Eclipsing the Real:

Reading Irigaray with Virilio on Nature and Technology

In her work, *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*, Luce Irigaray diagnoses what she deems to be the three most disturbing and destructive tendencies in the West: “the cleverness of technique, the dominion of nature, [and] the forgetting of the fundamental character of the difference of the sexes.”¹ Her work in this same text suggests that in order to resume the work and the possibility of human history, or what she calls “human becoming,” Western subjects must address these failings at the site of the crossroads of culture and nature, singularity and community. Irigaray claims that these tendencies are symptoms of our inability to think at the horizon of sexual difference and hence the ‘question of sexual difference’ is not only an ethical question, but indeed, an ethical imperative if we are to have any futurity at all.

Taking up Irigaray’s challenge to think at the horizon of sexual difference, I specifically address questions of technology—which have a large impact on how we locate ourselves temporally and spatially as subjects. In order to raise further queries about the relationship between nature, culture and technology, I address aspects of Paul Virilio’s work on technology and temporality, suggesting that his analysis of techno-science, ‘temporal compression’ and “the end of space,” offers us important insight into the increasingly rapid elaboration of these destructive tendencies, ultimately showing Irigaray’s call to the question of sexual difference is more urgent today than ever.² Overall, while my discussion may be deeply indebted and informed by these thinkers, I ultimately caution polarizing the discussion of nature and technology into axiological binaries which force us back into articulating unhelpful versions of the very question we are trying to uncover.

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