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*Lenart Škof*

## **Breath as a Way of Self-Affection: On New Topologies of Transcendence and Self-Transcendence**

*Abstract:* The aim of this paper is to address the question of transcendence and self-transcendence from the point of view of a new epistemology of breath and breathing. The question how to relate our self-transcendence to the irreducible otherness of the other is one of the key topics in a more recent thought of Luce Irigaray. In this paper, we first present Feuerbach's philosophy of sensibility and continue with some of the major concepts in Luce Irigaray's thought: auto-affection, self-affection, and attentiveness. They then enable us to open an intersubjective space, needed for a new inauguration of ethical gestures, based on our renewed awareness of breath. Breath is presented in the context of Schelling's and Irigaray's thought and linked to a deeper level of ontology. We wind up this paper with an elaboration on Irigaray's and Caputo's teaching on Jesus and Mary.

*Key words:* spiritual breath, self-affection, transcendence, self-transcendence, L. Feuerbach, L. Irigaray, J. D. Caputo, F. W. J. Schelling

### ***Povzetek:* Dih kot način samoafekcije: nove topologije transcendence in samo-transcendence**

Namen članka je premisliti vprašanje transcendence in samo-transcendence z vidika nove epistemologije diha in dihanja. Vprašanje, kako povezati našo samo-transcendenco z ireduktibilno drugostjo drugega je eno najpomembnejših vprašanj v filozofski misli Luce Irigaray. V tem članku najprej prikažemo Feuerbachovo filozofijo senzibilnosti in nadaljujemo z nekaterimi temeljnimi pojmi iz Irigarayjine filozofije: avtoafektivnost, samoafektivnost ter pozornost. Ti pojmi nam omogočijo, da si razpremo intersubjektivni prostor, ki ga potrebujemo za novo inauguracijo etičnih gest, temelječih na prenovljenem zavedanju diha. Dih je tu analiziran skozi Schellingovo in Irigarayjino filozofijo ter navezan na njegovo globljo ontološko raven. V sklepu članka sta na kratko predstavljeni in analizirani učenji Irigarayjeve ter Caputa o Jezusu in Mariji.

*Ključne besede:* spiritualni dih, samoafektivnost, transcendenca, samo-transcendence, L. Feuerbach, L. Irigaray, J. D. Caputo, F. W. J. Schelling

## 1. Before breath is born: in search for a new self-affection

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»For not even spirit itself is supreme; it is but spirit, or the breath of love.« (Schelling 1989, 86)

»Language is nothing but the realization of the species, the mediation of the I and Thou. /... / The word's element is air, the most spiritual and universal medium of life.« (Wartofsky 1977, 182)

»Anyone who knows how to breathe the air of my writings knows that it is an air of the heights, a bracing air. You must be made for it, or else you are in no little danger of catching cold in it. The ice is near, the solitude is immense – but how peacefully everything lies in the light! how freely you breathe! how much you feel to be beneath you!« (Nietzsche 2007, 4)

»Something has happened – an event, or an advent – an encounter between humans. A breath or soul has been born, brought forth by two others. There are now living beings for whom we lack the ways of approaching, the gestures and words for drawing nearer to one another, for exchanging.« (Irigaray 2008, 31)

The question of epistemological foundations of our religious and theological thinking is perhaps one of the most difficult questions in philosophy: it deals with both theoretical as well as practical layers of our being-in-the-world; moreover, it is also related to the most intimate layers of our personal and social life (questions of life and death, family and kin, our values in social and political environments, our ethical attitudes) that we possess and inhabit.

Moreover, for philosophy of religion, today the question would be how to relate our self-transcendence to the transcendence of the irreducible otherness of the other, in other words, how to relate in a new way our most intimate (also sexed) ontological layers with the other, and ultimately God/dess still to come. But it seems that we do not yet have the dialectics to enable this encounter. We pray for this event (Caputo 2013), which resides in a yet unknown place and time, as our longing, but also as our forgetting.

Traditionally, Western metaphysics has armed man (and, mostly, not a woman) philosopher with the knowledge he needed for this encounter with the unknown or dangerous, and at the same moment gave him permission to safeguard the place, he occupied only for himself and which he firmly held only for sustaining and perpetuating this powerful self-affection. With Feuerbach's philosophy of sensibility<sup>1</sup> and with Nietzsche's revaluation of all values (2007, 88) for the first time in the history of Western thought the existing topologies of this kind of selfhood (soul, spirit, subjectivity) have been radically undermined – both from the

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<sup>1</sup> On Feuerbach see my *Breath of Proximity* (2015), chapter 5.

theoretical as well from the practical sense (self-affection as both natural affection in Feuerbach as well as an artistic practice in Nietzsche). With Feuerbach and Nietzsche the philosopher, and a man, is now put into an entirely new relational space that he never before occupied: he is now close to the primordial (macrocosmic) constellation of the elements of nature (water, air, earth and fire), and to the pulsation of his body (the microcosm) – as radically exposed by Nietzsche; he is also reminded of his sex (Feuerbach being first philosopher to address this new dialectics of intersubjectivity)<sup>2</sup> and thus exposed in an entirely new way to sexual difference; finally, with both Feuerbach and Nietzsche for the first time the philosopher was faced with the death of God that he knew and worshipped for centuries.

In this both thinkers (and, as we will see, also Irigaray) are close to the Pre-Socratic thought. Additionally, Nietzsche reminds us in his *Antichrist*<sup>3</sup> that we need to search for truth also in the traditions of the East (i.e. within ancient Indo-Iranian civilizational circle) – such as in his invocation of the Zarathustra, and his high praise of Buddha (in this Nietzsche remained Schopenhauer's best successor; we may also add the Upanishadic thought).<sup>4</sup> Sadly, Feuerbach's philosophy soon went into oblivion, being allegedly superseded by Marxist thought and only resuscitated after more than a century with Irigaray's philosophical project.

Maybe phenomenology was first to learn this lesson in its entirety: Husserl and Heidegger have each in his own way decided to brush away all of the old philosophical sediments from our spiritual legacies.<sup>5</sup> Husserl's phenomenological reduction in his *Ideen* and Heidegger's *Being and Time* are without doubt two of the key events in the history of Western thinking. Since then phenomenology has enabled philosophers to dwell closer to the body, closer to our senses (of ethical/bodily proximity, hearing, caress and touch – as in Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, but also in Nancy, Henry, Marion, and especially Chrétien; but, with one exception<sup>6</sup> – not yet breath – as our »ontological« sense), and, later also in an intercultural sense, to interpret our various life-worlds only as parts of a pluriform world culture, which is hermeneutically open, eventual, and never enclosed into the one interpretative framework, or one Truth. But according to Irigaray, cultivating one-

<sup>2</sup> Feuerbach (1989, 91–92): »Flesh and blood is life, and life alone is corporeal reality. But flesh and blood is nothing without the oxygen of sexual distinction.«

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche (2006) and also his praise of Islamic Spain in chapter 60 of the same book.

<sup>4</sup> Schopenhauer was without doubt the first Western philosopher to deconstruct Hegelian Eurocentric thought on the progression of world cultures on a vertical East-West civilizational axis. But Schopenhauer's methodological problem lies in his inability to escape his metaphysical claims that fully captured his otherwise beautiful and informed knowledge (and respect) of Hinduism, Buddhism and other Eastern- and South-Eastern Asian religious traditions. See on this my paper on Schopenhauer and world religions (2006). On Upanishads see chapter 2 of *Breath of Proximity*.

<sup>5</sup> In this chapter I will not discuss analogous developments in classical American pragmatism (Peirce, James, Dewey, Mead). More on this in my book *Pragmatist Variations on Ethical and Intercultural Life* (2012).

<sup>6</sup> I think of breath in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. See on this important relation Petri Berndtson's essay (2010) on Merleau-Ponty.

self requires a different kind of self-affection which still »seems to be lacking for us Westerners« (2013a, 159).

The self-affection, which already was a part of classical philosophical training from Parmenides to Hegel, but which also extended to Husserl and Heidegger, did not cultivate the relationality as a way of our individual becoming, i.e., self-affection towards the other was not defined in a proper dialectical way – in a way which would safeguard both my subjectivity and the other's transcendence in his/her difference and full autonomy. Of course, philosophy always was relational in a sense of some temporality of me and the other, the Real, or, ultimately, a God, but not in a sense of an »ecstasy of an encounter« (Irigaray 2008, 78) – in an ethically radicalized mode of between-two, based on the ontology of self-affection, sexual difference and our mutual mesocosmic breathing.<sup>7</sup> In a way of an interaction, this very encounter inaugurates and at the same moment safeguards the new radicalized ontology (at first as atheology) of the two, which in its essence is both religious (compare with Irigaray's sensible transcendental) and ethical. What is the ontology of self-affection, then?

In her more recent works Luce Irigaray works on what I would call the sexuate ontology of radical subjectivity.<sup>8</sup> This thinking of her is based on the notion of auto- or self-affection. In order to be able to get to the ontological layer of her teachings on sensible transcendental and breath, it is first necessary to understand this notion of her as proposed in some of her later writings. We find it for the first time in *The Way of Love* from 2002, in the *Introduction*:

»An encounter between two different subjects implies that each one attends to remaining itself. And that cannot amount to a simple voluntarist gesture but depends on our ability for ›auto-affection‹ – another word that I did not find in the dictionary. Without this, we cannot respect the other as other, and he, or she, cannot respect us. It is not a question, to be sure, of extrapolating into some essence – mine or that of the other – but of a critical gesture for a return to oneself which does not stay in suspension in immutable truths or essences but which provides a faithfulness to oneself in becoming.« (xiv)

Later known as self-affection, this is in my opinion a key to understanding of her philosophical teaching on sexual difference and our ethical becoming. Irigaray's greatest invention in philosophy is without doubt the introduction of an idio-

<sup>7</sup> In this chapter, the term mesocosm is used in a sense, as propounded and defended throughout my *Breath of Proximity*. Mesocosm was there interpreted as »a sign of our awakening of an ethical and spiritual breath, which is the task and ontological property of each individual« (36). As a term, the mesocosm originates from a book on Newar religion authored by Robert I. Levy and Kedar Raj Rajopadhyaya (1990). In his beautiful exposition of a Vedic ritual Michael Witzel (2004) argues for the reconstruction of this term within the Vedic magical interpretation of the world. See also Michael Witzel (1997) and on this Škof (2015, 4).

<sup>8</sup> In this paper, I will mostly refer to Luce Irigaray's more recent books, i.e., those forming the so called »third stage« of her thought, among them especially: *The Way of Love* (2002), *Between East and West* (2002), *Sharing the world* (2008), *In the Beginning, She Was* (2013a), and *Una nuova cultura dell'energia: Al di là di Oriente e Occidente* (2013b).

syncratic dialectical dyad into the very core of our ontology and epistemology. This dyad is always formed by two, who are different (sexual difference is here understood as an ontological paradigm, and clearly not as a call to heteronormativity), and »not united by genealogy or hierarchy« (2013a, 160).

Self-affection thus teaches us to become two, without appropriating or annihilating the other as other, or without being alienated from our own becoming in subjectivity. The becoming of subjectivity also refers to an idiosyncratic logic of a difference between masculine and feminine world(s), since men and women have different accesses to maternal genealogies, to the rhythms of nature, and to sexual becoming and belonging through mutual desire and love. We breathe same air, but we breathe it differently. We all want to achieve our humanity, but we can only achieve it dialectically – by respecting our differences in an intersubjective and intercultural sense. Irigaray concludes in her *In the Beginning, She Was* with the following thoughts:

»Self-affection is neither secondary nor unnecessary. Self-affection – which once more does not amount to a mere auto-eroticism – is a much necessary for being human as bread is. Self-affection is the basis and the first condition of human dignity. There is no culture, no democracy, without the preservation of self-affection for each one. Self-affection today needs a return to our own body, our own breath, a care about our life in order not to become subjected to technologies, to money, to power, to neutralization in a universal ›someone‹, to assimilation into an anonymous world, to the solitude of individualism. Self-affection needs faithfulness to oneself, respect for the other in their singularity, reciprocity in desire and love – more generally, in humanity. We have to rediscover and cultivate self-affection starting, at each time and in every situation, from two, two who respect their difference, in order to preserve the survival and the becoming of humanity, for each one and for all of us.« (2013a, 161f)

But still, what does self-affection bring us that is not available to us in Western philosophical history? Here we need to return to Feuerbach and Nietzsche (and their appeal to the body and its practices of self-affection), and also introduce Eastern teachings (Yoga and Buddha: silence as a mode of our self-affection, and related appeal to practice of meditation), which all are Irigaray's strongest influences. They all form the fertile ground for her thinking. With Feuerbach, we are witnessing the first philosophical elaboration of intersubjectivity in the entire Western history of philosophy: according to the German thinker, a man and a woman are two beings, fully dependent on Nature (via food, water, air etc.), but thus also fully dependent on each other. They are sharing each other's finite life-worlds with the interchange of breathing, touching, and various gestures (such as language), which form a dialectical encounter between any pair of two sensible subjectivities. But in this relational process, my and your finitude also confront the limit – an infinite transcendence of the other, which is ontologically unsurmountable.

For Feuerbach, this is the true and first meaning of any religion and love. Nietzsche clearly radicalized this constellation with his appeal to the body and its immanent life and thus with his absolute rejection of any kind of subjectivity having soul or spirit as its immaterial cause, even hypostasized as a God. It seems that Irigaray translates and develops both concepts – Feuerbach’s sensitivity and Nietzsche’s will – to her idiosyncratic notion of self-affection. There is no logical procedure nor moralistic rule (or religious authority) that could guide us in this dynamics and dialectics of self-affection: and this is where Eastern teachings (Yoga, meditation, Buddha’s teachings) enter into the very core of Irigaray’s thought. In Yoga and Buddhism, the predominance of vital and spiritual breath is clearly represented in their meditational and practical methods, where emptying of our ordinary modes of selfhood is a key to the attentiveness (or mindfulness) of ourselves. Now, in order to secure a future world for us, we need to reorient toward dwelling first in our interiority, with self-affection guiding us – in order to inaugurate and enable silence and listening. But to which ontological layer, or reality will this silence refer? To whom are we first destined to listen? This still is a mystery. We first need to create a sanctuary in ourselves – a place for the advent of pure breath, which will be the first sign of compassion and love. As stated in *Una nuova cultura dell’energia*, »thanks to a practice of self-affection« (2013b, 31) we have become settled in ourselves, protecting life as such – in order to be able to share it with the others. Silence and listening (first to ourselves: meditation, Yoga, other spiritual practices) are therefore signs of our self-affection – first towards ourselves, and then toward others (from nature and animals, to human beings and gods, or vice versa).

Silence and listening are two modes of our attentiveness, which first is an ontological, and later, as developed in an intersubjective way, also a moral disposition of ourselves, a genuine and ontological dyadic mode of relationality. As argued in one of my previous papers on Irigaray’s notion of attentiveness,

»being attentive to the needs of others is not a simple act or a moral disposition but something more: it is the ideal – but as a certain passivity, an emptying of ourselves, a labelling with »nothingness« of our everyday aims and goals. In a theological language, all of this would be very close to a state of grace. Irigaray devoted much of her later work to the new culture of proximity and intersubjectivity, based on the elements that may, in our opinion, enable us to construct new ethical spaces in ourselves for the welcome of the other. But attentiveness is first of all related to our self-affection. /... / Attentiveness is a relational virtue, but of a pre-reflective character: it shows us that we, as individuals, have sociality (and God) already in ourselves. Attentiveness thus opens an ethical space of transcendence of the other – of his or her irreducible difference to me, or my subjectivity. Only on this ground an ethical gesture, fully respectful of the other and of the needs of others, can emerge. The intersubjective space has thus been revealed and opened to us in a new way.« (Škof 2016, 904)

In this sense, we first need to respect ourselves, being attentive to our inner breath, which always already pulsates in us (although we may not always sense its weak pulsation and it may be obstructed by various obstacles) and enables us to share it with the others, in a respectful, non-discriminating and non-possessing way.

## 2. Wound of the world: freedom and the love of breath

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*To stand in the shadow  
of the scar up in the air.*

*To stand-for-no-one-and-nothing.  
Unrecognized,  
for you  
alone.*

*With all there is room for in that,  
even without  
language.<sup>9</sup>  
(Celan 2002, 209)*

Now it is time to proceed to the ontology of breath. In *Una nuova cultura dell'energia* we read:

»If we are conscious of a fact that our life exists only because of our breathing, it is necessary to become autonomous beings. This is why we cannot remain alive on the elementary level of life of a newborn at the beginning of his existence. We need to accept the responsibility for our life and transform it to human existence. This is why we need to safeguard and develop our breathing but also to learn to create the reserve of disposable breath [*una riserva di soffio disponibile*]: a soul, which allows us, that our breath is not dependent only to some necessities we are facing. This, in fact, is the first meaning of the word soul.« (Irigaray 2013b, 29)

According to Irigaray, breath must be a path of our spiritual becoming. When we are born, we breathe autonomously for the first time, but our breath still depends on others who give us food, shelter and love. In the beginning of our spiritual life, breath is never uninterrupted, never pure and we do not yet possess the energy by ourselves to bring our breath into an equilibrium and peace. We are born with the body and with the soul (our senses, language), but spiritually we firstly depend on others and thus do not yet breathe in an autonomous way. We do not yet have the reserve of breath at our disposal.

In almost all religions of the world we find a cosmological myth or narrative related to breath energy or breathing, giving us the spiritual guidance and, as it were, the reserve of breath we first need for keeping and maintaining ourselves in our

<sup>9</sup> This poem is from his *Atemwende* (1967).

self-affection, and then for having its share for the others in our compassion. In the form of »wind«, »air«, »cosmic breath« or »spirit« (*lil, ruah, aer, pneuma, spiritus, anima, prāṇa, qi, ki, mana* ...), this substance is the essential link between microcosmic and macrocosmic realities, between immanence (our body) and transcendence (other), enabling finite human beings to access other spiritual beings, cosmos and its gods, ultimately, to become spiritual and express in themselves the infinite. This is the path of divinization and this is what I understand with freedom in a truly ontological way. But Schelling (in his *Philosophical Inquiries into the Nature of Human Freedom*) went with his elaborations on the primordial breath even deeper: for him breath of love (*der Hauch der Liebe*) is the very foundation of God/Ground – which existed even before there was a foundation. He argued that in the beginning (ontologically) there is an original gesture of »co-breathing«, *Konspiration* (1989, 70),<sup>10</sup> which, once it is inflamed with the inner fever, becomes fractured and inflamed with the evil, and the core of our being is wounded. Human being is born from the wound of the world and is essentially and ontologically vulnerable (in Christianity this is then expressed in the doctrine of original sin, in Eastern doctrines it is *karma*). To breathe autonomously, to express freedom in every move of our muscles, to possess the reserve of breath (freedom) for every gesture of our soul, is our highest goal. But how can we achieve this spiritual transformation of our being?

This is a very deep level of ontology (and theology) indeed, and it is in my opinion perhaps the most original account or question posited on the cosmological and theological foundation of human being in the entire history of philosophy. Life is born out of the primordial longing of God within itself, which is love, or, more precisely, the breath of love. Within this primordial breath there is a movement, an exhalation and inhalation,<sup>11</sup> as it were, of this ground, which is the archetype of all pulsation and all life (but also of our ontological wound of death). Within Christianity this movement is clearly expressed in the Trinitarian teaching, where God himself must become incarnated and wounded, in order to be able to bring the hope of salvation to the world; and it is precisely in the Holy Spirit, that Father sends his Son to the world.<sup>12</sup>

The mysterious logic of the trinitarian co-relationality and co-breathing (*conspiratio*) of three divine persons is visible precisely in this primordial and anarchic exhalation and inhalation of the Ground itself, the pulsation of its archetypal life, for Schelling. It is in *pneuma*, as represented by the Holy Spirit, that every living being receives the share of his/her vital breath, as its reserve, which is soul. For

<sup>10</sup> Schelling uses here the rare Latinate-German word *Konspiration*, which he takes from Latin *conspiro* (»to breathe together«; this word is of course related to *spiritus*). See on this my interpretation in *Breath of Proximity*, chapter 3, and especially Jason Wirth (2003, 2).

<sup>11</sup> In one of the most ancient speculative Vedic hymns »Creation« (*Rigveda* X.129, from the around 10<sup>th</sup> century BC), we find the most precise explanation of this cosmic breathing of the Ground/Foundation of Being (That One, or *tad ekam*) itself: »That One breathed without wind by its independent will. There existed nothing else beyond that.« (*The Rigveda* 2014, 1608). I have analysed this Vedic hymn and compared it with Schelling's ontology in detail at many different occasions, see especially *Breath of Proximity*, chapter 3. The poet-philosopher of this hymn argues, that even before there were any signs of the existent or non-existent, of death or life proper, there breathed this first One – by its own mysterious and »independent will« (1608).

<sup>12</sup> Mt 1:18; Lk 1:35. Also for Schelling »God must become Man in order that man may be brought back to God« (1989, 57). But he also knows, that man »is formed in his mother's womb« (35).



Roberto M. Unger, whose experimental pragmatist thinking is in many respects very close to Irigaray's philosophy, Jesus Christ

»was a concentrated embodiment of divine energy /... /, the activity of spirit that we find in our experience of transcendence and that we rediscover at work in evolving nature« (2007a, 261).<sup>13</sup>

We may say that this movement is a paradigm of our own becoming – as a progression of difference from the ground of our being, as already being wounded, and finite, to the possibility of our own infinite longing through the awakening and mysterious grace of this primordial breath. But also of our death. This is how we transcend ourselves and become spiritual and how our finite self is becoming awakened, and infinite. But one more step needs to be taken: it is the question of the role of breath and sexual difference as related to the sensible transcendental and feminine divine. For Irigaray it is of no coincidence that Jesus, as our saviour, has been incarnated into a young virgin since women have a privileged access to the breath:

»Naturally still a virgin, Mary retains the fullness of feminine identity that a little girl has. She is already autonomous in relation to her own mother, and her flesh and breath haven't yet been intimately mingled with those of another human being. Mary is still in communion with herself and with the universe via her breath. She is adolescent, already pubescent, but her way of breathing is still that of a child, or almost. Her body has begun to move and to retain breath in those parts of her that are less in relation with the whole. It is at this moment that the message intervenes. Before her breath might serve in a simple process of natural reproduction, Mary is called by an angel, the messenger or the embodiment of divine breath, to awaken as a woman not only to her vital but also to her spiritual breath. The angel not only shares breath with her, he also speaks words to her to which she listens and responds. The message of the conception of a child doesn't therefore limit itself to a being-moved or to a sharing that is purely material or physical. It is an exchange of words.« (2010, 13)<sup>14</sup>

According to Irigaray, the incarnation of Christ in a young woman marks the advent of a new epoch (new age) of our spiritual becoming, now with a mother (a woman) and her male child (a man) being both chosen for this revelatory and redemptive task. We may here only remember another young woman and a virgin

<sup>13</sup> See also Unger's previous book *The Self Awakened: Pragmatism unbound* (2007b). On cosmic Jesus see Caputo's *The Insistence of God*: »I treat Jesus as a Judeo-pagan prophet and healer, in tune with the animals and the elements, in whose body the elements dance their cosmic dance, supplying as it does a conduit through which the elements flow, and I treat the elements as a cosmic grace which is channelled by the body of Jesus.« (2013, 251) This indeed is a simply a beautiful depiction of Jesus in his cosmo-theological role. Of course, among the four elements, *pneuma* holds the most exquisite position, since his entire body is filled with this cosmic wind, or spiritual energy (»Yeshua was the sort of man whose *pneuma* filled any room that he entered.«). (254)

<sup>14</sup> Here I use with permission Antonia Pont's translation from the French original.

– namely Antigone from the Greek tradition, and Creon who has chosen to follow the diabolic<sup>15</sup> path by literally taking breath and freedom (and possibility for her to share her life and spiritual breath with others in the future) from her – as a woman. Antigone dies, but her death (by herself she has withdrawn her breath from this world)<sup>16</sup> is of divine and redemptory character. Through her radically apolitical and thus ethical act of safeguarding her brother (a corpse) a symbolic burial, she regains for all of us the lost cosmic order.

As Mary has now shared her breath with Jesus, and thus enabled with this sharing a new life – now of a saviour, this gesture of her will open a new possibility for a future epoch (the Age of the Spirit), in which, according to Irigaray, we all will become autonomous in our breath, and when we, men and women, will itself become linked to divine breath.<sup>17</sup> In this way the essence of religion is now affirmed by Irigaray by acknowledging special role of women – as being in a closer relation to the breath of life.

But to become enlightened by the power of self-affection is not possible without grace. For Caputo, Jesus dispersed grace all around the world, and if we would be able to touch his garment, Caputo writes, we could feel this grace being among us, close to us, as an energy, circulating in his body, as filled with *pneuma*, or the divine breath. The pneumatic grace of his body is related to the first breath, he receives both from the Holy Spirit, and from his Mother, being spiritually linked by, as it were, a pneumatic covenant. But the first grace we all receive is in a gesture of sharing of the breath in the womb of our mothers, as already beautifully explained by Irigaray.

This anarchic maternal gesture is a crucial mark of the pneumatic bond between a young woman and a young man, securing, as Irigaray would say, firstly, respect for life and cosmic order, then for generational order, and, finally, respect for sexual differentiation.<sup>18</sup> They all represent and embrace all that we need to preserve in order to safeguard a life and its breath in their immanence – within the cosmos, within ourselves, and within community.

<sup>15</sup> Creon is a paradigm for the progression of evil (the politics of power, tyranny, authority) into the world of free and living breath: »Miming the living, the diabolic does not breathe, or does not breathe any longer. It takes away the air from the others, from the world. It suffocates with its sterile repetitions, its presumptuous imitations, with its wishes deprived of respect for life.« (Irigaray 2004, 166)

<sup>16</sup> Antigone's justice and her life are of a cosmic origin. With his deed, Creon has inflicted this world with the diabolic - with an evil of a cosmic character. See Job 34:14-15: »If he should take back his spirit to himself, and gather to himself his breath, all flesh would perish together, and all mortals return to dust.« The verse 15 reads better in French translation: »toute chair expirerait à la fois /... /«. This precisely is God's spiritual breath as reserve for the humanity, as we will see later.

<sup>17</sup> Irigaray (2004, 168). Also, Irigaray states: »God is us, we are divine if we are woman and man in a perfect way.« (169)

<sup>18</sup> »The maternal genealogy favours the values of life, of generation, of growth.« (Irigaray 2013a, 127)

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