on Mathematics and Number and Geometry and Astronomy, leading up to the statement there exists a Good, a One, they were overwhelmed by the paradox of the whole matter. Some then thought little of the whole thing and others pooh-poohed it.

Aristoxenus, *The Elements of History II* (tr. Findlay)

"Failure"...not a word upon which we often think when we contemplate the life of Plato. Yet, in his infamous lecture, *On the Good*, where he gathered together individuals attuned to practical goods and yet proceeded to do a little math, he failed to seduce his auditors. They remained aloof to the point, settled by a conception of the Good as a *thing* to be embodied in applied sciences like economics, medicine or, at the very least, something productive of power. For most, the Good should be obtainable and graspable, not something transcendent and idle like the intellectual and heady idea of unity or the One. Even without the math, Plato's attempt to think the One *with others*, to dialogue and communicate, on the face of things, turned out to be a pathetic endeavour; the mad ravings of a solipsistic philosopher

out of step with concrete lived experience.

In tune with this criticism of Plato's One, French feminist philosopher and psycho-analyst, Luce Irigaray, in texts like *I love to you* and *To be Two* asserts the priority of the concrete Two. Thinking not of abstract metaphysical or mathematical origins but the natural genesis of the human being, Irigaray focuses her thought on the fleshy Two embodied in human natality:

[Man] has imagined that spiritual becoming can be realized on the basis of one and not two, even genealogically. In this perspective, we might indeed be going towards one but we do not come from one: we are engendered by two and Man as a man is born of another. From the time he is born he is thus in relation with another [...].<sup>1</sup>

For Irigaray, life fundamentally begins in relation—a relation that, if properly respected, can enrich what it means to be with others, a dynamic communal project of truly productive others, irreducible to the pursuit of or desire for wholeness or sameness. In other words, for Irigaray, philosophies like Plato's fail because his obsession with the One ignores the real need to hold space for difference, something other (Two) that constitutes genuine reproduction, i.e., a third. Said differently, if the One is thought to be the goal of all things, Plato's mathematics would be incoherent.  $1 + 2$  would become  $1 + 1$ , i.e., simply unit affixed to unit, and, further, that  $1 + 1$  would not produce 2 but another 1, but another unit, as any sum is just another whole. If all addition, all striving, equals 1, all things are the same and, as such, there is no real relation, no concrete productive good. Like Plato's auditors, Irigaray would likely, have "pooh-poohed" the *whole* thing, i.e., the thing that is a whole—be it the desire for the One or his seemingly abstract discussion of number.

Nonetheless, the discussion of number, geometry and astronomy in Plato's lecture should give readers pause, particularly when reports indicate that these sciences were derivative from Plato's other protological principle—the indefinite Dyad or the principle of the great and small.<sup>2</sup> As Sextus Empiricus reports on Platonic mathematics, which extends to the production of corporeal reality, i.e., to the astronomy consequent upon the arithmetic and geometry reported in Plato's lecture:

[The Platonist] generated Numbers from two Principles, the One and the indefinite Dyad, and from Numbers Points, Lines, Surfaces and Solids. These later thinkers build up all from one Point from which a Line arises, from the Line a Surface, from the Surface a Body. Except

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1 Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You*, trans. by Alison Murphey (Taylor and Francis, 1996): 39–40.

2 see *Metaph.* 1091a25, *EE* 1218a, Aristox., *Harm*, II, 30–1, Kramer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, 86, Szlezak, "The Idea of the Good as Arkhe in Plato's Republic," 131, Findlay, *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines*, 62, 74–75.

on this view, Solid Bodies are constructed under the hegemony of Numbers. And from them lastly sensible things arise, Earth and Water and Air and Fire, and the Cosmos as a whole. The Cosmos, they say, is arranged in harmony, again following upon Numbers, whose Ratios are the concords which introduce perfect harmony, the Fourth and the Fifth and the Octave, the first being a Ratio of  $4/3$ , the second of  $3/2$ , the last of  $2/1$ .<sup>3</sup>

In other words, contrary to popular opinion and according to the commentary tradition beginning with Aristotle,<sup>4</sup> for Plato there are *Two* principles, not one (or, at least, the principle is *Two* rather than one): One *and* Indefinite Dyad or, simply put, a kind of *Two*. Furthermore, the indefinite Dyad does not appear to be a mere privation of the One, i.e., something derivative of the One. Indeed, as shall be made clear, it will be the contention of this paper that once the role of the indefinite Dyad is taken seriously as co-constitutive and productive of all things, like Irigaray's conception of the *Two*, Plato's own failure becomes a living embodiment of what Irigaray calls the *thought* that thinks the *Two* or, in Plato's case, the Dyad. Such a *Two*—such relation—entails for Irigaray, an authentic desire expressed by her through a rethinking of the phrase “I love you” and transforming it into “I love *to* you.” The former focuses on the state of being (of a seemingly unitary subject) while the latter highlights the movement and space between (subjects derivative of said movement), making love less of a thing and more an ambiguous *site*, i.e., a *space* for doubt/negation, which allows for relation between *Two*, as tension demands working to understand and think said relation. As she writes:

[I] love to you and, in this “to,” provide space for thought, for thought of you, of me, of us, of what brings us together and distances us, of the distance that enables us to become, of the

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3 Sext. Emp., *Math*, X 270-283. (tr. Findlay)

4 The following paper will not throw itself into the debates concerning the historical reality of whether the unwritten doctrines (ἀγράφα δόγματα), as Aristotle describes them (*Phys.* 209b15), were truly held by Plato nor will it do the work of unpacking how the unwritten doctrines can be found in Plato's dialogues. Rather, it will proceed to examine, for the sake of time, the implications of taking seriously the Dyad as a co-constitutive cause alongside the One. See Sayre (1983 and 2011) for research that attempts to unpack how the unwritten doctrines may be found in the dialogues without being explicitly named and for my own attempt to show how the Dyad and its equality/strength of power to the One show up in dialogues like the *Timaeus*, *Symposium* and the *Republic*. See For my own contribution to the literature, see: Danielle Layne “The Indefinite Dyad and the Equality of the Male and Female Ruling Principles,” in *Soul Matters: Essays in honor of J. Finamore*, eds. Layne, D., Ahbel-Rappe, S., and Addey, C. (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature Publishing, 2023). See Cherniss, *The Riddle of the Early Academy*, for the classical criticisms of those who advocate for the unwritten doctrines. See Kramer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, Szlezak, “The Idea of the Good as Arkhe in Plato's Republic,” Halfwassen, *Der Aufstieg zum Einen: Untersuchungen zu Platon und Plotin* and “Monism and Dualism in Plato's Doctrine of the Principles” in *The Other Plato: The Tübingen Interpretation of Plato's Inner-Academic Teachings* and Findlay, *Plato: The Written and Unwritten Doctrines* and *Plato and Platonism* for proponents of the unwritten doctrines.

spacing necessary for coming together, of the transubstantiation of energy, of the oeuvre.<sup>5</sup>

Love is here highlighted as an activity of thought that allows for ceaseless transformation, for the composition and oeuvre of ever-shifting and organic complex conversations and realities. This is a form of thinking that will fail to make all things One, but this failure or tension/negation/confusion stimulates the movement between, creating the site/space for love toward the Two (moving asymptotically with the desperate hope of *connection* between Two rather than *consumption* into One). One might then say that in failing to make things One, it thereby succeeds in unmaking *things*. Likewise, as shall be argued, Plato's Dyad is productive of *thought* and, moreover, a *thought* that does not produce or reproduce sameness. In other words, the following hopes to bring Plato's Dyad into proximity with Irigaray's Two so as to show how Plato, too, demanded his auditors move toward the One, which is not One (a kind of Two), creating or acknowledging the space between *things*, the space of the Dyad. In this Dyadic space, we will find a movement that actually adds up to a  $2 + 1$  that equals 3 or another other. This fecund offspring is, as in Irigaray, like and unlike the original terms, but in its unlikeness, its failure to be 1, it possesses its own productive and destructive power *to love toward* the One/Good that is not One. Finally, it should be highlighted that Irigaray's conception of the Two has dramatic social implications for her as a feminist, grounding a transformation of our politics focused on women's equality (whereby equality is based on the myth of the One). Due to this political import, the final section will shift to questioning whether Plato's reported protological principles, the One and the indefinite Dyad, could do similar work.

### **I. The Two which becomes One**

Outside of specialist discourses, mention of Plato's unwritten doctrines<sup>6</sup> often leads to furled brows and blank stares. For centuries the dominant entry into Plato's thought was, of course, the dialogues themselves, all yielding a seemingly infinite variety of schools and interpretations and therein testifying to the dialogues' power to inspire centuries of philosophical inquiry. Nonetheless, as many ancient commentators augment, Plato had an esoteric teaching he refused to put in writing or, more accurately, to put definitively in writing. The unwritten doctrines, reflected in quotes like the one above, reportedly followed from Plato's attempt to establish the absolute causes of all existents, be it mathematical, intelligible, psychic, or sensible reality. In short, the One and the indefinite Dyad were reportedly the Platonic principles which were themselves *beyond being* as the ground of being. A perplexing theory on

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5 Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 149.

6 See n.3.

its face, but one that nonetheless held sway in Platonic circles directly after Plato's death and survived until the present age (albeit its contemporary iteration is less dominant than it was in antiquity) and, so, it is rather odd that in juxtaposition to the dizzying variety of interpretations we encounter with the dialogues, the reception of Plato's protological principles has been more uniform. Particularly for the purposes of this paper, commentary and scholarship on the unwritten doctrines have unfortunately tended to focus on the "superiority" of the One. For most, the One is the principle of determination or limit, and as such, it grounds virtue and the good, while the Dyad is often regarded as the impotent indeterminate principle responsible for the precarity of existence. Indeed, many prominent scholars of the unwritten doctrines, insist on the asymmetry of the One and the indefinite Dyad. For instance, D. Nikulin argues "the one does not excel or transcend the dyad in its function. And yet, the one and the dyad are not altogether symmetrical or equal in their effect," while for J. Halfwassen the Dyad is dependent on the One insofar as it is derivative of the One, implying, for him, that it cannot exist without the One.<sup>7</sup>

This dismissal of the Dyad has a longstanding history, beginning with Aristotle, who, nonetheless, preserves in his own criticism the weight Plato actually gave to the power of the Dyad. Decrying as absurd the power of "matter," Aristotle argues against such productivity on the basis of his own image of concrete sexual generation:

For the Platonists make many things out of their single matter, and the *eidōs* generates once only, but evidently one table is made out of one lot of matter, while the man who imposes the *eidōs* on matter makes many tables. The same holds in the case of male and female. For the female is fecundated in a single connection, while the male fecundates many females.<sup>8</sup>

Here, Aristotle has concentrated the activity of the One to the principle that establishes Form, while the indefinite Dyad is the *mere* material cause. Yet, in this argument against Plato's material cause, i.e., against the Dyad, Aristotle hopes to render absurd Plato's arguments that the Dyad's function or power results in infinite generation while the One has but a single act. Aristotle's appeal to the fecundity of men in relation to women (or the limit of corporeal material) neglects to actually analyse this fecund Dyad insofar as Aristotle continuously identifies it with his own (i.e., the Aristotelian) conception of matter as a passive receptacle lying in wait for determinative form.

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<sup>7</sup> See Halfwassen *Der Aufstieg zum Einen: Untersuchungen zu Platon und Plotin*, 10-11 and Nikulin, *The Other Plato: The Tübingen Interpretation of Plato's Inner-Academic Teachings*, 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Metaph.*, 988a, (tr. Findlay).

Acutely focusing on lambasting Plato's Dyad by identifying it with matter thought of as Aristotelian receptacle, as nothing but a placeholder for potential predication, Aristotle ultimately reveals in his inability to accept a fecund Dyad that Plato's principle is not akin to his own. Plato's Dyad is decidedly not passive stuff, and this is what Aristotle finds absurd. Rather, as he indicates, Plato's Dyad is the participating principle that conditions the activities of *spacing* and *placing*:

For this reason Plato identified matter and space in the *Timaeus*. For the *participating principle* and space were one and the same. He talked in a different manner regarding the participating principle in the so-called unwritten doctrines, but none the less identified place and space.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, Plato associated the indefinite Dyad with a kind of underlying power (*ὑποκείμενον*) to grasp or take hold (*μεταληπτικός*) or participate (*μεθεκτικός*) in/with its other, the One, becoming what Aristotle refers to as the all-containing element. Aristotle's inability to accept this conception of the opposing principle to the One is recorded when discussing the Dyad as the principle of the Great and Small:

If the Great and Small is the all-containing element in the case of sensible things, it should also be all-containing in the case of intelligible things. But it is bizarre and impossible that what is unknowable and indefinite should contain and bound things.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, even for Aristotle, Plato's indefinite Dyad cannot be reduced to sensible materiality. Rather, as principle for both intelligible and sensible realities including the material condition for number itself, the Dyad—like the Good—is no-thing. Rather, as shall be clarified, Dyadic “matter” or *space* arises, i.e., it is *emergent*, from its indefinite as well as definite *relation* with the One. The indefinite Dyad, in contrast to the One, is not the privation of the One. Rather it is the paradoxical space emergent from the Dyadic activity whereby the Dyad is, as Sextus Empiricus records, *relation itself* constituted by the Dyad's actual difference and opposition to the One. As the *force* or power of difference, opposition, and relation (*τὰ μὲν κατὰ διαφορὰν νοεῖται, τὰ δὲ κατ' ἐναντίωσιν, τὰ δὲ πρὸς τι*) the Dyad is not a “being” relative to the One. Rather, as the dynamism of relation, of participation, the Dyad exhibits an inexplicable or paradoxical ability to relate to “its” unrelating Other, the One, in such a way that it does so without transgressing the One's otherness to the Dyad—the One's aloneness, its absolute separation. In short, between the One and the indefinite Dyad, there is a fundamental tension of opposites caused by the *activity*, rather than passivity, of the Dyad. Yet, this opposition cannot then be, as most commentators have assumed, an opposition where the One is clearly superior to the

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9 *Ph.* 209b11–17, (tr. Findlay).

10 *Ph.* 207a, (tr. Findlay).

Dyad. Rather the One *does nothing* besides be itself—as Aristotle ridiculed above, it acts only once—all other activity, including all the various levels of thought and forms of life, arise from the Dyadic space between the One and the Dyad itself, the participatory/connecting principle.

Furthermore, as dyadic, the Dyad's activity is itself dyadic insofar as it is simultaneously moving infinitely toward its other, the One, but also away from it. The Dyad is both receptive or in relation to its other, like the One, but also that which rejects being One. The One does not relate, and so the Dyad must necessarily fail to fully grasp the One or become absolutely One: it cannot consume the One, the Dyad respects, so to speak, the One's aloneness. Due to this seeming failure or weakness via not becoming the Absolute One, the Dyad as relation *ipso facto* internalises the One—possessing the capacity to touch or grasp the unrelated One as the measure or principle of limit within the unlimited space of the Dyad. This activity of the Dyad therein establishes the first number—two—the definite Dyad within the indefinite.<sup>11</sup> To be clear, this limit or measure, the principle that conditions intelligibility, form, and concrete self-existents, is not the One in itself. Rather, the existence of these categories arises from the participating principle's receptive capacity to grasp and internalise, paradoxically, the One without tainting the One of its simplicity. The One is properly unrelated so that the Dyad does not “take-hold” of the One *qua* the One itself but *internalises* it, reproducing “ones” that are “not One” but always a combination of being (ones) and relations (dyadic activities). In other words, all things that come to be, whether number, form, or particulars, are in fact two. In short, as Irigaray desires, all ones are two for Plato, a two that desires or relates to the one, but strikingly also to the itself *qua* indefinite Dyad because the ground for all forms of intellection and perception is the dyadic movement between self and other that can, when aware of its other, find itself in relation to infinitely many horizons of possibility. Interestingly, Aristotle records how intellectual activities correspond to the Dyad's production of magnitude via movement toward and away from the One. As he recounts, the Dyad produces “first Length, Breadth and Depth”, which correspondences to 1) knowledge since “it proceeds in a single line to one point,” 2) opinion since it deals with the “surface,” and 3) sensation since sensation requires body.<sup>12</sup> In short, the beautiful implication of this identification highlights how the body itself is the space or place for the activities/powers of the human soul which resemble the Dyad's own power of relation. In other words, the soul in sensing, opining, knowing resembles the Dyad in its reaching infinitely toward and away from its other and in so doing manifests creative power. So, like the Dyad, individual souls always relate to the other, creating tension/confusion/negation allowing our thoughts, beliefs and feelings to birth something new – something both like the One and the Dyad, new realities possessing dyadic transformative power.

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11 *Metaph.* 987b.

12 *De an.* 404b., see also *Metaph.* 1085a.

In sum, the Dyad is not equal to the One because it is not comparable to it as a moving, fluctuating space of infinite relation. As the indeterminate participating power the Dyad is both/and and neither/nor, which thinks not sameness, not one without the other, but difference itself in its beautiful failure to be “equal” to the One. Yet, in point of fact, the Dyad is greater and smaller than the One, more and less than the One. As such, in this failure or weakness we see the Dyad’s dynamism to move and transform, a power that all things evidence even in their independence, separation and being. In short, from first to last all things infinitely strive or move toward the One but also, via love, away from the One, loving like the Dyad, the transcendence of the other, creating the space for all thought that can never consume or fully grasp its other. This failure bespeaks the infinite and powerful creativity of the philosophical life.

## II. Irigaray’s Politics of the Two

For Irigaray, identity must always be held in check by the limit of the Two that is not derivative of the One. Under her purview, the Two which is derivative supports a normative dualism whereby the One *appears* better or superior than the copy, the bastard image. Likewise, if we conceive of Plato’s Dyad as the negation of the One, it would not itself be an active power, i.e. a real principle. If it were derivative of the One, it too would be like the One and therein would not move towards its other – it, indeed, would be passive. As Irigaray writes of the Two conceived as the negation of the One,

And if this dimension is discussed, it is treated in the passive-active, or agent-object mode, a method that still does not deal with the interactions between two free subjects. Which gives rise to this paradox in our thought: it leaves passion solitary. Is it surprising if our reason is content with a single subject? It goes round in circles in its auto-affection, all else being related, assimilated to it.<sup>13</sup>

For Irigaray the failure to acknowledge the power of the Two empties reason of authentic relation. As she writes, “The horizon of understanding we have debars us from that thought. We discuss, we reason, but we do not think. We finish back at square one, having produced natural and spiritual entropy along the way.”<sup>14</sup> This *unthinking* thought of the One ultimately leads to a God estranged from what constitutes itself, i.e., relative being, relational being, dyadic being. Ultimately, for Irigaray, this leaves the embodied and sensible “unthought” which “endlessly taints reason with dogmatism, with madness

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13 Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 37.

14 Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 36–37.



and prevents it from realising itself as the *measure* of the spirit.”<sup>15</sup>

To be clear, Irigaray's project is not a project of equality—that would be the artifice of careless reason bent on reducing wisdom to sameness, to unity. So rather than living the tension existing between negations, most individuals submit to egalitarian politics, which estranges them from each other, reducing individuals to an unshared and non-existent humanity—to the aloneness of the One. What is left but “conform to an idea of what it is to be human, of what the human being is.”<sup>16</sup> Of course, this is part of Irigaray's feminist agenda. With a politics of Two, like with the Dyadic space of Plato where infinite new identities and relations emerge, for Irigaray, a politics of the Two substantiates new discourses and communities that may not reproduce, that fails to reproduce, antagonistic dualisms wherein only one side matters—rather, like the Dyad, such a politics would note tensions constituting real thought and corresponding lives of productive and ceaseless growth. For Irigaray, such relations conscious of productive Twoness cannot be subdued or consumed but only measured. Like the Dyad, which receives, and takes hold of its other, the limit, the Two can only be *thought* of in its complexity, its relation, which in itself should not be simplified into a whole. Reason, instead of fleeing such an economy of complexity, must attune itself to its capacity to *relate* and participate (to use Platonic language) via both living but also genuinely thinking the other, their independence but also the *space* of a connection that does not reduce all things to the same. In short, for Irigaray, like Plato's conception of reason/intellect that reflects the Dyad's creative power of relation, *thought* would and should allow for the emergence of new spaces of relation between the seemingly powerful and great with what we often regard as weak or less than. When the Two or the Dyad becomes the One,

...so-called passivity would not then be part of an active/passive pair of opposites but would signify a different economy, a different relation to nature and to the self that would amount to attentiveness and to fidelity rather than passivity. A matter, therefore, not of pure receptivity but of a movement of growth that never ultimately estranges itself from corporeal existence in a natural milieu. In which case, becoming is not cut off from life or its placing. It is not extrapolated from the living nor founded in a deadly character. It remains attentive to growth: physiological, spiritual, relational. In this way it masters nothing in a definitive fashion, and reason is no more than a measure, not an appropriation.<sup>17</sup>

Undone by the ideology of mastery, the *thought* that *thinks* the Two, or in Plato's case, the Dyad would then express a different spiritual game altogether, one liberated from the demand for empty equality.

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15 Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 37.

16 Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 38.

17 Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 38–39.

Since the political game of equality confines each individual to their sameness, this counter-world of unequal differences means that subjects can be more or less, weaker and stronger, many and one and, as such, there are real relations and possibilities for “exchange with no pre-constituted object—vital exchange, cultural exchange, of words, gestures, etc., an exchange thus able to communicate at times, to commune (...).”<sup>18</sup>In short, Irigaray rather ironically juxtapositions *two* models of thought based on the One and the Two. The first, which seeks unity as the original, demands historical and essential dependency—a dependency which is operative and oppressive for both terms insofar as it stifles duality and relation for each set. Everything is always ever alone, in this sense, very much like the classical conception of the One. Further, said principle of thought would not communicate or listen to the other *qua* other, but, rather if such a One listens, it eradicates communion by only hearing shared sameness, equality as if there were really such a thing. The second model, for Irigaray, “offers itself as an opening to a field of communication, as a world of the creation and exchange of thought and culture” where stability is not sought. Rather, the Two offers a “groundless ground of communication, the creative and generative locus, which is natural and spiritual, passive and active at the same time.”<sup>19</sup> Irigaray thus concludes that identity must include the *we* of nature, the Two that constitutes the good of inequality, as such inequality makes it possible that the other bears within, like the Dyad, something unique and beautiful, a divine one which is not the One. As a one that is not One, this concrete something can, like the Dyad, move toward its other or away, living in tension with itself, failing fully to grasp the other and in such breakdowns/divisions, finds itself compelled to create anew in thought and in flesh. For Irigaray, such a valorisation of difference would require a social order that is not characterised by “... the form of one plus one plus one, a sort of undifferentiated magma under the monarchical or oligarchic authority (even in supposedly democratic systems)”<sup>20</sup> but something that sounds much more like the activity of Plato’s Dyad, the principle that grounds life always ever philosophising much like Socrates via admitting doubt and ignorance. The life that does not hope to consume others, to make everyone the same, or even to profess the same thoughts, beliefs, or like the Dyad, fail to be One and as such can only relate or participate in what Irigaray deems a kind of touching of the other, the activity of the one which is Two. As Irigaray eloquently, dare one even say Platonically, argues:

This touching upon does not take place without a syntax constituting or bringing about the relation with the other. It is a grammar which *prefers the question* to the imperative; it chooses *predicates manifesting an intentionality* compatible with that of the other; it *privileges verbs expressing dialogue*, doing together; it uses *to, between, with, together*, rather than transitive forms,

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18 Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 45.

19 Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 46.

20 Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 48.

which always risk reducing the other to an object. The *touching upon* cannot be appropriation, capture, seduction—to me, toward me, in me—nor envelopment. Rather it is to be the other's awakening to him/her and a call to co-exist, to act together and dialogue.<sup>21</sup>

Ultimately, while Plato and Irigaray appear to make unlikely bedfellows, the dialectic constitutive of knowing and not-knowing, of endless questioning and repeatedly starting over, of manifest care for the beloved caused by erotic madness or divine pregnancy (see *Phaedrus* and/or *Symposium*) that cause us to ascend and descend, seems to have a point or a line of contact. As most can recall, Socrates' teacher, Diotima, described the erotic power of the soul as that which ever lives and dies (204b-c), moves amongst the indefinite space between eternal and temporal being, a process conducted with and for others, ending not in an Aristophanic consumption of one's other half but a bedazzling vision, the amorous activity of seeing the other in its divine beauty, pregnant and in need of the other through its labour—an image of philosophical ascension that demands we think the Two, the power of the Dyad. So, returning to Plato's failure before his peers and countrymen, he too acted, attempted to move, to think the perplexing other and, despite being misunderstood, even this failure, this miscarriage of thought with others caused by their/his confusion, evidences the erotic paradox of being a unique *one* able to touch, communicate and relate to others in the space of perplexity – the powerful transformative site for our thoughts, beliefs and feelings to be brought to bear in relationship with others who are both *one* and Two.

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21 Irigaray, *I Love to You*, 125.

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