

**THE PROBLEM OF DISEMBODIMENT: AN APPROACH
FROM CONTINENTAL FEMINIST-REALIST PHILOSOPHY**

By

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For my mother,
the container of the uncontainable,
who gave me birth twice.

Copyright Statement

I hereby declare that the dissertation contains no materials accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions, nor does it contain any materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

Stanimir Panayotov,

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Abstract

The argument of this dissertation is that despite the intellectual gendered burden of the problem of disembodiment I define, it can be employed from within the limitations of a gendered account in feminist philosophy of the continental-realist type. I formulate the problem of disembodiment as rooted in the notion of the boundless (*apeiron*) associated with femininity. Both boundlessness and disembodiment are subject to radicalization in Plato (*chōra*) and Plotinus (*to hen*). Read as a dyad, they culminate in a tendency towards gendered disembodiment, mediated by Plato's soul-body dualism. The dissertation seeks to compare the gendered dimension of disembodiment in the work of Plato and Plotinus and that of the non-philosophers François Laruelle and Katerina Kolozova.

“Part I. The Problem of Boundlessness: Radicalizing Disembodiment” is divided in three chapters, which present an intellectual history of the problem of boundlessness as femininity. I survey the problem of boundlessness as drafting relations between elements and principles and femininity in Greek mythology (Chapter 1), Plato's cosmology (Chapter 2), and Plotinus' metaphysics (Chapter 3). I argue that the relation between death and the female was ambivalent by the time of the Anaximandrian *apeiron* and that it became a subject of radicalization via Plato's *chōra* and Plotinus' One, mediated by the notion of the Indefinite Dyad and the doctrine of divided matter. The problem of boundlessness was subject to conceptual radicalization that led to hierarchical metaphysics and deepened the division between body and soul via the association of femininity, reproductivity and matter.

“Part II. The Problem of Disembodiment: Revising Boundlessness” is divided in two chapters focusing on the contemporary relevance and importance of the problem of disembodiment as a way of revising boundlessness. I present and explain the legacy of the Platonic *chōra* and the Plotinian One and what they as a dyad entail for contemporary

continental philosophy. I offer (Chapter 4) a trajectory for a continental feminist philosophy interpretation of disembodiment by combining continental feminist philosophy, non-philosophy and new realism. With the aid of Laruelle's non-philosophy, I explain how and why *chōra* and the One can be used for/from continental feminist philosophy, followed by a presentation of how *chōra* and the One are revised in continental philosophy from non-philosophical and new realist perspectives. I then develop (Chapter 5) a continental feminist philosophical interpretation of and approach to the problem of disembodiment from a realist perspective by problematizing continental and feminist philosophical anti-realism. The approach presented is itself an argument in defence of a feminist engagement with disembodiment and the dissertation's contribution: a non-philosophical contribution to the problem of disembodiment via a continental feminist-realist philosophical approach. The approach is offered through the intersection of continental feminist realism and non-philosophy, and partially new realism. My conclusion is that an affirmative project and consideration of disembodiment for continental feminist philosophy is possible via a non-philosophical and new realist reconsideration of the One.

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Introduction

The subject of consideration in this dissertation is an intellectual problem: that of disembodiment. I say “intellectual” because the problem is approached in a comparative way and the approach does more than a philosophical analysis and transcends “history of philosophy” with a preference for history of ideas and intellectual history. That history, however, is itself philosophical. In the following introduction the reader will be guided into this problem in a two-fold manner: what is the problem of disembodiment and what is the argument that I make by way of defining it? Below I present sections which define disembodiment, delimit the scope of my argument, present the aim, the questions and the contribution of the dissertation, and include sections on important terminology and methodical problems encountered throughout, followed by a chapter-by-chapter outline.

1. Disembodiment as A Problem and Concept

The problem of disembodiment is central to this dissertation. Although the two major terms of engagements - boundlessness and disembodiment - are sufficiently interrelated and constitute a pair of concepts, disembodiment looms large as the focus of investigation. The reason for such zooming in is that the former term, as I will show, is engulfed by the latter. The thesis begins with a survey on the genesis of the problem in mythology and pre-Socratic thought, and then moves on to the problem itself in Plato, in order to present the general argument on disembodiment as a problem.

In this dissertation the term disembodiment is used conceptually. As a concept, it applies to the role of the human being as she relates to ancient cosmology and the problem of the creation of the universe. Disembodiment, to be disembodied means to articulate abstractly

a desire to transcend the limitations of the factum of embodiment.¹ To abstract such a desire into thought is already an engagement with a program for being disembodied. At this point of abstraction, disembodiment becomes a problem: a problem because it starts with its opposite and will struggle, as I show, to prove its self-sufficient primacy over the body as its alleged origin. Disembodiment is thus the opposite of the material and bodily origin of the human being, formally defined as soul, spirit, noema, etc. It is a flight into the desire and ideal of not having a body, implicitly positing that it is better (a moral statement of the Good) to *not* be embodied. Thus, the concept first and foremost describes a direction: a flight *from* embodiment, an escape *to* disembodiment. Articulating disembodiment is a conceptual battle over the preternatural primacy of soul over body, of cause-and-effect relations.

The concept defines *tendencies* within historical flows of both pre-discursive and discursive thought that are gendered. The gendering proper applies to the result of the creation of the universe: nature (*physis*), inclusive of the human body, itself inclusive of biological sexual difference. Disembodiment thus applies to the human body, in its sexed and gendered aspects, as a problem in the context of what the human being faces as the result of creation: the material world of *physis* that is divided from that body. These types of thought are gendered because they propose theories for the origin of the universe and fragmented theories of matter (of matter as the substance of nature), and they always have to do with gender because they compartmentalize the elements and principles of the created world through gendered terms and figures. The gendering is present throughout from mythology to philosophy because a divide within matter (and thus nature) itself is introduced, according to gender as a principle of differentiation (of natural elements and forces) within origin narratives.

¹ The literature in on embodiment feminist philosophy is enormous. I have used it selectively with respect to my problematic and with a focus on the historical periodization. See on this point Heinämaa (2010, 142-3); Mjaaland, Sigurdson and Þorgeirsdóttir (2010, 1-16); Blackman (2008, 34-5). My major reference for theories of embodiment in classical antiquity and Hippocratic medicine is Holmes (2017, 17-49) and Holmes (2018, 63-88).

More specifically, disembodiment defines *a tendency within the transition* from mythological to discursive/philosophical thought. I claim that this tendency gradually radicalized (on “radicalization,” see below 4.c) the dividing of matter (as spiritual and bodily) according to gendered difference, typically present within theories of elements. The resulting discursive product of disembodiment is a divided notion of matter whose male and female counterparts serve often different explanatory roles in explaining both human embodiment and the origin of the universe.

2. Overview of the Argument

The general argument that will be defended in the dissertation is that despite the intellectual gendered burden of disembodiment, it can be employed from within the limitations of a gendered account in feminist philosophy of the continental-realist type. Initially I argue that the notion of boundlessness as found in mythological and pre-Socratic thought is subject to radicalization culminating in a tendency towards gendered disembodiment. I then argue that the radicalization of the motif of boundlessness is associated with femininity and is carried out trans-historically through notions such as *apeiron*, *chōra*, *to hen*, and especially through Plato’s soul-body dualism. While Plato instituted and radicalized the dualism, Plotinus radicalized what was already Plato’s radicalization as an escape motif: the tendency towards gendered disembodiment of the ancient human being (*anthropos*). By stepping on the work of feminist continental philosophers and historians of ancient philosophy and critical considerations of female principles in ancient and late antique philosophies, I investigate the roles of Plato and Plotinus for crafting and deepening the problem of disembodiment as gender-dependent, and accept that there is a gender-relative negative axiology of embodiment. By following the work of the representatives of non-philosophy, François Laruelle and Katerina Kolozova, I argue then for a feminist consideration of disembodiment in contemporary speculative and

continental feminist thought, which can transcend the erstwhile male-gendered idealization of disembodiment, of the idea that ultimately it is better to escape your body and return to the immaterial world of souls. In particular, my argument is built on revising the anti-realism of continental feminist philosophy, via the work of new/speculative realists, which is a precondition for enabling a feminist argument from disembodiment.

3. Aim, Questions and Contribution

By employing the concept disembodiment thus defined, the aim is to provide a synthetic presentation of the problem that cuts across and presents a continuity of the problem in different historical periods: from mythology and pre-Socratics via Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy to the contemporary fields of feminist continental philosophy, non-philosophy and new realism. Using consistently “disembodiment” in a transhistorical manner does away with a plethora of related notions (such as immateriality, incorporeality, defleshing, discarnation, etc.) in order to weave the intellectual continuity of the problem.

Due to the comparative dimension of this dissertation, the historical span of the problematic is both of the *longue durée* type and asynchronous. It runs from the Greek mythology of the 6th century BCE via Plato’s philosophy in the 4th century BCE and then directly plunges in the historical realities of Plotinus’ school in the 3rd century CE, to then consider the problem in 20th and 21st century schools of thought: continental feminist philosophy, non-philosophy, and new realism. Engaging with all of these fields and writing an intellectual history of the problem of disembodiment allows me to ask questions about the relation between boundlessness, gender, embodiment and disembodiment. This trajectory enabled me to ask: Is disembodiment gendered? Can it be assumed that embodiment became a philosophical symbol of femininity? Why did disembodiment become a philosophical ideal? Is disembodiment a masculine flight from the embodied world? These and related questions

animate the dissertation in the pursuit of both writing the history of the problem and accounting for it from a gendered perspective. But this perspective is not an apology of the notion of embodiment, neither is it an attack against it.

The fields engaged with are not all contributed to: while, strictly speaking, I work with material taken from mythology and ancient (Plato) to late antique (Plotinus) philosophy, via continental feminist philosophy to non-philosophy and new realism, the dissertation's contribution comes from the specific intersection of the last three fields. What the argument presented seeks to perform is to make a non-philosophical contribution to the field of continental feminist philosophy from a new realist point of view, arguing in defense of the utility of disembodiment for contemporary feminist thought writ large.

4. Terminology

4.a. Tendency

Because I claim that disembodiment features tendencies within the transitions of the types of thought researched, here I make the case of using “tendency” not as an analytical term, but a descriptive one. What I mean by “tendency” throughout this doctoral dissertation is that the material surveyed reveals a certain *desire* in various writers to prioritize an idea that can be (or was) otherwise flexibly used for different ideational projects. The tendencies that I identify are not intentional and conceptual projects hell-bent on structure or causation. I use this word because it does not qualify the resulting problem of disembodiment as the result of causation. The term qualifies the problem rather as the *sum total* of willful, desired ideational trajectories within a given textual corpus and/or evidence. “Tendencies” means that the ideas whose trajectory I outline were variable positions that, for reasons I detect, ended up as a particular

project of disembodiment whose correlates (e.g., boundlessness) cannot be seen as necessary causation.

Because my argument begins with and is reliant on the fragmentary nature of the initial evidences available and left to us by philological and doxographical work on the notion of *apeiron*, I qualify my argument about disembodiment as a tendency towards a disembodied philosophical anthropology, because the very nature, the very form of the fragment allows to diagnose precisely tendencies within the text. In certain cases, e.g., the pre-Socratics, the textual ambivalence of fragmentarity pairs with the content of my argument: that the tendencies within mythological and pre-Socratic thinking abandoned a certain type of gendered ambivalence about the origin of the universe.

4.b. Female/Feminine

Throughout this dissertation, I use the critical distinctions between female and feminine, and between femaleness and femininity provided by Moi ([1986] 1989), in order to account for the conceptual differences and consequences between biological and socio-cultural aspects of gender. Moi distinguishes “between ‘feminism’ as a political position, ‘femaleness’ as a matter of biology and ‘femininity’ as a set of culturally defined characteristics” (ibid., 117), which I follow. The very distinction between femaleness and femininity is an opposition against the patriarchal essentializing of “women,” which conflates the two terms (ibid., 123). The conceptual disentanglement of the two, according to Moi, always entails a feminist debunking of metaphysics as patriarchal type of thought. My general argument on disembodiment does not endorse entirely the correlation between patriarchy and metaphysics Moi makes. However, the distinction as it is used helps to “disentangle the confusion” of theory and power which is constitutive of the problem engaged with. This does not mean the “confusion” is *always* essential and necessary in the material surveyed.

4.c. Radicalization

In this dissertation the Platonic tendency towards monism (the late *Timaeus* and the Unwritten Doctrines) will be called radicalization. The monist tendency will allow the development of an implicit philosophy of disembodiment that ossifies the relation between boundlessness and femininity. The term “radicalization” is used throughout and is applied to “philosophical material” found in Plato and Plotinus, and more specifically the notion of *chōra* and/as boundlessness.

The term radicalization is taken from the work of François Laruelle (Laruelle et al. 2013; Laruelle 2015). In operating with the term, I rely on Smith’s thesis that the Neoplatonic One is radicalized in Laruelle (Smith 2012, 24). It is a useful concept because it helps explain continuous processes within the history of philosophy as exposed by Laruelle, on the one hand, and because its aim is the objectification of what he calls “philosophical materials,” on the other hand. Laruelle reduces these materials to their “*chōra*” (he uses the term in the sense of a transcendental minimum of the material objectified). His engagement with the term is particularly useful, because the objectification and reduction of philosophical materials to their “*chōra*” is the *radicalization* of the material captured by a philosophical concept. What Laruelle means more specifically by radicalization is the following: Before the procedure of radicalization, the philosophical system scrutinized is to be turned into transcendental material - a “*chōra*” (Kolozova 2014, 3-4). Once the material is turned into a *chōra*,² Laruelle calls the ongoing process of working with it either “radicalization” or “transcendental impoverishment” (of materials/concepts). The aim is radicalizing concepts and philosophical materials (Laruelle et al. 2013, 143) from the perspective of the Real.

² This includes the very concept of *chōra* by Plato, which too can be subject of reduction to its own *chōra*. The Laruellian use of *chōra* is a second-order objectification that makes *chōra* its own object of inquiry.

In Laruelle, thinking in terms of the Real is always thinking in terms of the One. What is important about the term radicalization throughout is that once the philosophical material is radicalized/transcendentally impoverished, the procedure tries to establish a “syntax of the Real” (also called “syntactic uni-versalization,” Laruelle 2015, 25) from which thinking in radical or radicalized concepts is made possible (Kolozova 2014, 63). Radicalization is uni-versalization, it tries to isolate a “kernel of universality” (Laruelle 2015, 21) in the material, and it is done in the name of a syntax of the Real (ibid., 73). Such syntax posits that the Real is as the One, since every claim on the Real is one about the One. That is, there is a reversibility between the two terms, but unilateral reversibility from the Real.

Laruelle’s example of radicalization is related to Marxism and he best shows what radicalization is by trying to isolate certain notions by Marx (such as “class struggle”) from their doctrinal and commentarial traditions in order to relate to their more embodied, literal counterparts more easily, by isolating the core of their transcendental minimum. I take this approach with respect to tendencies (monism) and notions surveyed (such as *apeiron* and *chōra*) and ultimately disembodiment. Laruelle’s Marxian example of radicalization is useful because my argument about the radicalization of an implicit philosophy of disembodiment in Plato (e.g., radicalizing the soul-body dualism) via the notions of *apeiron* and *chōra* can follow and uncover the material, embodied counterpart behind the terms of investigation: in the case of boundlessness, namely, women and their femininity. Through radicalization I describe a continuous process towards the *idealization* of disembodiment I identify in the history of philosophy and history of ideas, and I thus show that one does not need to be or become a Platonist or an anti-Platonist in order to work with a notion rooted in a certain tradition. One can merely reduce the reality of the object of investigation to its minimally warranted conceptual and material counterparts.

4.d. Cosmic Optimism and Cosmic Pessimism

In the problem of disembodiment and its origin I identify two competing versions of optimistic and pessimistic views on embodiment stemming from Plato's dialogues, and I call these cosmic optimism and cosmic pessimism. Both terms have religious and specifically Christian background, and both are post-Platonic developments, however, their use can be justified by looking at their traits, especially within Plato's work.

The term cosmic pessimism is related to and derived, but also reworked, from Gnosticism and gnostic scholarship, and has gained traction in philosophy due to the work of Eugene Thacker (2015). For Thacker, cosmic pessimism is defined by despondence in the areas of moral and metaphysics. Because of the irredeemable nature of embodiment and its consequent suffering, the moral of cosmic pessimism favors inexistence; for the same reason, metaphysically, our world is the worst possible world existing (Thacker 2015, 10-12). Cosmic pessimism is generally a view that riffs on gnostic eternalism that disallows change and a voluntarist embrace of the evil of matter, and it does not problematize the identification of evil, matter, and femininity, but assumes it. The term indexes a contemporary fetishization and glorification of embodiment as evil and radicalizes the Platonic and gnostic view of the body as the prison of the soul.

Unlike the term cosmic pessimism, the term cosmic optimism has a longer and more elaborate history. It is generally associated with the 18th century optimism in science and cosmology after Newton and the gradual relaxation of the social role of natural theology, and is used in 20th century philosophy of religion, but also science (for example, the idea of finding extra-terrestrial life is rendered as cosmic optimism). It is applied and traced back to genesis myths. Beck (1971) claims that in genesis myths, cosmic optimism is warranted by two projections: that there is a good God who rules, and that the dominant tone is optimism (ibid., 380), sustained by the idea of the unity of people on earth. Optimistic myths involve stories

about both deluge and destruction and redemption (ibid., 385, 387), so they combine both optimism and pessimism, but the optimism prevails because of the projected good nature of a benevolent God, which recasts cosmic optimism as theodicy and intelligent design. Strictly put, cosmic optimism is partial cosmic optimism. Hick claims that cosmic optimism is a trait of post-axial religions (1989, 2010) and that all of them exhibit soteriological structure (1989, 56-7; 2010, 160, 163) which in different religions is expressed in gospel-like form. Because there is a good God, our reality ultimately cannot be not-good. As in Gnostic pessimism, there is a “wave of world-denial,” but the denial which rests on the problem of human suffering is transcended by the limitless possibility of a benevolent reality which outstrips individual existence. In short, the pessimism of post-axial religious thought is overridden by a selective cosmic optimism because there is an eschatological structure of reality which the human cannot grasp against her own experience.

Generally, both cosmic optimism and pessimism are united by the problem of human suffering, and by a God-driven universe, and both include opposite elements in order to account for their own explanatory agenda of embodied human reality. While cosmic pessimism laments the endless and insufferable world of embodiment in terms of a cyclical and inescapable present of perpetual return to suffering, cosmic optimism transcends suffering and embodiment because its *eschaton* includes a notion of unembodied future which warrants the possibility of God-driven benevolence. This eschatological opposition, tied as it is on both time and suffering, is also present in Plato’s work (see Vallega-Neu 2005, 8, 11) and partially leads to a radicalization of and preference for disembodiment, which will be clarified in Chapter 2.

5. Allegoric Interpretation of Plato’s Works

Because the work of Plato frames the problem of disembodiment as relevant for the historical trajectory I outline, and because I seek to prove a continuity between Plato and

Plotinus on the problem, I have chosen to use the so-called allegoric interpretation of Plato. The allegoric interpretation is almost as old as Platonism and it corresponds to elitist and inegalitarian epistemic tendencies in Plato's thought. The Neoplatonists were the best and most articulate example of allegoric interpretation which nurtured a sense of esoteric containment and dispersal of Plato's ideas.

The allegoric interpretation of Plato is correlated with esoteric and orientaling tendencies (see Burkert 2008; Burkert 1995, 91-2) which themselves radicalize Plato's elitist proclivities. The Tübingen school associated in modern day with this interpretation mirrored the "oriental" Neoplatonizing forces in instituting the Unwritten Doctrines (Dodds 1928; Tate 1929). Supporting the so-called oriental influences in the Unwritten Doctrines tied closer "allegory," "esotericism" and "disembodiment," because the esoteric access to a closed off language allows only a very elite fraction of philosophers the ideal of human transcendence. Tate (1929) helped to enforce the allegoric interpretation as a method of reading Plato without singling out the Neoplatonists as aberration.³ The orientaling thesis provided a division between Platonism and Neoplatonism based on the rejection of the allegoric approach. I follow the allegoric interpretation as a continuous one, which started with the ancient notion of Platonic "undermeanings" (*hyponoiai*) and is now meant as "allegory," or the assumption that often the text "says something other."

6. Aristotle's Hylomorphism and Its Role in Feminist Philosophy

Aristotle's hylomorphism posited that *chōra* is *hyle*: matter is substrate/stuff. The Platonic *chōra*, identified as it is by Aristotle with *hyle*, is identified in feminist literature with need and Ananke (see Bianchi 2014; Cooper 2006, 4-7 is a useful summary.) Aristotle claimed

³ His article ends on a note suggesting Plotinus radicalized allegory, but that should not be read as orientalism, a stance which at the time was further dispelled by Dodds (1928).

that while form is *morphe* and is beautiful (*Metaphysics* I.A 1078a36), matter is *hyle* (substrate, stuff) and is ugly (matter desires form, “like the female which desires the male and the ugly which desires the beautiful,” *Physics* I.9 192a24), while for Plato it was the receptacle. This is the so-called hylomorphism (*Metaphysics* VII 1029a).

Accepting Aristotle’s identification of *chōra* and *hyle* is consensual in feminist philosophy largely because of two sources: III.6, where Plotinus discusses *hypodochē* and *hyle* (see Butler 1993, 16-17), and the work of Luce Irigaray (1985; 1998) on Plotinus. Reading *chōra* as matter has become *locus classicus* in feminist studies of ancient philosophy because of interiorizing Aristotle’s identification *chōra-hyle*. While investigating the particular feminist philosophical interest in the Platonic *chōra*, I gradually became aware that neither the *chōra*-as-matter formula is to be found in Plato, nor is its interpretation by Irigaray and many other feminist philosophers justified, for the simple reason that it is an Aristotelian intervention. The question why so many feminist philosophers have embraced this intervention cannot be succinctly answered in this dissertation. Rather, what should be spelled out is that there has been an “aristotelianization” of Plato’s *chōra*, just as there has been a neoplatonization of Plato (see 3.B.1ff.). Here I can only claim that the reason behind this academic habit is Aristotle’s outright misogyny in both his *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. Since it is very hard to claim that Plato was an *explicit* misogynist (see 2.A), a feminist re-reading of the canon can more seamlessly problematize what it qualifies as false and gender-free universality by polluting the source with Aristotle’s disparaging remarks on women. As a result, the work of Irigaray in particular has been instrumentalized to identify *Republic*, *Timaeus* and *Enneads* as threading the same line of excluding the feminine from participation in both form (metaphysics) and polis (politics). This is aggravating with regards to Plotinus’ views on matter, who held that it can partially participate in the realm of forms, to which Irigaray does not do justice. Plotinus disagreed with Aristotle, since he was able to divide matter in matter “here” and “there” (see 3.C). But the

division posed a concern: Is there matter in intellect, is there anything material and embodied in what grasps matter? Plotinus went a long way to solve this dilemma. Irigaray's reading and its influence rejects that there is one.

Given this Aristotelian interpolation of Plato's cosmological *chōra*, Aristotle's hylomorphism becomes a cornerstone for feminist philosophical analyses of Platonism regardless whether the operative assumption is that he is either somatophobic (and thus anti-women) or not. This is the reason why in this dissertation I have struggled to some extent with Irigaray's influence and the consensus it has brought about on feminist theorizing on *chōra*-as-matter.⁴ Influential theorists have claimed and sought to prove that matter is not the principle of evil or the source of disorder (Corrigan 1995, 13; see *Physics* I 192a14-16). What is more, feminist philosophers such as Witt (2004, 4-5) have even defended hylomorphism (see *ibid.*, 119 for a defense of a normative theory, and 121-3 on hylomorphism and gender). Elsewhere Witt (1998, 118-37) finds that Aristotle attached the norms of his culture to his hylomorphism. However, this is not a reason to think that the cultural norms of the time somehow predated and brought about his views about metaphysical norms. In short, the legacy of Aristotle's hylomorphism is not a closed debate for feminist philosophy, and its use needs to be questioned particularly in continental feminist philosophy on account of Irigaray's work, because the ramifications of that interpretation not only symptomatically embrace a model of misogyny to be generalized, but also because the interpretation is then transposed to later sources, such as Plotinus (Sharkey 2016, 35-49 on sex and gender with matter; 99-105 on the challenges of hylomorphism for feminism). The consequence of this feminist embrace of hylomorphism are also radical for reading Plotinus' theory of matter because the hylomorphic theory additionally obfuscates the scholarly debate whether matter is generated or not (see 3.B.4): a question that

⁴ The same applies to the more recent work of Butler (1993), who responds to Irigaray's and Kristeva's texts on *chōra*, authors I have dealt with in detail in my master's thesis *Chōra: Femininity and Space in Plato's Timaeus* (Panayotov 2011).

is fundamental for trying to formalize Plotinus' views on embodiment, and a question that is too hastily dismissed on account of Irigaray's reading of both Plato and Plotinus.

7. Chapters Outline

The dissertation is divided in two parts. "Part I. The Problem of Boundlessness: Radicalizing Disembodiment" provides an account of the intellectual history of the problem of disembodiment from the times of Hesiod to the realities of Plotinus and presents the philosophical material which is radicalized and culminates in the philosophical idealization of disembodiment. Part I consists of three chapters. "Chapter 1. Disembodiment and Boundless *Physis*: The Mythological and Pre-Socratic Situation" discusses the genesis of the problem of disembodiment in Greek myth and Pre-Socratics, setting up the discussion through formulating the problem of boundlessness. Boundlessness is treated via a survey of Greek mythology (mythic female figures) and fragments from pre-Socratic philosophy ("elements" and "principles"). I present and typify representative examples of the relation between femininity and boundlessness. In the discussion on pre-Socratics, I review single- and multiple-element theories and the transitioning from mythological female figures to philosophical female principles as conceptual abstractions of natural elements and forces. I then move to a discussion of two theories about sexual reproduction that influenced the relation to matter and nature: vegetation and sexual division, and I focus particularly on Empedocles and summarize his cosmology and zoogony. The chapter aims to prove that the problem of disembodiment is preceded by a pre-Platonic ambivalence and variation concerning the relations between femininity, elementality and death, best expressed in boundlessness as a problem in pre-Socratic thought. In the chapter conclusion I claim that the transition from the mythology involving the boundless and female principles and impersonation to the philosophies that discuss the boundless as those principles is varied and ambivalent, especially with relation to

female im/mortality and death. “Chapter 2. Disembodiment and Metaphysical Boundlessness: The Platonist Condition” articulates a continuity between mythological and pre-Socratic boundlessness in relation to femininity and Plato’s cosmology. This continuity is presented by firstly presenting Plato’s soul-body dualism and by secondly presenting his cosmology and the notion of *chōra* from the *Timaeus*. The chapter offers a trajectory of thinking the body and embodiment in Plato, summarizes his views on the body and embodiment, and aims to show that he developed an implicit philosophy of disembodiment. Plato’s views on the body and women were correlative to becoming and change, and *chōra* was framed as Plato’s major reference to the problem of becoming and, with it, of difference. I show that there was a transition from the mythic female boundless to the philosophical female *chōra* and a theory of becoming which introduced hierarchical metaphysics, and which transcended the *apeiron*, elemental pluralism, and the Empedoclean zoogony. Under Plato’s soul-body dualism and cosmology the boundless as the feminine *became* a concept via/as *chōra*: disembodiment was radicalized. To make the argument, I review the continuous use of *chōra* in several dialogues and typify them as dialogues expressing cosmic optimistic and pessimistic tendencies, and along with that somatophobic/psychophilic tendencies are also summarized and discussed. In the chapter conclusion I claim that the boundless was subjected to hierarchical metaphysics, and the notion of *chōra* was the first philosophical manifestation of this change: a move away from physical to metaphysical boundlessness, which led to the first sound articulation of the problem of disembodiment. “Chapter 3. Disembodiment as Neutrality: The Plotinian Solution” presents the problem of disembodiment in Plotinus by focusing on the notions of the One, the Indefinite Dyad and the doctrine of divided matter. I introduce the notion of the One as situated in Plato’s soul-body dualism and ask whether there is a more radical interpretation of female boundlessness in Plotinus’ metaphysical system of ascension to the One. This discussion continues the investigation of *chōra* and relates it to Plato’s Unwritten Doctrines and Plotinus’

One and highlights a continuity between *chōra* and the One through the notions of dyad and monad in Xenocrates. I then discuss Plato's Unwritten Doctrines, emphasizing the originality of the notion of the One, and discuss the importance of the Indefinite Dyad and its femininity and of the *Parmenides*. I offer an account of Plotinus' views of the body from feminist philosophical sources and focus on critiquing Irigaray's reading of Plotinus' notion of matter, which helps to re-open the discussion whether he can be thus seen as somatophobic and "anti-feminist." I formulate the problem of the One's grammatical neutrality and critique the argument that neutrality entails the incidentality of correlating femininity and evil and show that the grammatical neutrality of the One is a tendency towards disembodiment. Lastly, I analyze three treatises which present the notion of divided matter and matter as evil and privation and highlight a continuity between Plato's *chōra* and Plotinus' notion of matter, mediated by Aristotle's hylomorphism, through the association of femininity, matter and evil. I argue that Plotinus radicalized Plato's soul-body dualism and psychophilic tendency with his notion of the One. He abstracted the One away from its initial Pythagorean identification with maleness, culminating in the One's grammatical neutrality as an escape motif to disembodiment. In the conclusion I claim that through the Indefinite Dyad, in Plotinus boundlessness and indefiniteness were condensed in his notion of divided matter, as well as matter as evil and privation, and he introduced it in order to salvage the notion of the One from the world of embodiment, matter and gender, culminating in grammatical neutrality and the de-gendering of the One.

"Part II. The Problem of Disembodiment: Revising Boundlessness" consists of two chapters which focus on the contemporary relevance and importance of the problem of disembodiment. Part II conjugates together the fields of continental feminist philosophy, non-philosophy and new realism in order to set the stage for the argument and contribution of the dissertation. This part is an account and revision of the problem of boundlessness to the extent

to which femininity, elementality and boundlessness are congealed in the feminist notion of embodiment. Because I seek to offer a feminist account of disembodiment, these two chapters are to be read as a revision of the notion of embodiment-as-boundlessness whose philosophical primate is the identification between women and the elemental/the boundless. “Chapter 4. The Problem of Disembodiment in Continental Philosophy” is a generalized exposition of how the legacy of the Platonic and Plotinian notions of *chōra* and the One matter for contemporary continental philosophy in general and continental feminist philosophy in particular. The contemporary relevance is important because the debunking of disembodiment as pseudo-neutrality carried out especially by feminist philosophers has led to a dominant anti-realist and favored treatment of embodiment. The relevance of the problem is introduced in two ways: via Laruelle’s non-philosophy and his non-philosophical inversion of the One, and his notion of *chōra*; via Laruelle’s critique of decisionism, further aided by introducing the field of new realism and the critique of correlationism (Meillassoux, Harman). I enable a discussion of disembodiment from the perspective of continental realism. Setting up this discussion shows a way to bridge the Plotinian disembodied One with the continental philosophical tradition, which has long disabled the One via anti-realist philosophies, including feminist ones. I also present continental feminist readings of *chōra* based on Irigaray’s reading which accept the identification of *chōra* and matter and results in a defense of the embodied nature of female subjectivity. Subsequently I engage with Kolozova’s work which combines all these fields (non-philosophy, new realism, continental feminist philosophy) and her critique of the subject in feminist poststructuralism, as well as her reading of *chōra*, proceeding from a non-philosophical treatment of the gendered subject. Combining all of these fields and authors, and grounding my presentation on Laruelle and Kolozova, allows me to develop a non-philosophical continental feminist reading of *chōra* and to explain how philosophical materials (such as *chōra*/One) can be used and radicalized for/from continental feminist philosophy in

particular in order to consider a revision of the category of disembodiment. By offering such a revision, this chapter offers only the trajectory for a continental feminist philosophical interpretation of disembodiment.⁵ “Chapter 5. Disembodiment as A Problem for Continental Feminist-Realist Philosophy” synthesizes the research carried out on the problem of disembodiment and leads to my non-philosophical contribution to the problem of disembodiment via a continental feminist-realist approach. I offer such a contribution in the form of an argument from and approach to disembodiment, building on non-philosophy and new realism. To do this, I present continental anti-realism and (new) realism, and relate them to continental feminist philosophy. I develop the critique of the notion of embodiment with the aid of both Laruelle and Koložova, which helps me to arrive at an original non-philosophical continental feminist-realist interpretation of disembodiment. My argument and contribution rely on, and are an extension of, Koložova (2006; 2014) and her critique of feminist poststructuralist theory and her mixture of the latter with non-philosophy and new realism. Zooming in on her argument, as well as the very niched literature intersecting continental feminist philosophy and continental and new realism, I illuminate what the non-philosophical critique of continental feminism entails for the problem of disembodiment.⁶ The relevance of disembodiment I unearth via such trajectory requires an approach to the problem: a continental feminist-realist approach to disembodiment. My own interpretation defends a continental feminist-*realist* approach to the notion of embodiment as it is rooted in the theorization of female boundlessness and the notion of *chōra* and the Indefinite Dyad, correlative to the One, and traditionally read by feminists as somatophobic, disembodied and falsely universalistic.

⁵ In Chapter 4, I have relied partially on some of my published work. Section 4.A.1, pp. 153-5 reproduces some altered passages from Panayotov (2018b, 71-2), and pp. 159-60 from *ibid.*, 73, 75; and Section 4.B.1. pp. 164-6 features reworked passages from Panayotov (2016b).

⁶ In Chapter 5, I have relied partially on some of my published work. Section 5.A.1, pp. 190-195 features substantially updated version of a published dictionary entry on realism (Panayotov 2016c); Section 5.A.3, pp. 207-8, includes reworked passages from Panayotov (2018a, 194, 200-1), and pp. 209-10 is revised from Panayotov (2017b, 135-6).

The argument offered by my interpretation is one favoring and from the position of disembodiment, because the non-philosophical and anti-correlationist thesis allows a disembodied non-anthropogenic epistemological position stemming from the One's immanence. This position is not anti-realist because it proceeds from the unilaterality of the Real as defined by Laruelle. I develop such interpretation in order to show that the realist position could be maintained from a continental feminist point of view without having to denounce the materialist defence of embodiment.

Part I. The Problem of Boundlessness:
Radicalizing Disembodiment

Chapter 1. Disembodiment and Boundless *Physis*:

The Mythological and Pre-Socratic Situation

The argument that will be defended in this chapter is that there were *tendencies* in mythological and pre-Socratic thought that paved the way for an explicit philosophy of disembodiment in Plato. I discuss the genesis of the problem of disembodiment in Plato and Plotinus, and I make an investigation into those tendencies in mythical (pre-philosophical) thought and in the fragments left by some pre-Socratics, with the help of arguments from feminist poststructuralist theories and from feminist philosophy to pre- and post-Socratic/post-Platonic attitudes towards embodiment.⁷ The chapter aims to prove that the problem of disembodiment in Plato and Plotinus is preceded by a pre-Platonic ambivalence concerning the relations between femininity, elementality and death.

Throughout the chapter, and in order to present and develop in the next chapters the general argument laid out in the Introduction, I trace what I see as gendered ambivalence in both mythology (female mythic figures⁸) and pre-Socratics (i.e., “elements” and “principles”⁹) in the period 6-3 BCE, in order to show that in the post-mythological world, the relation between women *and* death became problematic, leading to a male anxiety over reproduction: an anxiety that was reliant on correlating women, death, boundlessness and formlessness.

By “gendered ambivalence” I describe the varying relatedness of femininity, elementality and im/mortality. This includes a discussion of the notion of the “*apeiron*,” which

⁷ Including such arguments makes it possible to later account for some analytical deficiencies in feminist poststructuralism with regards to the place of embodiment in ancient cosmology from the perspective of non-philosophy and new realism, fields which constitute the comparative aspect of this dissertation and are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. In those chapters the distinction between feminist philosophy and feminist poststructuralism, fields that are defining for my work, is also made and maintained..

⁸ The “figures” are treated more as metaphorizing examples of the tendency toward disembodiment rather than mere metaphors with a subtext.

⁹ I discuss “elements” and “principles” as these were the discursive units introduced by representatives associated with both mythology and pre-Socratic philosophy.

will be rendered as the boundless. Focusing on *apeiron* will help me to show that the material engaged with reveals a move away from boundless *physis* and developed a metaphysical version of *physis* conceptually through a more metaphysical notion of femininity without disrupting the continuity between femininity and boundlessness, but by changing the implication of that linking in the process of abstracting natural forces. Boundless nature was given a hierarchical locus, and hierarchical metaphysics became possible. I will show that the transition from the mythology involving the boundless and female principles and impersonation to the philosophies that discuss the boundless as those principles is varied and ambivalent. There were two distinct steps; the ambivalence of boundless femininity with respect to power and death was interrupted. The formlessness and boundlessness of natural forces evolved from mutability of elements to the irreducibility of the femininity of elements, from personification to concept, which opened the way to a later metaphysical attitude illuminating disembodiment as something good in itself.

1.A. *Apeiron*/Boundless

The two terms *apeiron* and *boundless* are synonymous, bearing in mind that the other preferred translation is “limitless,” whose preference conveys a sounder continuity with Plato’s Unwritten Doctrines and their importance for Neoplatonism. I prefer the term “boundless” because it has been used consistently in feminist philosophy throughout the 20th century, and because I use references from feminist philosophy to account for the problem posed by boundlessness. The term describes the association of femininity and elementality in general and femininity and non-discursivity in particular; the latter association has been positively valued in opposition to what feminist philosophers qualify as male-centric Western metaphysics (Lloyd [1984] 2004; Clark 1999). There exists a plethora of terms such as boundless, limitless, formless, indefinite, unlimited, and infinite in the intersection of feminist

poststructuralist and feminist philosophical bodies of literatures, and those fields often use these terms interchangeably. I prefer “boundless,” yet I try to use the other related terms as mutations of the initial dyad *apeiron*-femininity I scrutinize, although I will avoid endorsing those terms’ interchangeability as much as possible. Where the discussion takes on the “formless/ness” qualification, this will be to indicate those moments where the association between female and form point to a more or less misogynistic tendency, which comes from the Aristotelian hylomorphism discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 3 and which imputed to form a higher metaphysical standing: a post-Aristotelian tendency projected anachronistically into the pre-Socratics. Where I use “boundless/ness,” this will be to evaluate femininity as it is often being recovered by feminist philosophers from ancient and mythological narratives, where boundlessness is not superimposed onto origin narratives as a female qualifier of deprivation and lack (i.e., lacking goodness). The associations between female, matter, boundlessness, maternity and evil have led to a differential and questionable status of the female in ancient Greek cosmology. The question here is how is it that the female figures, elements and principles moved closer and closer to the boundless? How did they, after mythology and the pre-Socratics, continued to be associated with boundlessness, matter and corruption?

1.B. Theorizing the Boundless

Feminist philosophy of antiquity proposes a return to the formless (or the non-eidetic) in pre- and post-Socratic philosophy in order to explain the predominantly negative valuations of femininity in ancient philosophy.¹⁰ This return opposes what has limits (*peras*), or the initial

¹⁰ As already stated earlier, here the use of formless/boundless/limitless is somewhat synonymous. The described return to the “formless” in contemporary feminist philosophy corresponds to the return of/to the Real and nature in new realism, as well as in new materialism, fields I will discuss in the later Chapters 4 and 5. Here I want to merely indicate that the consequences of a re-theorization of boundlessness need not be reduced to feminism only and that the discussion will be re-captured later.

four elements doctrine (*stoicheia*), to the boundless (*apeiron*). It is best represented by the accounts of Irigaray (1985, 2012), Kofman (1991) and Lovibond (2000); in non-philosophy and new realism, it is found in Kolozova (2014, 79-103). In these readings, the feminine is akin to *apeiron*. Reasoning according to metaphors is proximal to the boundless and matter (and the embodied); reasoning according to concepts is closer to the bounded, idea and form (and the disembodied). This set of readings has interiorized the hylomorphic dichotomy which allows reading the canon in dichotomously gendered terms.

Feminist philosophers of antiquity offer arguments defending the idea that the female principles in ancient philosophy are often represented as second-order principles or having less meaningful place in mythological and metaphysical schemas. Lovibond suggests that the lower status of the feminine in ancient cosmology is effectuated via the devaluation and downgrading of the formless, projected on to the female body. The more formless, the less powerful a force is, whence femininity's cosmologically contested role. This association between formlessness and natural force becomes the motif behind the political contestation of women in Hellenism (Loraux 2006). The cosmological and political obsolescence or superfluity¹¹ of the (female) boundless comes from the embracing of the limit (*peras*) as "good" and the limitless as "bad" (Lovibond 2000, 16). As Kodera says, "'being without a limit' also implies a characteristic inclination to be infected by (potentially unwanted) forms" (Kodera 2010, 26-7). Hence becoming and liquids, metaphysical and physical, were easily interchangeable, leaking into each other. Metaphysical becoming and physical liquids putrefied each other, and "woman is able to tap the inexhaustible reservoirs of nature's procreative power" (Carson 1990, 143, 154). This opposition is as old as the Pythagorean table of opposites:

Limit (*peras*) is contrasted with the *apeiron* (the indeterminate or formless - a character attributed, in this way of thinking, to matter), and together the two make up one of ten pairs of opposed terms which Aristotle says were recognized by the Pythagoreans as ontological or cosmological "first principles." The pairs (which in fact include "good" and "bad") each comprise a "good" and a "bad"

¹¹ *Überflüssigkeit*, Songe-Møller's term, was proposed in response to Konrad Gaiser's work in 1984, whom I discuss in Chapter 3, see Songe-Møller (2002, xi, 4, 9-10).

term, though in some cases the values attaching to them are derived from a highly specific philosophy of mathematics; “limit” falls on the “good” side of the table, prefiguring the role of “forms” or universals as ideal paradigms in middle-period Platonism. For us, though, the important point is the appearance of “male” and “female” in the list. (ibid.¹²)

When feminist philosophers try to answer how to re-interpret the boundless, they implicitly or explicitly address the mythic dimension of reproduction; however, reproduction becomes a metaphysical problem only after mythological thought. The problematization of boundlessness extends to the entire history of Platonism, and to Plato’s predecessors. Koderá claims that the “Platonic tradition [has] a characteristically ambivalent attitude towards embodiment” (Koderá 2010, 51), and he gives an example with a metaphor of matter called “nymphomaniac matter.” This is a late 16th century metaphor taken from Renaissance Platonists Leone Ebreo and Alessandro Piccolomini (ibid., 33-47, with the Latin word for prostitute *meretrix*, and thenceforth *materia meretrix*), where Piccolomini goes on to compare matter to nymphomania, building on a passage by Aristotle’s *Physics* (II 193b31-194a6) which posits that “flesh and bone” are subject to change. Koderá states that the association between nymphomania and matter describes “the ontological whoredom of the embodied world” (ibid., 43) and that nymphomaniac matter indexes femininity as corrupting matter - corrupting because disrupting with change what is otherwise unmoved, stable and bounded. The feminist philosophical approaches to embodiment and the boundless since ancient philosophy onwards treat and explain femininity as valued more negatively. The problematization of boundlessness as it is associated with femininity here is studied before Platonist philosophy and I claim the ambivalence about gender persisted until the pre-Socratics.

The ancient theorizing of creation was a theorizing also of embodiment, and embodiment put on the agenda of cognition gendered metaphors for an even more grandiose

¹² The table traditionally features ten opposites, and the tenth - male/female - is sometimes disputed as being part of the original listing, although the ideal number among Pythagoreans was ten. Here Aristotle’s influence of understanding the Pythagorean system (*Metaphysics* I.A 986a22-986b2) is formative for a retrospective critique of the original source, whose stability relies on embracing the historical account of the hierarchies as undergirding the critique of those hierarchies.

pursuit - cosmogony and cosmology. In cosmology, the female body became the placeholder of male anxieties about reproduction. The late Renaissance worry over matter's nymphomania indexes anxiety over reproductive control, but also over conceptual clarity, and embodiment presents a fundamental stipulation for such clarity. As Carson says when describing the dirtiness of ancient women (the *porneia*),

[t]hat which confounds categories or transgresses boundaries is polluting, that which is so confounded or transgressed is polluted and threatens to pollute others. ... Adulteresses pose a special threat to the public hygiene of the city; their dirt is something they carry with them like a contagion. ... Dirt is a matter that has crossed a boundary it ought not to have crossed. (Carson 1990, 158)

Much before womanhood would be framed as “nymphomaniac matter”, harlot, and even mother, in mythology, thought about matter belonged to the domain of physics and explaining nature. It is necessary to review the problem of associating boundlessness and femininity in mythology and pre-Socratics because without analyzing the ambivalence (especially with respect to death) these domains entailed about femininity, femininity's role in post-Socratic thought and metaphysics cannot be explained. And investigating these two domains for gendered ambivalence - from physics to metaphysics - describes a process of becoming, which is tied to reproduction and femininity.

Detecting gender ambivalence has to begin with the idealized assumption that whenever philosophers provide a distinction between Hellenism and Hebraism, the former is equated with change and the latter with obedience (Kofman 1991, 12-13; Lovibond 2000, 19). The transition from physics to metaphysics concerns changes: changes specifically around this ambivalence, changes that are decisional in the last instance, changes that qualify matter in a gendered way.

The cosmological opposition between form and formless is derived by the (pre-)modern dyad rationality-masculinity, which Lloyd (2004) has identified, and Bordo (1987; 1988) has singled out as soul-body dualism. In Lloyd's reading of ancient philosophy, femaleness was symbolically associated with unreason and the dark powers of conceiving, making them closer

to earth and death (Lloyd 2004, 2-3; similarly, Carson 1990). The opposition is not derivative of Plato's legacy and is older: from the earliest cosmogonies and cosmologies of the pre-Socratics onwards, the female has been identified with the formless and the boundless. It is the Hellenistic philosophical continuity that tied femininity to earthliness in thinking about *change*. Lloyd's implication is that the body was figured as an impediment to knowing the truth about the reality of universe; the value-laden-ness of the boundless crossed the threshold of femininity. The identification between women and the boundless expressed a political worry about women's political nature and participation in what should have been an autochthonous political geometry of horizontality (= male equality). The analysis in the next two sections surveys how the way was paved for a discrete progression of Platonic soul-body dualism and its resulting tendency toward disembodiment by looking at examples of female figures that can be seen as threatening male life and virtues.

1.C. Mythology, the Pre-Socratics and the Boundless

In this section I will review and typify examples from mythology and mythmaking (Hesiod and Homer) and will discuss female mythic figures that have a strong relation with constant becoming and elemental change in order to account for a change in attitude to women and death. The exposition will help to show two things: that boundless *physis* was given a hierarchically lower place, later enabling hierarchical metaphysics, and that there is a gender ambivalence with respect to power and death. My objective is to show how gender and femininity operate in myth with respect to boundlessness.

Mythology and pre-Socratics are a polarity and cannot be read in isolation. Kofman (1991, 11) claims that philosophical (pre-Socratic) thought began with metaphorical language, and it was subsequently devalued. Metaphorical language is inferior to later Hellenistic discourse (Plato and Aristotle): it conceals rather than reveals truth, since metaphor is

subordinated to concept. It is seen as inferior discourse and useless polysemia. Polysemia is boundless with respect to truth and is gendered. Zuckert (2009, 427) claims that pre-Socratic philosophy was not able to articulate itself in general truth and principles, because it did not hold that any such truth was tenable. Myth was a precursory form of truth and was central to understanding the use of natural forces and their anthropomorphic translation as gods, deities, or as the later development of the four roots/elements. The indistinct character of gods and natural forces suggests that for the people of pre-Hellenistic times, religion and physics worked together to explain reality (Campbell 2010; Burnet 1914, I.1).

Hesiod is the first to organize figurations of the divine into an ordered system. This makes him the first representative of the transition from theogony to cosmogony. Hesiod is considered both a mythologist and thinker (Vamvacas 2009, 11; see *Theogony* 27-8). He introduced an organized system of choreographed personifications of powers and placed importance on gendered conflict (Songe-Møller 2002, 81), in two ways. First, he gives a name to women (*gyne*) and only after that he referred to the original race (*anthropoi*) as men (*andres*) (ibid., 9). Before the creation of women, men (the humans) represented mankind, but now women represented only themselves, for their creation brought about the very distinction between kinds of *anthropoi* (*Theogony* 590; Vernant 1986, 56 on the parallel between death and women). In the *Eumenides*, Aeschylus' original Greek speaks of both mother and child as *xenos* - friend but also guest (Songe-Møller 2002, 6), the implication being that there is no natural bond between the two, and that the woman is a mere midwife. In Hesiod's Pandora myth women become the "race of women" as the evil for men (*kakon anthropoisin*, *Theogony* 570) and as the "destructive race of women" (*oloion esti genos kai phyla gynaikon*, *Theogony* 591). Second, he introduced Chaos as relative to women. Hesiod is connected to female boundlessness as he relates it with death and formlessness, derivative of Chaos - a male god. In Hesiod, Vernant finds Chaos as the preceding element before any separation (*chorismos*)

(see Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1984, 29; on its etymology, *ibid.*, 26-7). Death and boundlessness are here not bounded by a female figure. The nocturnal forces (the “first Night,” *Theogony* 120ff.), the female and the Chaos are etymologically united by *chaino*, derived from *chasko* (Vernant 1986, 56), meaning “to open up, gape open,” and by extension to swallow. In describing the death of Achilles, later Homer uses the verb *amphichaino*. Vernant (1991) builds on the work of Frontisi-Ducroix (1988) and links the female monsters with Chaos and the impossible image of the unimaginable - and hence the impossibility of seeing (female) monstrosity. The examples below are related to both monstrosity and boundlessness, and, on Vernant’s argument, to Chaos, thus initially representing the female as potent boundlessness.

1.C.1. Mythological Boundlessness

Below I present and typify representative examples of the relation between femininity and boundlessness from mythology. I approach them through the Paris school of comparative anthropology of ancient Greece (Gernet 1981; Vernant 1991; 2006¹³). Basing his work on his teacher Louis Gernet and his studies of ancient Greece’s juridical foundations, and influenced by Lévi-Strauss’ structuralism (Humphreys 2009, 103), in 1964 Vernant founded the Centre Louis Gernet de recherches comparées sur les sociétés anciennes at École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris (since 2010: ANHIMA, Anthropologie et histoire des mondes antiques). Vernant, Vidal-Naquet, Loraux, de Polignac et al. moved away from literary positivism and Durkheimian sociology prevalent in their day (*ibid.*, 12, 93). Literary positivism demands that the reader/scholar of ancient myths should abide only by the text given (the so-called “*sola scriptura*”). Vernant and Loraux (1994; 2006) in particular also stimulated research on gender. Following those writers, Slapšak (2010; 2013) in turn based her work partly

¹³ The term monster/monstrosity introduced above is an interpolation of the school. It captures a culture of welcoming, and not shunning, death (see Vernant 1986, 54).

on Savić-Rebac ([1932] 1984), a contemporary of Gernet, who in the 1920s independently focused on issues related to Eros and gender. Those authors moved away from literary positivism towards a more materialist and constructivist approach. Savić-Rebac claims that one cannot divorce poetry and speculation, personal and impersonal.¹⁴ She further claims there is a “universal lyricism” (see also Slapšak 1984, 16) in myths and an untenable disjunction between the personal and the poetic, between the lyricism of the impersonal and the speculative of the personal, and her approach sought to disrupt this boundary (ibid., 25¹⁵).

Slapšak (2013) and Kolozova (2000; 2003) represent best the synthesis between Vernant and Savić-Rebac in contemporary classics. Following Savić-Rebac’s universal lyricism and Vernant’s notion of myth-making (the idea that myths are not closed systems of thought), Slapšak (2013, 10) offers the term *mythourgy* which focuses on myths as *creative action* and on “discursive aspects of production of myths, thus avoiding the pitfalls of value-laden classifications” (Slapšak 2010, 122). The language and materiality behind mythology are expressive of the ambivalence between personal and impersonal as an open system of thought. This ambivalence gives way to analyzing the material within mythology as expressive of tendencies and transitions towards an ambivalent attitude to boundlessness and gender. My analysis below treats the examples as mythourgical since the focus on discursive aspects gives the potential to “open a new semantic field for the study of myth” and because this approach “entails loose temporality, or historicity” (ibid., 123). Additionally, the notion of mythourgy aims at the deplatonization of myth (Slapšak 2013, 11). The examples below are often treated as more radical than they are because from a later perspective the very idea of myth (see

¹⁴ For example, she accused Rohde’s capital work on the concept of *psyche* (1925) in divorcing these two categories.

¹⁵ For example, there is a transition between the personal poetry of Euripides and the impersonal speculation of Plato, just as there is a transition from an impersonal Plato to a more personified one (see Marcuse 1947, ix on Wilamowitz-Möllendorf’s reading - or rather avoiding - of Plato’s biography).

Republic III 394b; *mythologountes*, *Republic* III 415a) is platonized. Thus, the notion of mythourgy helps deplatonize the mythology of female boundlessness I present below.

1.C.1.a. Boundless Immortality: The Gorgons, the Keres and Circe

My first group of examples includes the Gorgons and the Keres, and Circe. I present them because they exhibit a flexible relation to both death and power, and to the problem of male and female im/mortality, thus posing a challenge to masculinity in myth. The name Gorgons comes from *gorgos*, meaning “grim, dreadful” (the Sanskrit etymology is onomatopoeic, as in the growl of a beast), their hair was made of venomous snakes, and turned those seeing them into stone. The name Keres comes from Ker, meaning goddess of death/doom, but also plague. A “Ker” in singular usually means destruction. They were the daughters of Nyx and were female death-spirits. Their sisters the Moiras controlled Thanatos; the Keres were often the pure, solitary form of death itself (see Kolozova 2003, 27).

The Keres and the Gorgons relate to the qualities of monstrosity, deathliness and femininity; they represented death proper (Vernant 1986, 59). The Keres have a more explicit relation to a divine heartlessness and mercilessness (see *The Iliad* XV 18.535ff.), figuring as unstoppable furies “assuaging their bloodthirsty hatred” (Vernant 1986, 55). Their uncomplicated relation to bringing death can be explained through their relation to form. A Gorgon is not a person or a face (*prosopon*) but a head (*kephale*) (Frontisi-Ducroix 1988 *apud* Vernant 1986). Gorgons have no heads proper before the head being cut off. The impossibilities of female faciality culminate in terror, in both fascination and repulsion (Vernant 1986, 61), as faciality and head-ness are articulated once mortality enters the scene. Mercilessness is best portrayed by Circe. Unlike the Gorgons and the Keres, Circe was ruthless, and her relationship to death was unilateral and rather spontaneous. She is killing out of affect, and for entertainment

(see *Odyssey* 10.505 on killing her husband the king of Colchis, and 10.135-12.156), including other women (e.g., turning Scylla into a sea monster because Glaucus rejected her).

The monstrosity and facelessness are enabled by female divine immortality. This changed with Medusa's mortality, whose monstrosity and form were divorced in a way that defined femininity (see Carson 1990, 154) as a figure of the incommunicable, transfigured into the formless, "now a nothing, a nonperson" (Vernant 1991, 144). Her potent formlessness was ruptured by her mortality: her head became a weapon of Perseus, the man who beheaded her, and who gave it to another woman, Athena, which then became an adornment and part of her shield and the imagery of justice.¹⁶

These mythic females were defined by shapelessness, monstrosity, and deathliness (the ability to bring death). Their femininity was not defined by their reproductive qualities. They are all monstrous and nocturnal beast-like, shape-shifting female creatures, whose divinity and power are defined by their uncapturable transformability.¹⁷ Shapelessness, monstrosity, and deathliness make them examples of boundless and powerful female immortality, with amorphic power of femininity, and this power is powerful-because-formless. These females are anthropomorphized representations of natural forces whose manifestation is a dramatized boundlessness. The latter often translates into behavioral traits such as deceptiveness and mercilessness. As a result, those female mythic examples are expressive of deceptiveness with respect to truth, saying deceitful lies (*pseudoi logoi*) (Vernant 1986, 56 on Apatē). Similarly, Hesiod has Hermes implanting in Pandora's chest "deceitful words and more lies" (*Works and Days* 373, 788). The boundless immortality of those mythic females appeared possible on two

¹⁶ The so-called *gorgoneion* is an amulet with apotropaic function which is said to have been used by Athena and Zeus.

¹⁷ This aspect of the female figures is not tied to "femininity." The shape-shifting Zeus is also defined by such transformability. My examples are reduced to female figures because they undergo a specific kind of transition to a decreased transformability and relation to death. As with male examples, the heroines of Homeric literature mirror societal roles (Lloyd 1968, 195). On a recent recasting of female mythological transformability, see Manchev (2016).

accounts: bringing death and telling lies. In mythology, the qualities of shapelessness, monstrosity, and deathliness culminated in a female boundlessness *and* immortality.

1.C.1.b. Mortal Boundlessness: Calypso, Pandora, Athena and Chthonia

My second group of examples includes figures whose relation to death becomes more ambivalent. In those examples monstrosity and immortality are less pronounced, indicating that the female boundlessness is a subject of some restrictive changes. The examples express a transition from imagining women and their power as unfettered by death and embodiment to being encumbered by the effects of mortality.

In the *Odyssey*, the Ker's mercilessness transitions to Calypso's tamed relation to death. Both Circe and Calypso (they are often confused since Odysseus ultimately escapes them both, e.g., Plutarch, *Beasts Are Rational* 985ff.) have had relations with Odysseus. While Circe literally manipulated him for her pleasure, Calypso lulled Odysseus to an oneiric-like life of pleasure. This difference in relations is important because it highlights how female figures intervene in male narratives of heroism and moral adventure. Calypso is a significant example of transitioning to a more ambivalent relation to death that redefines the implications of boundlessness. She does not embody Circe's murderous isolationism and excommunication; she is simply not dehumanizing. Calypso, a nymph, hides (her name comes from *kalyptein* - to hide, Vernant 1986, 62). She promises Odysseus immortality and reprieve from age and death, leading him to a "sort of nowhere-land into which Odysseus has disappeared ... where he lives a life as though in parentheses" (Vernant 1991, 107). Her offer for immortality proposes an indefinite form of livelihood as opposed to the telos of heroic life. But heroic life is only achieved through undying fame (*kleos apthiton*) and beautiful death (*kalos thanatos*) (on both, see Kolozova 2000, 36-53, 138-47). The episode's moral is about a temporary diversion from male immortality caused by the amoral formlessness of femininity. Odysseus leaves because

he sees the life of boundless eternity as a formless heroism (“a heroic refusal of immortality,” Vernant 1986, 63), devoid of the horizon of immortalization by death.

The male preference for tragic death over endless life correlates gender and mortality, and it is defined by the creation of women in the Pandora myth. She is responsible for the “deadly race and tribe of women who live amongst mortal men to their great trouble” (*Theogony* 591). Before her creation, mankind, made of men only, knew no death; after Pandora, women and death became a unity (Vernant 1986, 59). The myth reshapes the mythological boundlessness of femininity: it is not about the *birth* of women, but namely their *creation*, and thus artificiality. The post-Pandoran world is the world of death, of humanity’s mortality, of post-divine artifice. With the Pandora myth, female boundlessness is reduced to a boundary within the self-sameness of male *anthropoi*.¹⁸

The sexual division wrought by the Pandora myth caused a worry over male identity. Songe-Møller describes it as an anxiety and the problem of male self-sufficiency¹⁹ via the work of Loraux (1994), stemming from the myth of the foundation of Athens as the guardian of the polis. Hephaestus created Pandora and is the father of the first Athenian, Erichthonius (Apollodorus, *Library* 3.14.6), who expelled Amphietyon, became king of Athens, and set up the wooden image of Athena in the acropolis. Sandford (2010, 44) notes that “[t]he origin of the first Athenian is both divine and earthly.” The creation stories are similar but the purpose of the myth of Erichthonius is different: Erichthonius and the Athenians are autochthonous and self-same, and Pandora is a “concession to a sad reality” (Songe-Møller 2002, 10). The myth feeds a male fantasy of autochthonous self-reproduction (Sandford 2010, 44) which instituted

¹⁸ Again: the introduction of qualities in figures is not exclusively one-sided. For example, if Eros can be read as the male analogy of Pandora, he too has a “primordially vegetative and ... lightful nature,” in similarity with Apollo and Mithra (Crepajac 1984, 9).

¹⁹ The notion of self-sufficiency is defined and criticized by feminist philosophers (James 2000, 41; Friedman 2000, 218). Even though it was stabilized in Cartesian philosophy (Stoljar 2013), some scholars trace male self-sufficiency back to creation myths and mythology too (Loraux 1994; Lovibond 2000). It is criticized because “man stands for original unity, whereas woman is the *other*” (Songe-Møller 2002, 10).

the very form and idea of *isonomia* (Karatani 2017, 11-17; Humphreys 1978, 83) and the democratic polis. The dream of a world without women *after* Pandora was an exercise in testing the ground for the boundlessness and formlessness of *physis*. The myth of Erichthonius was a response to the question how this dream can survive after sexual division, and one part of the answer was the war-like and masculinized, de-sexualized (Slapšak 2010, 47) Athena, who inherited only a petrified aspect of female vengefulness: the incrustated head of the mortal Medusa on her shield.

Relating autochtony and maleness via Athena as the problem of male self-sufficiency was preceded by the collective figure of Chthonia: deities who were representative of agricultural societies and bore the sign of fertility, and were also representative of the conflict between “the Eleusines, the lightest place of the Demeter cult, and Athena” (Slapšak 2013, 120). The collective name Chthonia was used for a group of female nymphs at the very periphery of the Greek ancient world - they were the guardians of water, wellsprings, herbs (ibid., 120-1), and, according to Slapšak, this made them look dangerous. Unlike the later Athena, they had rich sexual lives. If nymphs and sirens had rich sexual lives, it is because they guarded procreation and sustained the food chain, not the polis. Athena’s body, presiding over autochtony, was no longer representing boundlessness; her embodiment follows and is followed by the order of statehood. Athena became the generalized image of subsuming agricultural sexuality into an already divided statehood and, with that, the symptom of weakening the ruthless relation to death, and thus boundlessness.

The two groups of examples represent a varying attitude to death in female deities. Instead of the female figuration of immortality, the Greeks preferred the male mortal condition (Vernant 1986, 64). The transition from the Golden Age of female, deified, shape-shifting immortality in myth and lyric towards the male heroic death and mortality in tragedy and drama highlighted that the male heroic overcoming of death, as the antithesis of the female

transcendence of death, was the true and worthy kind of life-in-death that secures the avenue of immortality. Gendering the relation to death, due to sexual division, dualized mortality. Heroic male death was defined dualistically, in terms of a female polarity representing a boundless relation to mortality (Calypso). The creation of deadly women made love and sexual reproduction a necessary evil. The homosocial²⁰ generation of the universe was over. The interruption in the relation of women to death (Medusa, Calypso) was redefined by the story of the creation of women as the story of the sexual division of mankind (Pandora). This led to a changing relation between female deathliness and boundlessness, traceable in the move from the gods to the humans: from the political geometry of divine immortality to the geometric democracy of anthropic finitude. The trouble of the latter was the division of the sexes, and this trouble was relaxed with emasculated femininity (Athena). Other female figures began to embody both femininity and maternity (Demeter, Hestia). The post-Pandoran female's mythology of the boundless moved away from non-reproduction, monstrosity and inconsequential death towards maternity, reproduction and mortal life. The world of birth was the world of multiplicity, and this alone isolated it from the ideal of unity and self-sameness in the polis' *isonomia*. The death of Medusa became the life of Athena incrustated in her shield. Female boundless immortality became mortal boundlessness defined by reproduction.

In this section I surveyed examples of female boundlessness that present shapelessness, monstrosity and deathliness. With these examples, I made a summary of the ancient Greeks' mythology of the female boundless. These figures were material myths/stories responding to the problem of embodiment and reproduction. The mythmaking behind them has happened because embodiment was not a problem in the pre-Pandoran world, as it did not entail mortality and finitude in a sexually undivided world. The female figures discussed expressed the gendering of boundlessness, and this boundlessness of natural forces moved closer to mortality,

²⁰ On the notion of homosociality, see Hartmann (1981, 1-41) and Sedgwick (1985, 1-5).

embodiment and sexual reproduction in post-mythological thought, which in turn enabled tendencies towards preferring disembodiment.

1.C.2. Pre-Socratic Boundlessness

In this section I review the changes within the female boundless in the transition from mythological narratives to pre-Socratic philosophy, with examples of the gradual loss of gender ambivalence in boundlessness. This is done by looking at the transition from female figures to abstract principles as conceptual abstractions of natural elements and forces. The transition included some gendered ambivalence, specifically regarding the moral evaluation of female control over natural forces. What Songe-Møller calls “tragic ambivalence” (of myths, 2010, 84) is thus differentially gendered in pre-Socratic philosophy.

I organize my sources according to single-element (Heraclitus, Anaximenes, Anaximander and Parmenides) and multiple-element (Anaxagoras and Empedocles) theories and group the authors according to their interpretation regarding oneness/unity or multiplicity of elemental creation. I argue that in the transition to abstracting femininity (from physics to metaphysics), the linking of women and the boundless did not de-escalate: it is precisely the continuity of the link that will serve as a tendency for the formation of an idealization of disembodiment. The linking of women and the boundless did remain the structure of supporting a notion of femininity that is more and more associated with embodiment. But the linking added an explanatory model to that structure that was morally charged. The move towards abstracting principles went hand in hand with their gendering, but the move was not radical.

The general transition I describe in this section is from theogony/cosmogony towards philosophy/cosmology. The particular transition within this general process is from female boundlessness expressed in anthropomorphic terms to conceptual abstractions that do remain gendered. Concepts and elements are expressions of the earlier metaphors and gods (male or

female). The general process of transitioning to philosophical speculation is traditionally explained with the interest in the beginning (*protista*) of it all and the all (*panton*) itself. Contents-wise, the transition accounts for the Ionian interest in the transitoriness of the elements to the problem of the eternity of the world and what is stable, i.e., purely physical, in the created world (the Italian schools and Parmenides' Sphere, cf. Kirk, Raven and Shofield 1984, 73-216 and 216-319). To follow this transition, two steps should be minded: (1) the gross qualification of pre-Socratic sources as (crude) materialisms is an Aristotelian framing; (2) the Eleatic school largely rejected the Ionians and their rather non-hierarchical universe. The discussion of the boundless in the very terms of the Ionians has, strictly speaking, nothing to do with a distinction between form and matter as it is understood via Aristotle's hylomorphism. So, the discussion of this transition below aims to describe the end of god-like immortality and the beginning of sexual division in humans. Cosmogonically, the formalization and distribution of male and female qualities/principles is reliant on the separation of both sky and earth and men and women.²¹ The real problem was to "find better institutions" (Douglas [1970] 2004, xii-xiii) that will organize elements and principles in a sustained notion of orderly speculation.

As in mythic thought, in the pre-Socratics there is also ambivalence whether those elements are gendered and if so, how does this order the speculation of reality and reality itself. The most fundamental problem in the pursuit of the scientific speculation are precisely the four elements and the way they are divided or not. The female boundlessness is a subset of that problem. *Apeiron* precedes distinction - of form/matter, male/female - as it describes the cosmos as a body, an abstract cosmos, but *apeiron* can still be researched through gendered perspective if we apply the interiorized hylomorphic schema.

²¹ The literature discussing these processes in terms of grossly ahistorical binary schemas is traditionally the one of comparative religion, and writers such as Mircea Eliade, whose reliance on binarism (up and down, left and right) is questionably suitable. Anthropologists and sociologists such as Gregory Bateson, Mary Douglas, Pierre Bourdieu and André Leroi-Gourhan have contributed greatly with data on "primitive mentality" that entertain more with empirical detail rather than inspired-and-literary ahistorical explanatory generalizations.

1.C.2.a. Single-element Theories: Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus and Parmenides

Single-element theories (also known as material monism) include Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus and Parmenides. In those theories either one natural element out of the four (earth, water, air, fire) is given preference, or another unifying entity is singled out as the unique point of creation of the heavens. For Anaximander it was neither element, but the *apeiron*; for Anaximenes this was air; for Heraclitus it was fire; and for Parmenides, too, none of the elements but the Sphere/Being was central. According to Songe-Møller (2002, 74, 80), we can distinguish within those theories between hierarchical and non-hierarchical ones: Heraclitus and Anaximander are examples of a non-hierarchical philosophizing and cosmology that did not make its way into later political philosophy. By this she means that in those theories maleness and femaleness were recognized as different but more or less equal counterparts in creation narratives.

Other than Thales and his emphasis on water, who I do not discuss here, two later philosophers share a single-element theory: Anaximander and his student Anaximenes. We only have one surviving fragment from Anaximander and his poem *On Nature*, as testified by Simplicius:

Of those who say that [the first principle] is one and moving and indefinite, Anaximander, son of Praxiades, a Milesian who became successor and pupil to Thales, said that the indefinite [*to apeiron*] is both principle [*arche*] and element [*stoicheion*] of the things that are, and he was the first to introduce this name of the principle. He says that it is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements, but some other indefinite [*apeiron*] nature, from which come to be all the heavens and the worlds in them; and those things, from which there is coming-to-be for the things that are, are also those into which is their passing-away, in accordance with what must be. For they give penalty [*dike*] and recompense to one another for their injustice [*adikia*] in accordance with the ordering of time - speaking of them in rather poetical terms. It is clear that having seen the change of the four elements into each other, he did not think it fit to make some one of these underlying subjects, but something else, apart from these. (Simplicius, *On Aristotle's Physics* 24, 13ff. = DK 12A9 and B1²²)

²² Trans. by Patricia Curd.

This passage has been studied extensively and the clause about the *apeiron* (the translation here by Curd renders it as “the indefinite,” while I use “the boundless”) and its authorship has not been contested (Kahn 1960, 28-82 with comprehensive doxography; on *apeiron*’s doxography, *ibid.*, 32-3, with discussion on 321-39). Simplicius’ doxography is considered the most reliable one, while Theophrastus’ (*ibid.*, 12-13) is considered unreliable after Burnet (1914, XIV).

The boundless is, in effect, an element of the elements; this is why Anaximander’s is treated here as a single-element theory. With Anaximander we see for the first time the *apeiron* defined: for an undefined and boundless natural force to be, first it should be defined as such, and this is what he does by speaking of the boundless as a first, undefined principle. This does not mean we cannot think of the boundless as a boundless body, because the boundless is material (not matter) and thus requires emplacement within space. As Guthrie (1957, 51) sums this up, after Anaximander fire was the most important element. Other than Simplicius’ evidence, we also know that an *arche* is “to be the first point from which a thing either is or comes to be or is known” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V 1013a23; see also *Physics* IV 213a16-18). Natural philosophers, presided by Anaximander in the doxographic tradition, question in a new way the origin of life on earth. Life was the result of actions between hot and dry on the cold and moist (Guthrie 1957, 31). But it is the boundless (body) out of which the heavens are made, and which in turn gives rise to the elements. There is an ongoing discussion about this sequence, and some authors claim that the boundless only generates the polarity hot-cold, not the elements themselves (Curd 2016). Generally, both Anaximander and then Anaximenes believed that in some unexplicable way the heavens (*ouranoi*) are formed in this “boundless,” but they were unable to provide an account of the formation of heavens (Songe-Møller 2002, 49-77). That the heavens are in or from the boundless implies that *apeiron* is some kind of an infinite but

created/material space. The separation of polis and *kosmos* is thus still “not yet discreet” (Victorin-Vangerud 2004, 32) and the account of the boundless is insufficiently philosophical.

Anaximenes of Miletus, son of Eurystratus, pupil of Anaximander (although this is sometimes disputed too) singled out air as the key element of origins. He

declared that the origin of existing things is air. Out of it all things come to be and into it they are resolved again. He says that just as our soul, which is air, holds us together, so breath and air surround the whole cosmos. Air and breath are used synonymously. (Aëtius I.3.4, B2; DK A10²³)

He chose the air because for him the boundless body was devoid of any qualities. With his monism he suggests that an entirely unqualified entity cannot account for origins and creation. Air is preferred because to Anaximenes it seemed closer to inter-transformation. In Theophrastus and Plutarch, it is suggested that air provides the way for change to happen (through condensation and rarefaction of air) (13B1). The view that single-element theories require one material reality that can transform itself but keep its “own” quality throughout is a later development, undergirded by Aristotle and his ontological requirement of substance and substance metaphysics. At the time of Anaximenes, nothing close to the Aristotelian substance was defined, but the question of quality and property was already posed. The problem of matter’s quality is a problem of the created world, of the world of becoming and change, and Anaximenes deepened this problem without finding a solution of explaining quality.

With Heraclitus, everything revolves around fire - an element later masculinized in ancient medicine and the theory of humors, but in no way is it gendered in this way in Heraclitus. In B30 he simply speaks of the “ever-lasting fire” and in B90 that it is exchanged for all things in a cosmic cycle. For him fire (*Keraunos*/Thunderbolt) is *logos* and Zeus (B64), an identification supplanted by the doxography, whereby *logos* is eternal and unchanging, and fire is eternally changing, leading to an inter-transformation of elements. But he does not make gendered qualifications of the element’s identification with Zeus. However, later Theophrastus,

²³ See also Aristotle, *Physics* IV 213b22; almost the same theory as Anaximenes’ is developed by Diogenes of Apollonia, cf. Guthrie (1957, 49-50).

a student of Aristotle, will make a further distinction between generative and destructive heat (Guthrie 1957, 41), where heat is the generative agent and moisture the matter on which it acts. As Anaximander, Heraclitus expressed monist tendencies and claimed that “all things are one” (B50). The underlying oneness comes from fire, which is analogical to *logos* as an immanent principle of creation. *Logos* penetrates Nature, because “nature is accustomed to hide itself” (B123).

The emphasis on unity was also kept by Parmenides. His cosmology responded to that of Anaximander, since for Parmenides being is a Sphere (B843). He did not single out an element, as in the case of Anaximander, and treated Being (*to eon*)/the Sphere (*Sphairos*) as the foregrounding principle of principles (Palmer 2008). In his poem, a young man meets a goddess (Dike) who will give him knowledge of “all things” (28B1); however, eventually she does not give the man (*kouros*, B1 24) the knowledge, but ways to uncover it. Strictly said, the “ways” is knowledge itself, but since she does not claim to present it, it is illuminated instrumentally via the “well-rounded Truth” and the “opinion of the mortals”. The Heraclitean suggestion that nature hides is implied by the poem’s goddess, and she impersonates a thesis that is thus older than Parmenides’. She warns the man that one has to avoid the way according to which “that which is not is,” meaning the way of relying on sense perception (B7). The philosophy of “Being” with which Parmenides is associated thereafter (Kahn 1969) is laid out after B7 (what-is, *esti*, or what must be, as opposed to what-is-not, or what is contingent), and Parmenides presents the thesis that man has to provide an account of how what-is is.

Past this point, the goddess speaks of the deceptive opinions of the mortals, and therefore requires the proofs of truth behind the reality/nature which is already hiding; this is Parmenides’ famous introduction of *doxa*. On the grounds of a polarity between divine truth and human/mortal opinion, Parmenides is considered the first thinker to introduce the distinction between being and becoming. What-is cannot come-to-be, and it cannot cease to be;

change of what-is is impossible. On this ground, because the universe is predicated on the sphere and sphericity, it is stipulated that change of what-is is impossible: “[s]ince the only solid that is uniform at its extremity is a sphere, what must be must be spherical” (Palmer 2008). Only becoming (the world of opinion and mortals) can undergo change that will qualify it as what is not and as contingent. What-is/being therefore does not have a place. Parmenides’ cosmology is theological one, because it qualifies truth as an achievement of the mortal philosopher/*kouros* as advised by the divine goddess. Thus, in Parmenides change is impossible because nothing comes out of nothing - everything is always already created and the perishing or generation of anything new is impossible, for the world is the One Sphere which contains the All in itself. The principle can be summarized as: What is uncreated is indestructible.

Here, too, it is difficult to discern a specific gendering within the polarity itself. Some introduction of equality between elements is partly true in Parmenides, with the proviso that there is a division in necessity between the boundless and the elements. The Sun-like girls lead the hero to the border of day and night, a border patrolled by Dike as the goddess of boundaries, especially the one between life and death. The daughters of the sun persuade Dike from the gates, “whereupon the road is left behind and instead a ‘gaping chasm’ is disclosed, which evidently alludes to Hesiod’s description of Tartarus and Chaos” (Songe-Møller 2002, 35), and we are taken beyond the limits of the world of Chaos. Dike is the bearer of knowledge, but she says nothing of herself, and says nothing of the place out of which she speaks, effectively becoming that place of truth. Most importantly, in the interpretation of Songe-Møller Parmenides is not occupied with soul-body distinctions (*ibid.*, 37) that will consume Plato and Aristotle, which means that Parmenides’ teaching is not irreconcilable with human bodily, and thus sexed, existence. The thinker does not posit existence as reliant on sexual division. Yet Parmenides unproblematically describes the securing of the border of Being as presided by women (*ibid.*, 41; Dike B1.15 and B8.13; Ananke B8.16 and B8.30; Moira B8.37) and guarded

by the “chasm” of Chaos which, curiously, is male in Hesiodian terms. The fact that the first feature of being, guarded by the female Dike, is that it is ungenerated (*ageneton*) is in stark contrast with the Hesiodian race of women who bring evil. Because of that, Being cannot die: and Being is still watched over by an immortal goddess. Dike is used to demonstrate that change and becoming are excluded. The sexed mythology explains the sexless *logos*. The insistence on unity and unchangeability of the boundless/the Sphere does not exclude the existence of the world of matter, embodiment and multiplicity. Parmenides’ cosmology only qualifies this world as unnecessary, but it does not stipulate that it should not exist. This single-element theory should be considered the pre-Socratic theory that has led to the later development of hierarchical metaphysics.

1.C.2.b. Multiple-element Theories: Anaxagoras and Empedocles

Multiple-elements theories that I review include Anaxagoras and Empedocles, and I will focus more on the latter. Here the importance of Hesiod has to be emphasized again as he first defined the quadruple structure of the world (which will travel all the way to Neoplatonism) and it is this structure (Kingsley 1995, 14) that Plato and Aristotle will later try to support with an immaterial principle (respectively *chōra* and prime matter). Hesiod elaborated the four categories of time (*protista*), space (*chaos*), matter (*gaia*), and force (*eros*), making him the first proto-philosopher to transition from theology to cosmogony and philosophy, from personifications to the “causal *relations between things*” (Vamvacas 2009, 12). Hesiodic cosmogony feeds into later pre-Socratic thought.

Anaximander’s view that life and moist were somehow primordially united is seen in Anaxagoras and Democritus (Guthrie 1957, 35). “The universe is surrounded by a whirling mass of *aither* which is fiery in its nature, and by the vigor of its motion it has caught up rocks from the earth and set them on fire. That is how the stars were made” (ibid., 52). From

Anaxagoras onwards, we have reason to believe that matter was at some point seen as an inert principle, and that it cannot move itself, rather, movement was caused by the Mind. For Anaxagoras “[w]hen Mind had started the movement, it began to withdraw from the moving whole” (DK B12-13). The abstracting is tied to a complexification of separation. Anaxagoras’ idea of separation belongs to his notion of “mixture”. As Schofield has it,

[t]he idea of dispersal is less clear than that of separation. Perhaps it is the process whereby “seeds” are disentangled from one another, in contrast with what is necessary for stuffs like air and ether. “Mixture” ... is not attributed to mind’s activity. Doubtless it is the mechanism by which humans and animals and plants are “compounded” (fr. 4): fr. 17 [of Empedocles] asserts that what the Greeks call coming into being is really mixture. The extant fragments [by Anaxagoras] say nothing about how mixture works. Do seeds somehow control a process whereby portions of the appropriate stuffs are absorbed from the earth and elsewhere into the growing organism? On this view they would exercise one of the key functions carried out in Empedocles’ system by Love, with mind playing a role analogous to his Strife (see Empedocles §5). (Schofield 1998, 341)

Schofield emphasizes the clarity of separation and its importance. Dispersal here is not explicitly feminized. In Anaxagoras there is still no sound discrimination between Mixture and Mind that will posit the need for differentiation pertaining to ethical considerations, which are in turn attached to abstract principles.

Empedocles’ fragments (*On Nature* and *Purifications*) are treated as a maturation in multiple-element theories. I will now discuss in more detail Empedocles’ four elements (*archai*, fr. 17) for two reasons. One, because it is this multiple-element theory that is the most important for the problem of disembodiment and the development of Platonic cosmology. Two, because his “elemental pluralism” (see below) is central for continental feminist philosophies and their critiques of Platonism and philosophies of disembodiment (for example, Irigaray 2012).

The first doxography we have on Empedocles is by Simplicius (in his epitome of Theophrastus’ *Physics* 371.33 [= DK B61]), but the reconstruction of the fragments was a very slow historical process (Janko 2005). Generally, both pre-Socratic philosophy and Empedocles had troubles explaining the formation of heavens (*kosmos*) by only referring to the boundless body and *archeia/stoicheia*. For Empedocles the elements were *stoicheia* (letters) - his attempt

to posit a first principle of cosmic creation. In *Metaphysics* I.A 985a31-3 Aristotle credits Empedocles as the first to distinguish clearly the four elements (Parry 2012), and “[e]ven Aristotle adopted the four elements of Empedocles, though Plato and his Pythagorean friends had declared that so far from being letters (*stoicheia*), they were not even syllables” (Burnet 1920, 72).

Empedocles presents to us an elemental pluralism, but he also invents an ethics of the cosmos by defining the so-called cosmic cycle. He breaks the cosmic cycle into two (Love and Strife) which is then divided into principles (Unity and Multiplicity). Empedocles seeks the restoration of Unity in the phase of Love within that Cycle, for Unity is Goodness. While preserving the Parmenidian influence (the emphasis on Unity), Empedocles adds the moving principles of Love and Strife.

Because of an emphatic engagement with both the phenomenon of feeling and the form of the poem, according to Savić-Rebac Empedocles should be treated as a pre-Socratic representative of what she calls “pre-Platonic erotology,” which she formulated in a time (the 1920s) when philosophical biographies grew in importance as opposed to the scripturalist readings of the German doxographers. Because of this shift in the approach, the elemental pluralism of Empedocles is often explained through interpreting his role as a democrat in his native Acragas (West 1986). Empedocles does not identify either of the moving principles (Love and Strife) behind the elements with unchanging (though gendered) gods. For him, transformation is an open process. This tendency towards openness qualifies him easily as a candidate for a proto-feminist thinker.

The Hesiodic separation of earth and heaven produced a gap to be explained, and it is not given a detailed account in either Anaxagoras or Empedocles, but “[i]f, however, we wish to speak of the horror of tearing apart, Empedocles furnishes a vocabulary of division for those occasions when Eris - the discord that splits every being down the middles - slices everything

whole into two, in violation of the great law of Friendship” (Loraux 2006, 94). This is still the spoken language of anthropomorphic *personae*. The analogy-oriented pre-scientific thinking does not avoid metaphorical expressions, at the very least because rationality and poetry are not wholly separated: Empedocles is among the very few pre-Socratics writing in hexameter. The cycle of Love and Strife is analogous to Olympian life; it is not sublated in the cosmos, the genre notwithstanding.²⁴ For Empedocles, poetry is inseparable from science, and metaphor is the language of Being (Kofman 1991, 51²⁵).

The central interest in Empedocles’ cosmology here lies in fr. 17.²⁶ It is by now the longest surviving fragment from pre-Socratic philosophy (first systematically reconstructed by Diels and Kranz’ doxographic tradition; later questioned by Kingsley 1994). Here I follow Trepanier’s reconstruction, as well as the one of Burnet. In *On Nature*, fr. 17 we find the theory of the four elements (fire, air, water, earth = hot, cold, wet, dry = Zeus, Hera, Nestis, Aidoneus) and its two attending forces (Love and Strife = *Philia* and *Neikos*) (cf. fr. 17.18-19²⁷). Fr. 17 tells us a “two-fold tale”/“double account” (lines 1-2) of the One and the Many (lines 3-4), with each already undergoing the two phases.

Empedocles wants to do three things at once: (1) to provide a story about the creation of the cosmos (introducing the four elements and the two principles forming One Cycle); (2)

²⁴ For Empedocles, Love, Aphrodite and Harmonia are all interchangeable (Loraux 2006, 115).

²⁵ In distinguishing between the genres of metaphor and analogy, Kofman independently arrives at Savić-Rebac’s universal lyricism and its impersonal absolute, characteristic for pre-Socratic thought.

²⁶ On its recent history and the Strasburg manuscript, see Martin and Primavesi (1999); Janko (2005); Trepanier (2000). I use the rough but more succinct translation of Trepanier in Trepanier (2000), because it is based on the latest discoveries pertaining to the Strasburg manuscript (Martin and Primavesi 1999) which added 74 lines to the poem altogether, including the so-called “ensemble a” to fr. 17. It is also noteworthy that the papyrus dates from late 1 CE, a time when Neoplatonism grew in influence.

²⁷ It should be noted that there are two main interpretations of Empedocles’ fragment and cosmology: one vs two cosmogonies, i.e., that either there is one single cosmogony which proceeds through both Love and Strife (which, however, is effectuated only by the logics of Love, which is the weakest point of this interpretation), or that Love and Strife are two separate cosmogonies that excommunicate each other. The new reconstruction of fr. 17 in Martin and Primavesi (1999) proves almost unanimously that Empedocles could not have had in mind two separate cosmogonies (cf. Trepanier 2000 and his stichometric analysis). Finally, I would like to point that unfortunately the so important interpretative feminist philosophical insights of Songe-Møller for this chapter cannot be fully integrated, as her Norwegian-language book on Empedocles does not exist in a translation of which I can make use.

to investigate why the case is as it is (by allowing change, but not excluding the Eleatic principles of reality); (3) to know what follows from this double birth and death.²⁸ The notion of reality in Empedocles is Parmenidian and speculative, but unlike Parmenides, Empedocles does not avoid *sense* data and does not exclude it from rational accounts. He follows the spherical structure of the world laid out by Parmenides, inheriting the interest in monism but transforming it into a changing-but-eternal pluralism, which makes it his principle of the One via the cycles of Love and Strife.²⁹ To Parmenides' Sphere Empedocles added that it is moved by the forces of Love and Strife. Now, the two principles of Love and Strife should explain how change is possible: "[a] world of perishable things such as we know can only exist when both Love and Strife are in the world" (Burnet 1914, 73). If this is not the case, the Parmenidian principle will prohibit all change. Everything is mixed endlessly into the Sphere moved by Love and Strife. Only the Mind (Anaxagoras' behest) is not mixed (West 1986, 109).

In the Cycle itself, the cosmos exists under two extreme conditions: there is the One which is a Sphere, self-containing and sustained by the force of Love (the stage where the living things are united in themselves and are not disjointed), and there is the fragmented and curving plurality and brutality of Strife and its work (for a full description of the four stages of the cycle, see Vamvacas 2009, 173). This brings into the cycle the periodicity of either harmony or antagonism, for each is a phase between separation and generation. Without separation harmony cannot be conceived. Much as the Greek myth and drama are organized around gender dispute, the Cycle's work on elements implies that a subsequent concord will be impossible without separation. The introduction of the Mind in the schema serves a noetic purpose that will translate in the *ratio* of post-Socratic thought. The synthetic might of the Mind already

²⁸ Notably this is continued in *Purifications* and the topic of metempsychosis, which is partly taken up in Plato's *Timaeus*, and with which I do not deal here, but see Trepanier (2000, 6-7).

²⁹ At the time, it was revolutionary that Empedocles put on equal footing earth with the other elements (cf. Burnet 1920, 72). From a Platonist perspective this is something of a heresy, for earth would make knowing impossible: it is the soil of death.

implies that there is something outside the cycle and circle of immutable exchange: it implies that there are both an outside *and* a change. As Burnet notes, this Empedocles found in Love (Burnet 1920, 108, thus identifying Mind with Love).

Feminist philosophy of antiquity is especially concerned with Empedocles, because a return to the notion of the boundless restores a connection lost to femininity and elementality. This view essentializes women's connection to elementality as a specific kind of empowerment and agential potential, and the most prominent voice in defense of the boundless in feminist philosophy is Irigaray (1985, 161, 343). She proffers a notion of female materiality and subjectivity based on Empedocles and boundless elementality. In her work, the positing that the formless is powerless, because it is deprived of the Platonic idea, and is thus unpolitical, is challenged. The reality of cosmos and the natural world, according to the paternal logic, is revealed in the way upwards to heaven, not to earth. To procreate and dominate, the father must be able to generate the world *alone*, homosocially - only then the world is "true" (ibid., 300-1; see also Sandford 2010, 98-128).

To challenge this paternal logic for Irigaray means for the woman to become a demiurge. Irigaray's project is largely reducible to this task: against Aristotle, she claims that the internal, in as much as the feminine, cannot be done away with (Irigaray 1995, 16). Embracing the internal as feminine, she sets on making the latter a demiurge. At the same time, she tries to capture the logic of male self-identity, and this can be done only within the limits of sexual division. For the post-Socratic, the female is needed only in as much as she is instrumental in defining essences (*ousia*), but to do this work "her function requires that she herself ha[s] no definition" (Irigaray 1985, 307). Serving as the undefined background of self-identity, the female principles delineate the avenue of eternity of which they should be no part as they still remain undefined. This lack of definition means that self-identity should be such an absolute mirror of itself that the paternal should never actually appear. Not appearing,

it is thus always already presence unto itself. There, “[t]he father is, has always been, pure speculation” (ibid., 308).

In Irigaray male self-identity comes very close to female boundlessness and indefiniteness. She turns to the pre-Socratics and Empedocles to expose philosophical manhood as “pure speculation.” There are various references to Empedocles’ elements in her work (ibid., 172, most explicit in 217, and somewhat latent in 237). Grosz has noted that Irigaray grounds her work on the pre-Socratic philosophers and the doctrine of transmutation in medieval alchemy (Grosz 1989, 168). More recently, Irigaray continued her work on the boundless, proposing it as a dialogical concept for the two sexes, and it is in this sense that Empedocles is often seen as a democrat:

This relation [between goddess and sage - S. P.] thus remains hidden or removed with respect to the teaching of the pre-Socratic Master. However, certain masters allude to her, such as Empedocles or Parmenides, each in a different way. ... But in any case, they are men who evoke an absence or someone absent, a gap or a surplus. They refer to something other than their discourse, a beyond for which they have no words, and above all no logic. ... At that time, a memory still exists of an unsaid, of a beyond, in which wonder, magic, ecstasy, growth and poetry mingle, resisting the logical link that is imposed on words, on sentences, on the world. Some traces remain, at least in the discourse of certain masters. (Irigaray 2012, 2, 3)

For Irigaray, Empedocles’ four elements serve as a metaphor and meeting place for various “substances” and it is in this place that, via Love and Strife, productivity and cooperation happen, thus representing a model for co-existence of the two sexes (Grosz 1989, 169) in a way disallowed by other pre-Socratics.

In this section I presented examples from pre-Socratic philosophy that reveal tendencies towards abstracting boundlessness as principles and elements that generally overcome the anthropomorphic and divine personification of natural forces. I showed that pre-Socratic single- and multiple-element theories did not break radically away from gendered ambivalence but rather continued this ambivalence towards a more speculative and metaphysical interpretation of the embodied world as gendered. These abstractions of principles and elements developed towards “concepts” but did not reject the factum of embodiment. As in

myth, natural elements kept being gendered (e.g., moist's femininity), and a metaphysical version of nature integrated boundlessness in philosophical and discursive thought.

1.D. Sexual Division and Reproduction in Empedocles

In this section I will focus on the zoogony of Empedocles, which introduces a very early theory of sexual division and procreation. I focus on it because the presentation of his cosmology does not suffice to explain the poetic-scientific abstractions and their relation to gendering. The zoogony is presented in both *On Nature* and *Purifications*. There are two interpretations of his zoogony in *Purifications*: the traditional interpretation has it with Love and Strife creating the animals, and the newer one with only Love, excluding the violent creationism of Strife. The scholarly protagonists are, respectively, O'Brien and Wright vs. Long and Bollack. Here I will focus on the zoogony in *On Nature* and will present De Ley's (1978) reconstruction of sexual reproduction in Empedocles, as well as O'Brien's (1969) view. I present these authors' work for two reasons. One, because they help explain the material, embodied dimension behind the abstraction of Love, an abstraction which in and of itself does not account for a sufficient explanation of gendering elementality. Two, because the Empedoclean influence on the Platonic cosmology (Hershbell 1974) has been historically recorded in continuity and elements of his cosmology are integrated in it.

The zoogony presents a theory of the semen as the key to reproduction. De Ley mounts an argument partly against O'Brien regarding the generation of humans via semen in the fourth (zoogonic) stage of the cycle. O'Brien's (1969, 203-4) argument is that zoogony is "preformationist pangensis"³⁰ of both males and females. De Ley does not question

³⁰ The ancient source that mounts evidence against preformationism is Simplicius (see DK 31A72 and DK 68A139) for whom there is no "splitting apart" of the *oulophueis* into the men and women of the fourth stage, but to the articulation of what, initially, contains only *dynameis*" (De Ley 1978, 158).

preformationism in Empedocles, but the argument about pangenesis, trying to prove Empedocles' theory of the semen is about "epigenesis" (De Ley 1978, 161-2). He claims that the text suggests splitting of the semen, not of the sexes (ibid., 159).³¹ For O'Brien the text suggests separation of the bisexual or asexual *oulophues* (undifferentiated, lumps of earth) into man and woman. De Ley bases his objection to O'Brien on Aëtius' doxography and Simplicius (Aëtius V.19.5 = DK 31A72). His reconstruction is as follows, and seeks to disrupt the parallels drawn between Empedocles' *On Nature* (B63) with Plato's *Symposium*:

1) B 63, which is our only testimony for such a "splitting apart," does not speak of a splitting of the members themselves, but of their origin; secondly, there is no question of a splitting "into man and woman," but of putting one part into the (body) of the male, the other in that of the female (cf. *en andros*), which apparently presupposes the existence of the sexes. 2) It is not sex differentiation that matters in Aëtius' opposing the fourth stage to the third [De Ley means Aëtius V.7.1 = DK 31A81 - S. P.], but the fact that the creatures do not any longer arise out of the earth; they are generated instead by sexual intercourse. Besides, if the fourth stage would really be defined by sex differentiation, the persisting bisexuality of the plants would be an unexplainable anomaly. (De Ley 1978, 157)

De Ley's reconstruction demystifies a static essentialism seen in Empedocles' text (O'Brien's argument about pangenesis) and the so-called preformationist fourth stage of generation, whose importance comes from the fact that it is there where the writer seems to describe origins of human life *in conjunction with* sexual reproductivity. On the pangenesis account, the very separation of the Cycle does not correspond to its own elements (Love and Strife), and accordingly the principles associated with those elements (Unity and Multiplicity), as well as their biological counterparts (semen and sexes).

How sexual division and separation are organized in time and space is defining for the right interpretation, and this is important because the interpretation can prioritize between either unity or multiplicity with respect to sexual division and Love. The timeline of generation is as follows: creatures are born out of earth and later are made *en allelois* (elsewhere + last). The geography of epigenetic preformationism is as follows: the first males were born out of

³¹ The argument could have consequences for the existing year-long exchange between Laqueur's (1990) one-sex model and King's (1998) more nuanced reading that allows variation of the one-sex model into two-sexed one.

the earth in the East and the South, the females in the North, and so “[t]his could apply to the birth of the males in the South, were the fire in the earth would be attracted by the warmth of the climate” (ibid., 157-8 n19). The result of the polarity is not as attractive as the epigenetic conclusion of De Ley might seem, for he says that “male and female are not characterized in the first place by their sexual organs, i.e., by their sexual function, but rather by the physical ‘quality’ of their nature, the one being ‘warm’ the other ‘cold’” (ibid., 159). This clarification is consistent with the separation of the Cycle as processual abstraction of elementality and boundlessness. But epigenesis or pangenesis, the fact remains that preformationism is the definitive pre-Platonic version of the theory of ideas applied to sexual division.

The semen which is bisexual should be necessarily both warm and cold, just as the Cycle should contain both Love and Strife. This isomorphism is constitutive of abstraction. Upon this reading, the full development of the first representatives of the human race took place only after the first “long day” on earth, *after which* they became sexually differentiated. It takes a differentiation within the semen and the coming to being on the first long day to effectuate the sexual division. In the third stage’s geography, which precedes epigenesis, the creatures of the North were female (= moist/cold), those of the South were male (= fire/heat). As a result, there is no special kind of bisexual or “sexless superbeings, but ‘simply’ earthborn men and women” (ibid., 158).

In this section I briefly presented Empedocles’ zoogony and its interpretations in order to highlight that the metaphysical version of nature in Empedocles as a pre-Socratic thinker relates not only to metaphysically conceptual but also to biological explanations of reality. The debate presented above concerns the problem of change: the Sphere is not itself the problem, since it should remain unmovable and unquestioned, but the moving and creation that the Sphere produces, or, what will generate mankind in the perturbations of the boundles and the limitless. The interchangeability of the elements and their endless compounds are secured by

both the stability of the Sphere (analogous to the One) and the infinite love and strife between Love and Strife themselves (cf. fr. 17.10-15 on immobility). Empedocles accounted via his zoogony for the problem of embodiment and sexual reproduction and offered an early theory of nature whose conceptual abstractions will serve as the basis for later cosmologies as this theory contained the boundless in a model of sexual reproduction, which itself bounded the very boundlessness of nature.

1.E. Conclusion

In this chapter I reviewed the genesis of the problem of disembodiment, showing that in mythological and pre-Socratic thought there was gendered ambivalence concerning the relations between femininity, elementality and death, culminating in the notion of *apeiron*, and that this ambivalence was expressive of tendencies towards radicalizing disembodiment. I described the continuity between myth and pre-Socratics regarding nature and matter as boundlessness as the result of creation stories. I showed that in the post-divine and post-Pandoran world, the double gift of women *and* death went hand in hand with a male anxiety over reproduction, and with a fantasy of self-sufficiency and immortality defined by the realization of its otherness, death itself. My discussion of mythological boundlessness revealed that there was a transitioning to a model of male heroism which was reliant on correlating women, death, boundlessness and formlessness. The discussion of pre-Socratics showed that from the mythological phase onwards, femininity was closer to the domain of embodiment, becoming and mutability, and this mutability challenged the very nature of boundedness, of limit, and finally of definition and conceptual clarity. Conceptual clarity needed as its other the boundlessness of femininity.

Creation stories maintained that women approximate boundlessness via figures of shapeshifting, mutable creatures, making femininity responsible for not controlling boundaries

and endangering those of the others. This produced a homologization between the elemental woman of nature and its metaphysical analogy, matter, and culminated in the concept of *apeiron* in Anaximander and Empedocles. The elementality of boundless femininity and its translation into a dubious proxy of creationism continued the Erichthonian male anxiety about autochtony. Chtonia became autochtony.

In their desire to institute a boundary between *peras* and *apeiron*, the ancients *have defined* the limits of the limitless and the indefinite against the background of femininity. The definition of the indefinite as the very indefinite was defined by gendering elementality and boundlessness. The move from mythological personifications to abstractive concepts retained the use of female boundlessness, and boundless *physis* was developed into a metaphysical version of *physis*, which deepened the continuity between femininity and boundlessness. With the introduction of *apeiron* and the four elements theory, this continuity led to a more metaphysical notion of femininity, and the ambivalent relation of women to death was problematized, because sexual reproduction posed a challenge to conceptual identity and self-sufficiency. The continuity's metaphysical garb is mythological and very physiological, as I showed earlier (Chtonia). This duality, founded on ideas of sexual division between sky and earth, is suggestive of the axiological ordering of reality.

The creative force of boundless nature was given a hierarchical locus, and hierarchical metaphysics became possible. The transition from the mythology involving the boundless and female principles and impersonation to the philosophies that discuss elements and the boundless as those principles is varied. These were two distinct steps; the ambivalence with respect to power and death was interrupted. In the transition, the formlessness and boundlessness of natural forces evolved from mutability of elements to the irreducibility of the femininity of elements. This made possible a metaphysical attitude towards disembodiment as something good in itself.

Chapter 2. Disembodiment and Metaphysical Boundlessness:

The Platonist Condition

This chapter is devoted to the continuity between mythological and pre-Socratic boundlessness in relation to femininity and Plato's cosmology and the radicalization of that continuity. The chapter gives central space to Plato's *Timaeus* and the notion of *chōra*, because it is a reconsideration of earlier concerns with the role of elements and elementality, and it answers them with a conceptual feminized framing (*chōra*). I explain the problem of boundlessness through approaching the soul-body dualism in Plato by introducing feminist philosophical perspectives. I focus on and introduce the notion of *chōra* from the *Timaeus* and trace how it cuts across works and topics of Plato: the philosopher's attitude to death, the soul's immortality (*Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*) and the idea of the ideal citizen (*Republic*). I read these dialogues because they reveal how Plato's views on the soul relate to his ambition to give an account of the physical world and the body. The focus is two-fold: I zoom in on only those works that have a more or less *explicit* relation to Plato's dualism between soul and body; I focus on the notion of *chōra* as expressive of Plato's views of embodiment by trying to offer a trajectory of *chōra* via the soul-body dualism. The aim of this chapter is to show that there is a radicalization of tendencies towards disembodiment which takes place in Plato's later cosmology, and I present Plato's philosophy as a radicalized philosophy of disembodiment based on elements from soul-body dualism and the cosmology of *Timaeus*.

My argument in this chapter is that under Plato's soul-body dualism and cosmology the boundless as the feminine *became* a concept - *chōra* - conditioned by metaphysical and physiological concerns regarding the soul. Boundlessness and boundless femininity and its myth-bound ambivalence underwent a loss of transformability: syncretized under the notion of

chōra, the *apeiron* became the setting stone of hierarchical metaphysics. *Chōra* became a signpost for cosmic pessimism based on idealizing disembodiment.

Why immateriality and disembodiedness were privileged is a central concern that animates the research on Plato's views of embodiment in continental and feminist philosophy. This chapter outlines a trajectory of how to think the body knowing that Plato privileges the soul. The argument will depend on answering the questions: What is embodiment for Plato? And how it is problematic for femininity and boundlessness in cosmology? The defense of the idea that the soul from the soul-body dualism (psychophilia) prevailed over the body has been made throughout feminist philosophy (Bar On 1994; Tuana 1994; Landau 2006, 71-93; Schott 2010, 1-25). I will present the body in Plato's cosmology in terms of what radicalized disembodiment, which is consequent on the use of *chōra* relative to *Timaeus*. The argumentation about disembodiment in Plato is reliant on its negative, i.e., his views of embodiment, which I summarize in 2.B.

2.A. Feminist Philosophical Perspectives on Plato's Political Views and Embodiment

In this section I present feminist philosophical approaches to Plato, soul-body dualism and the role of women in Plato's political philosophy (the *Republic*) and I highlight the main interpretations and positions. It is necessary to present this scholarship on Plato abstracted from feminist (history of) philosophy because the debates and predominant positions in the literature try to make sense of Plato's political philosophy and how women figure in it, and these positions are based on identifying what Plato thought of both women and the body. Presenting the main positions allows to critically investigate the so-called soul-body dualism (see 2.B) and understanding the ramifications of the dualism in turn makes possible the consideration of the late notion of *chōra* as relative to hierarchical metaphysics, itself reliant on that dualism. The

discussion of the literature allows to see how Plato's views on women as citizens relate to the more general problem of embodiment and the arrival of *chōra* as a metaphysical notion and condition.

Feminist philosophers such as Witt (2005) and Lloyd (2004) offer a general framework for assessing Plato's views on women and embodiment. Most of the literature offers frameworks dealing with the *Republic*. Accounts on women and embodiment have to do with explicating theoretical misogyny and exploring what resources Plato might hold for feminist purposes (Witt 2005; Schott 2003, 31). Reading the equation of reason and man has driven most of the feminist philosophical literature on Plato, qualifying him as an inconsistent misogynist. Lloyd (2004, xxi) qualified the binary male-reason as "scandalous" due to pretensions for universality and the gradual exclusion of women from the domain of Reason.³² This contention has led to a problematization of the very notion of "man" as neutral, universal and gender blind (Lovibond 2000, 14). Plato is an "inconsistent" misogynist in so far as in the *Republic V* he does not exclude women from the just society, yet his views on embodiment and knowledge are gendered. Scholars corroborate these tendencies by looking at 540c and 449c to 473e, where, e.g., Glaucon states: "[e]verything should be in common, except that the females are weaker and the males stronger. ... if we use the women for the same things as the men, they must also be taught the same things" (*Republic V* 449d-e).

Since the ancient notion of sex is very similar to today's gender, and since it was used as a marker of difference and foreignness, it is aggravating to read Plato's alleged feminism as selective equality. Sandford notes that the Greek concept of "sex" "tends to figure in the same form in both popular discourses and ... philosophical texts" (Sandford 2010, 4). She explains that the word *genos* does not correspond to the English "sex," but rather to race, kin, offspring,

³² The concept of reason, as grasped by feminist philosophers, is studied under the suspicion that it divides and hierarchizes humanity on a gendered bias. I follow Bordo (1987), Flax (1987), and Harding (1986) on this point.

tribe, kind (ibid., 22-3), and there are instances in Plato (e.g., in the *Sophist*) where he would describe ideas such as being, rest, motion, etc., with *genos*. *Genos* has to do more with *eidōs* rather than biological sex. At best *genos* would be the idea behind it. The claim Plato is a misogynist de-historicizes the notion of sex, while it is much closer to the contemporary concept of gender. Sandford has studied the dichotomy sex/gender in Plato claiming “there is no natural beginning of sex” (ibid., 39-41), in line with her argument that in Plato’s *Republic* *genos* is proclaimed to mean sex, while it bears racial-ethnic rather than sexual connotations.

Because there is a collision between Plato’s cosmology, theory of forms and his social theory with respect to reason and gender,³³ two tendencies of reading Plato - as a feminist or anti-feminist - have become articulated. He could be qualified as *both* accidental or benevolent anti-/feminist and as un/conscious one, etc., but the two lines of reading mostly tend to discourage nuance. This division of Plato has led to two readings of “Plato’s feminism”: justificatory and inculpatory. Both are documented in Tuana (1994) and Bar On (1994), and both correspond to optimistic and pessimistic readings of embodiment as specifically female.

The justificatory reading tries to prove that Plato was not a misogynist, because he was proposing a radical reform of the Athenian democracy, seeking to include women by separating those best human qualities that transcend sex (Okin 1979). Plato understood gender differences as determined by nurture, and did not see women as determined by their reproductivity (ibid., 41). The nature of woman is directed by whatever social and economic structure philosophers favor and is to be defined as whatever best suits her prescribed functions in that society (ibid., 10; Hutton 2001, 196-7 on Buchan 1999). Bluestone (1987), based on a study of the reception of *Republic V* over a period of hundred years, claims some feminist Plato scholarship ignored the *Republic*’s Woman Question, leading to essentialism and re-naturalizing women (ibid., 17).

³³ An apologetic (feminist) reading can only assume that he might have resolved this issue in his unfinished *Critias* and/or the unwritten *Hermocrates*.

Some of the literature is positioned between justificatory and inculpatory tendencies (Tuana 1994; Spelman 1994; Vlastos 1994). For Tuana, accepting Plato's misogyny involves a reading of his social propositions and if they lead to full or partial female participation or whether he singles out only those qualities that would have been seen as masculine within Greek society.³⁴ For Spelman (1994), since Plato's world-view is dualistic, women in the ideal city are essentially incompatible with feminism, and there cannot be philosopher-queens, since the best (the good) qualities are taken from a male prototype: only those women who manifest such qualities acquire an equal status (ibid., xiv with Pomeroy 1974, 34). Vlastos (1994) proposes a combined argument: that Plato offers a selective egalitarianism for some women, since other women should do the reproductive work of the polis.³⁵ This view seems to treat this differentiation among women as derivative of the division of souls. When Plato refers to ill female qualities, he means the traits of women deformed by the corrupt Athens, so he does not directly diminish women's participation in the polis.

The inculpatory reading suggests that Plato's just society cannot be implemented through selective equality, and he remains a misogynist. Saxonhouse (1994) claims that Plato attempts to de-sex women only, and true egalitarianism would involve the de-sexing of all human nature (both men and women), but Plato's female citizens imitate the allegedly universal but male nature of the citizen. Plato was concerned with equality only for the best and the brightest, be they men or women (Bluestone 1987, 18), and his inegalitarian tendencies are universal (against Pomeroy 1974). Bar On's collection (1994) studies if Plato's texts are sexist, masculinist, or phallogocentric, and claims this research agenda cannot offer a consistent

³⁴ This reading involves a separate body of literature on the *Symposium*, which I do not include here, as the literature is more or less consistent on Plato's privileging of male homosexuality in the dialogue and hence the problematic participation of women (Diotima) in both rationality and politics.

³⁵ On other strategies of keeping the balance of production and reproduction among women in the nearby Thrace, see Kotova (2013, especially 75-99), who underlines the Hellenistic contempt of the 5th century BCE towards Thracian women's leeway to manipulate politics, and decrying male para-dynasts' relaxed attitude to female sexuality and the non-committal to virginity.

and uniformed reading (ibid., xii), because Plato's texts form a gender-centered canon. Brisson (2012) claims it is not gender, but sexuality that obscures Plato's views, and in this area Plato is conservative, because only reproduction, not desire, matters for the polis, thus women's productivity is excluded at the expense of their reproductivity. Gender figures in terms of reproductive sexuality, and the debate should be recast at the intesection of gender and sexuality.

The focus of both readings of Plato's alleged feminism revolve around showing a troubled relation to gender and embodiment in his political philosophy. In this section I introduced those readings to lead my discussion on the problem of disembodiment in Plato and explain the issue as a dualistic matter at the heart of Plato's soul-body dualism. However, Plato's implicit philosophy of disembodiment is not reduced to his political vision and the dualism translates into metaphysical concerns.

2.B. Soul-Body Dualism

In this section I present the soul-body dualism in Plato's work, and provide an overview of his views on embodiment. I focus on two problems: the philosopher's death and the ideal citizen, both of which set the context for transforming the problem of disembodiment into a metaphysical one. The soul-body dualism present in works preceding the *Timaeus* (*Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*³⁶) foregrounds the introduction of the notion of *chōra*, which expresses the tendency toward radicalization of disembodiment, because of deepening the relation between boundlessness and femininity identified earlier. In Plato's soul-body dualism, two tendencies are present, namely, cosmic optimism and cosmic pessimism with respect to the role of embodiment. This analytical divide is important because it makes it possible to assess

³⁶ Although it is hard to date with precision, it is generally considered that the line of succession is *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus* (Cooper 1997, xvii).

Plato's shifting views on the soul-body divide and the tendency for either psychophilia or somatophobia. Subsequently, how embodiment is valued and what role does it play in cosmology will define the tendency towards disembodiedness.

Phaedo and *Phaedrus* both share a cosmic pessimistic view toward embodiment, while the *Republic* features a more optimistic orientation. These three dialogues largely contain the soul-body dualism of Plato and involve important topics of discussion that will be transformed later into the notion of *chōra*: the philosopher's death, the soul's immortality, the problem of the ideal citizen. The soul-body dualism represents concerns about embodiment proper and in order to show that there is a metaphysical transformation towards disembodiment in the notion of *chōra*, I will present the dualism with reference to terminology related to *chōra*.

Phaedo endorses an attitude on engaging with truth, later expressed in the *Republic*, i.e., the assumption that humans cannot look at truth (the sun) directly, but only at its reflection in water (99d/100a). This is because embodiment and vision cannot see and correspond directly to truth, and the soul needs to be "purified (*katharsis*) through her separation (*chorizein*) from the body" (Vallega-Neu 2005, 16). To live means to be trapped in embodiment in a non-unity (67e4), to be in division with identity and sameness, which correspond to truth, and to be embodied. Because the form of the good is immaterial, embodiment divides the soul from the good. The embodied life is a dividing line with truth. *Chorizein*, of which the form *choris* as separation/division is derived, precedes the discussion of the philosophers' death at 69c, which can explain the dualism's early formulation:

Is it anything else than the separation of the soul from the body? Do we believe that death is this, namely, that the body comes to be separated by itself apart from the soul, and the soul comes to be separated by itself apart from the body? Is death anything else than that? (64c)

... for if it is impossible to attain any pure knowledge with the body, then one of two things is true: either we can never attain knowledge or we can do so after death. Then and not before, the soul is by itself apart from the body. (66e-67a)

The true philosopher needs to embrace and welcome death, because embodied life is the obstacle between the immaterial soul and the good. The philosopher desires death as it is

the condition for the soul's liberty from the body. Philosophers should avoid bodily pleasures to keep their body-trapped soul closer to gods and the good. These passages (with 61e-62c) codify the ancient idea of the body as the prison of the soul (*soma-sema*, *Cratylus* 400c).

This view of the body is laid out in two ways: with a theory of perception and of matter. With respect to perception, because our senses are cunning, we should listen to our reason. To do that the philosopher should practice a disenchantment of the body and its pleasures. If life has been put to the service of truth, death liberates truth from embodiment and lets it run free in the intelligible realm of the beautiful truth. To desire death renders the philosopher a fearless figure: his death as the avatar of reason is a true *arete*. Death is a heroic form of reason, the measure of true defiance of embodiment.³⁷ The imperative form of living towards death is the *separation* from the sophistry of senses. With respect to matter, at 83 Plato presents the so-called affinity argument. This argument provides a differentiation and hierarchy between visible and invisible, good and bad, truth and untruth, singling out incomposites (form-bound) which are indifferent to change and chance, and composites (matter-bound) which are subject to change. The argument likens the theory of the forms to the incomposites and hence to the soul as incomposite. If the soul is composite it will carry difference within it, and hence cannot be good. By implication, what is not composite is not created and is eternal, so the soul becomes a symbol of philosophical eternalism. The incomposite soul is closer to the forms and the invisible, and matter and embodied souls are lower to disembodied souls because what can be sensed is not whole, as it is affected by the body.³⁸ The theory of forms undergirds this view on embodiment. It justifies the hierarchy between matter and form, body and soul. The soul, when in a body, is deformed because it has no pure *access* to the eternal and immaterial forms of the things. To be in contact with the true reality of things the soul should be left alone by the

³⁷ This attitude to death outlines the problem of self-control and self-perfection, more elaborately developed in the *Phaedrus*.

³⁸ The limitation of embodiment as a "life" or "form of life" - something that does have a form - is not thought of as good; rather, the dialogue seems to devalue form of life as opposed to limitlessness of eternal good.

body, in a solitary unembodied environment. This argument's teleology is purely philosophical, and the goal is for the soul to acquire wisdom, so that at the end it is a beautiful soul.

The theories of perception, matter and souls in *Phaedo* are a propaedeutic to Plato's attitude to the soul-body problem and dualism, and especially the theory of the different souls installs a hierarchy that requires an explanation, because the argument was post-mythological. Betegh's work explains the tendency of Platonic psychophilia. He proposes that the theory of souls follows a journey model (Betegh 2006, 38-34) and is a manifestation of traditionalism, but also a metaphysical solution reacting to earlier pre-Socratic eschatologies (Burkert 2008, 94-5) as a combined solution approaching the body, moving from "animism" to "mechanism" (Morrow 1950, 150). Separating soul from the body is instrumental and teleological for the philosopher, aiming at disembodiedness. The philosopher, so long as his soul is saved from his body, becomes the ideal model of the citizen. The journey model is important because it is psychophilic and instills metaphysical hierarchy justifying disembodiment. It entails the othering of the topography of souls throughout the universe and it harbors axiological differentiation within that topography.³⁹ The differential topography of the soul is a disembodiment tendency because it requires that there is a differential presence of the good in the othered place. The journey model deals with the problem how the soul can have a mobility transcending the limitations of embodiment. This model paved the way for the political role of the soul in the good city for the ideal citizen.

The answer to the final question - "Do we think with our blood, or air, or fire?" (96) - is compromised by Plato's idea to offer an escape solution for the soul from the body. There is a trajectory, but not a direct answer to the question whether we think *through* the elements we

³⁹ This is warranted by introducing the idea of the good later in the *Republic*.

are made of.⁴⁰ Plato's journey model of the soul deepens the problematic relation of soul to elements and matter and devalues the body as the analogy of untruth. The whole soul-body problem is treated because of the soul-cosmos relation, which is impeded by the body problem in the philosopher's virtuous life, which in the *Phaedo* turns out to be a political training of the soul for the cosmic entertainment of a very insecure and selective afterlife.

Phaedrus is important for the problem of disembodiment because it offers a topological model that will be reworked in the later cosmology of *Timaeus*. It continues cosmic pessimistic views on embodiment by radicalizing the motif of psychic escape through the topic of love. This dialogue features an erotic psychagogy at the very limits of the political: Socrates meets Lysias outside the city. Such location is important: the conversation is inspired by the gods believed to have lived on the shores of Ilisos (Bogdanov 2007, 7-21). Ilisos was a demi-god, the son of Poseidon and Demeter. The eponymous river is the place where the lesser mysteries were held, which were dedicated to Persephone (and Demeter), while the greater mysteries were held in Athens in their shrine (Pedley 2005, 94). The river's location corresponds to the location where the dialogues are held: outside the city, a *topos* relevant to a debate on the "outer-heavenly reality" (Bogdanov 2007). This location is exactly a model for the later *Timaeus* where *chōra* is the metaphysical outside of the polis. *Phaedrus* radicalizes the dualism towards disembodiment through the presented theory of love. With the psyche-ridden theory, which aims to prove the soul's immortality, Socrates compares the soul to a chariot with two horses and a charioteer. By being in control of the horses, the charioteer and his soul are led harmoniously in the outer-heavenly and incorporeal order of reality; when losing domination over his horses, the chariot falls into the material world and the disembodied soul becomes flesh (246a-249d). In short, if the soul grows wings, it will be closer to the gods and fly

⁴⁰ The question has been raised already in the *Parmenides* (140c), where "we can see that a complete science would have to account for 'hair, mud and dirt' as well as for the planetary motions" (Burnet 1914, 345).

disembodied through the heavens. The allegory is composed of three elements: the “natural union” of the two winged horses and the charioteer (only gods have two good horses). One horse is pulling towards aetheral eternity, the other towards earthly discontinuity. The human male is imperfect because his soul is a mixture of good and bad horses, and the *mixture* is correlative to the created bodies, which have beginnings, are destroyable, and thus are not eternal and immortal. But for the soul to fall into a body is consequent on a horse’s disorderly motion embodying the passions. The analogy bestows upon us the narrative of fall and the disorderly motion, motifs recurring in *Timaeus*.

This theory is gendered, as the one god who does not participate in those activities directed by Zeus is a female one, Hestia, surrounded by the eleven others. Vernant (2006, 157-74) analyzes the connection Hestia-Hermes, where Hestia is the “heart” of the polis, and she has a virginal status. Hestia as the heart and center describes “a closed and isolated world” (ibid., 174), and thus also immobility. She is also called Earth-mother by Euripides, who is seated in the aether (*Dramatic Fragments*, fr. 944). She represents the fixed center of the polis sitting on her *omphalos*, and Hermes, her opposite, “is the very idea of change and mobility around the center” (duBois 1991, 52):

Hestia is the only one who remains at the home of the gods [*menei gar Hestia en theon oiko mone*]; all the rest of the twelve are lined up in formation, each god in command of the unit to which he is assigned. Inside heaven are many wonderful places from which to look... (247a)

The fact that Plato immobilized this female divinity is significant, for two reasons. One, Hestia is made to represent a type of embodiment that is a static non-boundless feminine; two, she is a goddess which is aether-, not earth-bound, and therefore closer to truth. Hestia remains static, that is, she alone stays in “the house of gods.” Femininity is allegorized as *oikos* (the word is in the feminine), because *oikos* is the opposition within the polis, and not its outside. Nothing negative is said of Hestia; what can be identified as negative is her immobility and lack of participation (depending on how we evaluate her function of guarding the hearth of the political space). This element of the narrative features a topological immobilization of

femininity which signals a gendered aspect of the disembodying tendency, in as much as immobility and lack of participation are a negative feature.

The *Republic* features more cosmic optimistic views correlative to the problem of embodiment and femininity. The discussion of women in the ideal state seeks to politically curtail some ethically conservative consequences of the theory of (the philosopher's) soul. The main point of reference here is the cave/sun allegory (VII 514a) and the ensuing "metaphysics of light." The pessimistic body skepticism precedes the *Republic* - consider these two comments:

[The earth] first and she alone in that olden time bore food fit for humans, wheat and barley, which are the finest and best nourishment for the human race, because she really was the mother of this creature. And such testimonies are to be taken more seriously on earth's behalf than a woman's, inasmuch as earth does not mimic woman in conceiving and generating, but woman earth. (*Menexenus* 238a⁴¹)

... my art of midwifery is just like theirs [the midwives'] in most respects. The difference is that I attend men and not women, and that I watch over the labor of their souls, not of their bodies. (*Theaetetus* 150b⁴²)

Qualifying Plato's body pessimism before the *Republic* should be read in relation to both soul-body dualism and the feminist notion of psychophilic somatophobia (Spelman 1982), according to which those views in Plato that value negatively the body are related to female gender. The reason why Spelman and the majority of feminist Plato scholars identify the body (*soma*, a word in neuter) and not the soul (*psyche*, a word in feminine) with women is largely Plato's own ambivalence with respect to women. Plato's views on the body and women and gender are presented in the *Republic* VII through the course of his exposition of the ideal state. The question addressed in Book VII is who will realize the transition from words to reality, from phoneme and *logos* to polis. The solution offered is the philosopher-kings, in VII 540a8-b1: "By seeing the Good itself and using it as a paradigm, they [the philosophers] must order

⁴¹ Cf. *Timaeus* 32b, where Plato discusses the form of the world as spherical (see also Ballew 1974). This leaves the impression the ensuing demiurgy is neutral.

⁴² Cf. *Theaetetus* 149b on midwives' childbearing only after having given birth.

(*kosmein*) the polis, the citizens and themselves.” What stands between the polis and the philosopher is the citizen who will serve as the moulding material of the state.

This idea is preceded by the discussion of the body in Book VI, addressing the division necessary between the philosopher and his body (485d). The true philosopher needs a line of demarkation with his body (494b).⁴³ After this line is drawn, the attention turns to the citizens as the moulding material. 495c discusses the corruption of the city’s best denizens and how they have abandoned philosophy and the “unworthy” dared to approach it. In 495 there is a reference to *chōra* (which in the translation by G. M. A. Grube and C. D. C. Reeve is rendered “position,” and *kenon* is “vacated”):

And it is a reasonable thing to say, for other little men - the ones who are most sophisticated at their own little crafts - seeing that this position [*chōran*; the word can be rendered also “field” - S. P.], which is full of fine names and adornments, is vacated, leap gladly from those little crafts to philosophy, like prisoners escaping from jail who take a refuge in a temple. (495c-d).

In this passage, *chōra* is qualified as an obstacle to truth, for a move from untruth to truth, from the “fine names” to philosophy. The “fine names” are examples of sophistical doxa. The result is that “philosophy itself is corrupted, its *chōra* having become empty (*kenon*) although full of the names and pretentions” (Sallis 1999, 116). Citizens abandon philosophy when they break away with their souls, and they do that when they disobey philosophy in a *chōra*. While it appears that *chōra* here has little symbolic meaning, it’s pre-emptive use correlative to the later use of *chōra* relates its use to sophistry and becoming, that is, untruth and change - elements that will be integrated in the *chōra* of the *Timaeus*.

Plato provides an improvement to the theory of perception with respect to sight and the senses (507d-e), which relate to the disembodied tendency. Sense data and perception are limitations, and light is “a third kind”:

Sight may be present in the eyes, and the one who has it may try to use it, and colors may be present in things, but unless a third kind [*paragenetai triton*] of thing is present, which is naturally adapted for this very purpose, you know that the sight will see nothing, and the colors will remain unseen. What kind of thing do you mean? I mean what you call light. (507d)

⁴³ Note that in *Thaetetus* 149a2 Socrates tells us he is the son of a “hefty midwife” whose name is Phaenarete, a name meaning “she who brings virtue to light.”

Light's role is to mediate between the visible and the senses.⁴⁴ Plato's account of perception has to explain how goodness is embodied and *percieved*. This is done by the uppermost sense (the eyes), which are sun-like (truth-like) and correspond to the sun. As mediator, light is divine and comes from the Sun, which is likened to the highest good (remaining unqualified in the passage, 508a). A little later Plato speaks of the physical world as the "offspring of the good" (508b-c) which is analogous to the good itself. In this polarity between the visibility and invisibility of the goodness, the sun is on the side of the visible realm, as it conditions its perception (not its causation). And while the sun is the ultimate condition, the soul is the seer, its eye is the intellect, sight is knowledge, and light is truth (508e-509a). This account conditions and explains the soul-body polarity through the idea of the good, in as much as the soul becomes analogous to vision and sight (508d, 509b). Soul and being are together on the side of light. When things are "mixed with obscurity", when the soul is focused on "what comes to be" it is "bereft of understanding" (508d4-6); the mixture is synonymous to untruth, which makes the soul fall in the world of becoming and embodiment.

In Book VII Plato introduces the famous cave allegory (514a-517d), which is a continuation of the *soma-sema* formula from *Cratylus* and *Phaedo*. The allegory radicalizes the soul's dependence on the body and here we find another crucial reference to *chōra*. Plato suggests that the regular human being cannot look at the light (by extension, the third) itself (515e, although Plato does not specify the sun as the origin of light itself). By implication, select philosophers could. Nowhere does the writer suggest that the escaped prisoner will come to know the thing itself, when he finally is to look upon the sun:

Finally, I suppose, he would be able to see the sun, not images of it in water or some alien place [*en allotria hedra*], but the sun itself, in its own place [*en ti hautou chōra*], and be able to study it. (516b)

⁴⁴ See, via the work of Jane Harrison ([1903] 1908, 647), Savić-Rebac's (1983, 117) claim that the light motif is a transposition from orphism, leading to the so-called metaphysics of light (*ibid.*, 119).

The cave allegory is central for the problem of disembodiment because it deepens the *soma-sema* formula: it builds on the metaphysics of light and on the latter as the basis for the third kind, helping us to read the Timaeian problematic of becoming and *chōra*. At 516b-c it is said that the prisoner will come to know one day “the sun itself, in its own place” as the source of all things he mistook for their shadows previously. Plato’s earlier discussion of sight in Book VI has divided being and becoming with the third kind (*paragenetai triton*, “third thing,” 507d) of light, which gives philosophers the prerogative to operate themselves from the problem of embodiment. This concludes in the idea of the goodness and that both the source of, and the light itself, are good. The perceptible world is similar, an image of the “prison dwelling” (here the Greek is about *oikos: desmoterion oikesei*, 517b). Once one is in the knowable realm, “the form of the good is the last thing to be seen, and it is reached only with difficulty” (517b-c). Seeing the form of the good according to the divided line (509d, with 513d) is a liberation, but not just epistemic one: it is also an erotological and thus a moral liberation, because the form of the good, being itself beyond truth, can lead to truth and beauty (Glaucōn is quick to identify the form of the good with truth). The allegory is an escape route from the senses offered to the philosopher only, and as a political act at that: at the end of 517b-c Plato says that every citizen who “is to act sensibly in private or public must see [the light],” the third thing. The theory of perception is a pessimistic one, and it provides a model of overcoming embodiment as the corruption of truth. This model is the beautiful soul of the philosopher-king.

von Staden (2002, 79-80) states that it is easier to give an account of interaction between a body and a body than between soul and body. The sophistication of philosophical and speculative thought in Plato is a reaction to explaining this relation. He claims that the Hellenistic age had one crucial question to ask: Is the soul corporeal?, and that the dominating answer was that it is not. Plato gave a dialectical account of this relation between a body and a soul, without ignoring entirely the body-body relation. In the above section I introduced Plato’s

soul-body dualism with respect to the philosopher's attitude to death and the ideal citizen, which developed the *soma-sema* formula in continuity and relative to the use of *chōra*, defining Plato's views on embodiment. I showed that these views are reliant partly on gender, because the psychophilic tendencies are modeled on the male philosopher's soul and its separation from the body as untruth. The soul-body dualism makes the case of embodiment in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* as a dividing line with truth, and it is the obstacle to defeating the divided line from the *Republic*. Each time Plato comes back to the formula, it is relative to space and/or place and motion. It is not a problem that motion is involved so much as what kind of motion; any motion that can cause the soul's fall into body is, then, disorderly and not good. The journey model of the (philosopher's) soul is defined via *chorizein*, the separation of the soul, as avoiding the body-prison. The *Republic* gives an answer that is more optimistic not to the body itself, but to transcending it: the scenarios what the human body would undergo under different theories of the soul become more diversified. The answers given by *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus* read differently under the rule of psyche from the *Republic*. The metaphysics of light as the "third kind" was placed as a mediator between visible and invisible, and the world of embodiment was qualified as the offspring of the good. But this physical world would be represented in both metaphysical and gendered ways in the *Timaeus*, leading to the metaphysical notion of *chōra*, which is articulated as a principle.

2.C. *Chōra*

In this section I turn to the notion of *chōra*⁴⁵ from the *Timaeus* and argue that Plato submitted earlier elemental pluralism and gendering of elements and principles to a more

⁴⁵ *Chōra* is a *hapax nooumenon* within Plato's work, and inferring its significance and meaning based on earlier usages, as demonstrated above, is possible precisely because the usage can be related to the context of soul-body dualism and gender.

metaphysical and abstractive schema of rendering femininity, or a “metaphysics of sex difference” (Sandford 2010, 135ff.). I claim *chōra* is one out of two elements in late Platonist philosophy which conditioned femininity as metaphysical and cosmological boundlessness (the other being the Indefinite Dyad, presented in Chapter 3). The notion of *chōra*, as with the ideal citizen, is gendered, and unlike earlier theories, *chōra* is also connected to maternity and reproduction.

2.C.1. Introducing *Timaeus*

This subsection is meant to introduce the main terms of the dialogue *Timaeus* that will be involved in subsequent sections and to set up a framework for interpreting the notion of *chōra* featured in the dialogue. The dialogue is amongst Plato’s latest ones, predating the *Critias*, and the last full he has written, providing an account of the creation of the world. The introductory conversation (17a1-27d4) is a discourse on the transition from politics to cosmology. The conversation involves excitement about the guardians and the perfect city “in speech” of the *Republic* and the past of Athens, which is represented as always young. While Socrates gives instructions to the other speakers on how the *de facto* projected trilogy should proceed (19b3-20c3), Critias longs for the perfect city (19c5-7). *Timaeus* is structured by two “beginnings” of the dialogue. They reveal one credible (historical/archeological) and one speculative (mythical/philosophical) account. The first beginning runs from 29d7 to 47e2 and deals with the craftsmanship of the Intellect (Nous), which is a primary cause, where Timaeus tries to explain the composition of the World order (*Kosmos*) and heavens (*ouranos* at 28b, *to pan* at 28c). It ends with the explanation of differences between primary and auxiliary causes. The first beginning also deals with and recalls the political organization of the ideal state described in the *Republic* V (*Timaeus* 19c5-7, 27b2-6). In the *Republic*, the philosopher is *demiourgos* of virtue in the real, while in *Timaeus* God is the “ultimate philosopher-king”

(Carone 2005, 52). The second beginning runs from 47e3 to 69a5, describing the effects of Necessity (Ananke). Within this second beginning, there are two accounts: the first as just mentioned, and the second one (69a6-92c9) describes the collaboration of Intellect and Necessity, where the former informs and “persuades” the latter. Sections 29-52 represent speculations on how the world comes to be via Being and Becoming. The terms Nous and Ananke are introduced in a sequence, and they are figurations of, respectively, the realm of intellection (of knowledge) and the realm of necessity (of matter and created bodies). While Nous is a primary cause, Ananke is descriptive of the effect of cosmological creation. And although the dialogue’s late passages describe the cooperation between the two, Ananke is responsible for the field of becoming and matter.

Timaeus is an instance of partial cosmic optimism (see Koderer 2010, 50). Somfai claims that the later “exploration of the laws of nature in the *Timaeus* is the counterpart of the search for positive law in the *Republic* and *Laws*” (Somfai 2002, 4). According to Owen the *Timaeus* is “the culmination of a period of growing confidence” and the crown of the *Republic* group (Owen 1953, 94, 81). Lovejoy (2001, 33) claims the God of *Timaeus* and *Laws*, and not the idea of the Good, is Plato’s supreme theme. Plato’s ambition was to better answer previously unanswered or partly answered questions, such as “Do we think with our blood, or air, or fire?” and offer a “complete science” (Burnet 1914, 345), and it led to a “model of dominance” (duBois 1991, 152).

The passages and terms explored here frame the discussion of femininity as metaphysical boundlessness within a theory of becoming. The terminology (discussed in the next section) presents various attempts to answer the key question explored: “What is *that which always is* and has no becoming, and what is *that which becomes* but never is?” (28a1-2, emphasis mine). The answer given to the first part of the question is that *that which always is* (Being) is grasped by understanding, which involves a “reasoned account.” The answer to the

second part involves a gendered terminology and in answering it “we are dealing with what is always becoming and never is, not with what always is and never becomes” (Burnet 1914, 340). *That which becomes* (Becoming) is grasped by opinion, which involves “irrational sense perception” (*aisthesis alogos*, 28a4) and not a “reasoned account.” Being involves “a reasoned account” (siding with Nous, truth and order), and becoming involves “irrational sense perception” (siding with Ananke, belief [*pistis*] and chaos).⁴⁶ Being as what always is never becomes because it is ultimately good. This schema creates a hierarchy transcending cosmology, because it associates the first account with knowledge and goodness and the second with belief and lack of good, since “[a]s being is to becoming, so is truth to belief” (29c).

This cosmological-political continuity is in line with the *Republic*, where if the soul is focused on “what comes to be,” it is “bereft of understanding.” Under the earlier theory of forms, what is visible but not intelligible is on a lower status, as is what always becomes but never is. The continuity between cosmology and politics comes down to a similar wording with the “third kind” for the general category of becoming. While in the *Republic* the third kind describes the light, in *Timaeus* the third kind describes the medium out of (*ek hou*) which what is seen by light is borne. When in the *Timaeus* Plato resorts to *chōra*, he recalls in an alternative way the *Phaedo* question about what we are made of, i.e., returning to elements. In this sense the dialogue is a reworking of elemental pluralism but subjected to a metaphysical model. To repeat, the psyche needs to be purified by the body through separation (*chorizein*). The “place” that *chōra* “defines” can be likened as the metaphysical counterpart of the *topos* outside the city in *Phaedrus*. The connection with *Republic* is one that brings closer the embodiment of the polis and the embodiment of the soul, because in *Timaeus* Plato indicates that the

⁴⁶ In the *Republic*, one of the four conditions of the soul - the third one - corresponds to belief (VI 511d), and thus Ananke is already framed as related to the third kind/thing.

connection between polis and soul has to be followed by a disembodied solution: the afterlife of the beautiful soul.

2.C.2. Terminology Concerning the Female and Becoming: *triton genos*, *hypodoche*, *chōra*

This section deals with (a) the dialogue's cosmological apparatus and its gendering, and (b) how the feminine *chōra* relates to disembodiment. The dialogue introduces three largely interchangeable terms - *triton genos* (third kind, 48e4), *hypodoche* (receptacle, 49a5-6), and *chōra* (space,⁴⁷ 52a8, d3). I focus on the third term because it describes a transition from natural and elemental to metaphysical rendition of female boundlessness and the introduction of metaphysics of sex difference. This transition is, in effect, the radicalization of the earlier ambivalence of femininity.

In Plato's work, *chōra* appears 4 times in the *Theaetetus*, once in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, 5 times in the *Parmenides*, 7 times in the *Republic*, more than 100 times in the *Laws*. *Chōra* can be identified as a semantic *hapax nooumenon* only due to the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*. The statistical data about its usage in other works does not qualify it as *hapax*, nor as a concept/notion. However, the *hapax* cannot be isolated from various other usages: as I previously highlighted, the adverbial usages suggest that Plato's understanding of space was ontologized and radicalized *in relation to* femininity and the way it is associated with (but is not necessarily *identical* with) becoming and untruth. The reason why it can be stated that *chōra* is a concept in the context of Plato's *Timaeus* is that, as a *hapax*, it does radicalize the meaning of femininity, which makes *chōra* not a passing term, but an operable concept and, as

⁴⁷ I follow the so-called space interpretation of *chōra*, see Zeyl (2000), Sallis (1999), with Algra (1995, 76-110). In the *Timaeus* *chōra* is not, strictly, matter. The interpretation below largely follows the contemporary continental consensus that *chōra* is identified with matter again due to embracing hylomorphism. To the extent to which it is allegorized as female, and to the extent to which the hylomorphic rendering of matter antagonizes femininity, the formula *chōra-as-matter* is spelled out.

a concept, it defines something, namely, femininity and female reproductivity. And the radicalization is discernible in those two instances in *Republic* and *Timaeus*. Above I have dealt with *chōra* as a *hapax* in the context of the former; below I deal with it in the context of the latter.

In the so-called second beginning of the dialogue, the problematic of *becoming* is introduced (after 47) with these three names (and two other marginal words used in passing: *hedra* and *meros*⁴⁸) that are all qualified as female and reproductive, within the second account on Ananke.⁴⁹ It is here that Plato “decides” to identify the problematic of becoming with women and to conceptually radicalize femininity. Trying to approach becoming, Timaeus first calls it *triton genos* (third kind, 48e4), first used as a “likely account” (*eikos mythos*, 29d) describing the dialectic between Being and Becoming (or model and image). It is “likely” because as mortals we could serve ourselves with opinion (*doxa*), but true understanding is accessible only to God and very few mortals (the philosophers and rulers with “golden souls,” *Republic* III 412c ff.). The second term used is *hypodochē* (receptacle, 49a5-6). In the *Republic*, the citizen was described as serving as the moulding material of the ruler; in *Timaeus*, the receptacle is qualified as imprint-bearer (also translated as “impressionable stuff,” 50c2-6, 50e7, 51a1) between being and becoming, and Plato connects politics and cosmology through *hypodochē*. It is called *to pandeches* (the recipient of all things, all-receiving, 51a7) and *ekmageion* (matrix, moulding-stuff, impressionable stuff, imprint-bearer, 50c2). There are motions in it, they are different ones and do not originate in the receptacle itself but “in the incoming affections” (Johansen 2004, 130). *Hypodochē* is sidelined with becoming, irrational

⁴⁸ On *hedra* (seat, 52b1), see Sallis (1999, 119); Kalkavage (1983, 125). On *meros* (part, 81b4-6), see Zeyl (2005). The use of the word *topos* is suppressed. It appears as late as 57c3 through 87a4, with meanings varying from “place of body” (57c3, 57c6, 58c1) and more precisely “proper place of body” (57c3, with *chōra* in 57c1, 58b9, 60c1), and a “region or part of the human body or soul” (85b4, 87a4, the analogies between sun/earth and belly/head).

⁴⁹ This is also a continuation of the *Republic*, where the physical world is described as the “offspring of the good” (VI 508b-c).

sense perception and opinion. According to Claghorn, Plato “wanted to avoid identifying [the receptacle] with the *archai* of the pre-Socratic philosophers” (Claghorn 1953, 11⁵⁰), and the very use of *archai* could be read as a second-order metaphor (Ashbaugh 1974, 215). The third term introduced is *chōra* (52a8, d3) which is rendered space, or space-as-matter, it is introduced in the so-called “second beginning” and is further called “bastard reasoning” (*logismo tini notho*, 52b2-3⁵¹) as opposed to the “likely account.” Becoming as *chōra* (space) receives the following other names and similes: *tithene* (nurse, 49a), *en ho* ([that] in which, 49e), *ek chrysou* (lump of/out of gold, 50a4-b5), *ekmageion* (imprint bearer, also “translated as “impressionable stuff”, 50c2-6, e7, 51a1), *meter* (mother, 50d2-4, 51a4-5), *ta aleimmata hoposa euode* (variously translated as perfume base, unguent or ointment, 50e5-8), *ton plokaron te kai organon* (winnowing sieve, 52e6). We find the “third kind” and *chōra* at 52 in the context of a dialectical opposition between being and becoming, and in light of *Republic VI*, where being and becoming are divided by the third kind.

The task in the *chōra* passages is a return to the difficulty of seeing the form of the good described in the *Republic*. The difficulty is here named “bastard thinking,” and finally *chōra*. It is difficult to make the case that all of these names and similes *are chōra*. It’s being beyond predication is as mysterious and ungraspable as the uncontainability of *apeiron* or the Pythagorean number. However, it can be said that it is called “bastard” because it escapes the likelihood of *logos* which philosophers aim at. This part of the dialogue deepens the association with femininity because Necessity which is “persuaded” by Intellect is female, and *chōra* is

⁵⁰ In the course of the first beginning of *Timaeus* *arche* means “highest” and “best” (Kalkavage 1983, 106). Consider also that the first beginning is only about fathers and sons (Sadoff 2002, 36), so the *arche* up to the receptacle’s introduction could be considered as describing purely male parts (again, notwithstanding the fact the word is in feminine).

⁵¹ Derrida’s *Dissemination* carried over to his commentary on *Timaeus* (Derrida 1995), and the exchange with John D. Caputo, explain the structural value of the bastard reasoning: “every text, written or oral, is a bastard or an orphan, its father/author having departed. ... The text is always a bastard. This system or boxes inside boxes, containers containing containers - this ‘khōra’ quality - is a feature of textuality itself” (Caputo 1997, 91). The problem that for a disembodied word to be “higher” (because disembodied) than written ones depends on the agency of the admixture of mind, body and soul is certainly not recognized here, for it will diminish the hierarchizing psychagogic function.

also called “mother of all beginning” (*metera kai hypodochen*, 51a). Gadamer suggests that “overall one has to picture the *Timaeus* as a game of Plato” (Gadamer 2007, 401), that is, a game of *Nous* and *Ananke* (confirmed in the third part of the dialogue describing the cooperation between the two). It has the function of mediation between Being and Becoming while being described as herself becoming. With *chōra* as a mediating term between them, Plato allegedly balances out the forces of the two: the explanation of the creation of universe is done via *chōra* as the irrational “bastard reasoning.” Even when qualified as the mother of all beginning, however, *chōra* does not directly participate in creation: it is characterized by the activities of *dechesthai* (receiving, cf. *dechetai te gar aei ta panta*, 50b, and in the same sense *to pandeches* as “the all-receiving”) and *tiktein* (bearing, to procreate, 91b4-5).

The word *chōra* has military and spatial, agrarian connotations, which can lend consistency with the motifs concerning political *isonomia* (equal political rights). The etymology has meanings as: land, country; territory; landed estate; country town; the country, opposite to the town (Liddell, Scott and Johnson [1925] 1996, 2015). Ancient concepts usually have everyday life meaning and are close to daily language use (Gadamer 2007, 385). *Chōra* as land was inseparable from the polis, and a division between citizen rights and ownership of land (Bintliff 2006, 13), describing lands outside the polis (De Ste. Croix 1981, 10), plots and pastures that helped countrymen support themselves, where villagers were non-citizens of the polis and Greek was rarely spoken (ibid., 13; Brown 1988, 5-33). Passages in *Laws* illustrate this meaning as farmland for cultivation (*Laws* 740a; cf. also 745d) or mother tending to her children (see Sallis 1999, 116). Where this sense prevails, a differentiation between center (city) and periphery (country) is sought (ibid., 116-17⁵²). When earlier the theory of ideas and forms in the *Phaedo* was presented, “[t]he Form is said ‘to be present’ to the thing (*pareinai*),

⁵² The middle of the city is a clear reference to the unmoving seventh position designated to the center in *Timaeus*. The twelve parts seem to correspond to the twelve gods from *Phaedrus*.

‘to occupy it’ (*katechein*), or to ‘retreat’ from it (*hypechorein*)” (Taylor 1928, 346). Taylor underlines the significance of these words: they are all spatial metaphors relating to military occupation (ibid.) Recall also that in *Republic V* 459c-d the word *chōra* describes the “position” of craftsmen and their “false names.” The *Laws* features comments on both women and *chōra*. There Plato tries to say something positive about women under hierarchy and the male-female model ordering the human race. The proviso of giving a positive account concerns only a positive and successful regulation of women’s nature, and not that nature alone:

For with you, Cleinias and Megillus, the common tables of men are, as I said, a heaven-born and admirable institution, but you are mistaken in leaving the women unregulated by law. They have no similar institution of public tables in the light of day, and just that part of the human race which is by nature prone to secrecy and stealth on account of their weakness - I mean the female sex - has been left without regulation by the legislator, which is a great mistake. ... For women are accustomed to creep into dark places, and when dragged out into the light they will exert their utmost powers of resistance, and be far too much for the legislator. And therefore, as I said before, in most places they will not endure to have the truth spoken without raising a tremendous outcry, but in this state perhaps they may. (*Laws* 781a-b)

In *Laws* the meaning is “place,” not “space” (though R. G. Bury prefers “space”) (see Sallis 1999, 116). This meaning is logical and tied to the idea of motion. The motion-place relation in *Laws* is very similar to the motions within the receptacle as described in *Timaeus*, which is why feminist writers can presume that women do not have autonomous involvement between the Athenian (male) citizen and the *topos* of the marketplace (Alfonso 2002, with more nuanced evidence by Pomeroy 1995, 125-31).

Plato’s wording is ideationally consistent with the political crisis of republicanism (Loraux 2006, 24) that concerned him. Because of the femininity and maternity of *chōra*, the cosmological account can shift from the more general exclusion of the exploited (as the land of the non-citizens) to the female (as the receptacle of matter⁵³). As the relationship between polis and *chōra* was one of exploitation, in cosmology it bears a similar hierarchical brunt on

⁵³ The etymological approach can lead us all the way to the archaic period, when *stenochoia* (“lack of land”; note that it is a noun in the feminine too) was what is assumed to have prompted Greek colonization. While *chōra* entails political exclusion, it might as well entail territorial/economic inclusion and the political conquest of land - and the female. A relation of domination is apparently present in any case.

to the notional femininity. Feminizing the term metaphysically helped Plato transfer the eternal Forms to a philosophical-cosmological lexis when faced with embodiment and material change. Because the notion is gendered, it triggers suspicions regarding the role of difference and women in the discursive crisis surrounding *isonomia* within the city and questions the egalitarian account on women from the *Republic* in relating politics and cosmology. It is due to these inconsistencies with respect to gender and *isonomia* that Plato can appear as an inconsistent misogynist and subject to inculpatory reading. That said, the very idea of an inculpatory reading shuns the possibility of reading Plato's thought as "development" and inculcation is reliant on the idea that his thinking, because contradictive, is degenerative with respect to gendered *isonomia*.

The distinction between *polis* and *chōra* is the political and metaphysical introduction of *chorein*. The middle/the polis is the center because its difference is defined by the *chōra* as outside and country land. If the polis is a self-centered unmoving identity, the *chōra* contains the motions of the material world of differences. If in the *Republic* light was the third kind, and what was qualified as the place full of fine and untruthful names for philosophy (VI 495c-d), in the *Timaeus* this is now *chōra*. The place that *chōra* defines can be likened to the *topos* outside the city in *Phaedrus*, but this place is now more than place, it is space, and it is feminized not as metaphysics of light, but as sexed metaphysics of becoming. If in the *Phaedrus* the philosophical *topos* best suited for philosophy was outside the city, in the *chōra* near Ilisos, in *Timaeus* this place now itself becomes a metaphysical space feminized. The fact that philosophy is best practiced outside the polis makes the non-politeic space a space of exception precisely of philosophical discourse whose teleology is polis-oriented, and the metaphysical use of *chōra* as feminine still has to serve the polis. When the female is at the center (Hestia), the price paid is immobilization and exclusion from participation in the gods' deeds. Plato introduced a schematism of cosmic genesis, which can be simplified as: Being is

the Father, Becoming is the Offspring, and Space (*chōra*) is the Mother.⁵⁴ The language used maintains consistency with offering a solution of how to see the form of the good, and allows some continuity not only with the theory of perception and the doctrine of principles, but with offering a cosmology. With the latter, Plato also produced a metaphysics of sex difference - the most debated point in the feminist literature on Timaeian cosmology is the problem of *chōra*'s *participation* in the creation story and its reproductivity, and what is its relation to the "offspring." As discussed above, *dechesthai* is what characterizes *chōra*, and not active participation in the procreation.

In this section I showed that *chōra* is framed as Plato's major reference to the problem of becoming and, with it, of difference and/as femininity. The preceding motifs and problems surrounding the body, especially in soul-body dualism, and the terminology surrounding *chōra* revealed an indelible identification between *chōra* and (reproductive) femininity. This identification is a radicalization of femininity's relation to creation and elementality. The identification genders the cosmology and the gendering becomes a problem with respect to synchronizing politics and cosmology, because the egalitarianism and alleged feminism of Plato from *Republic* V is cosmologically curtailed by the *Timaeus* passages after 47 since *chōra* is denied participation. The oppositions between being and becoming, truth and sophistry, reasoned account and irrational sense perception nurture and deepen hierarchy and the development of hierarchical metaphysics, which is reliant on an idealization of disembodiment.

2.D. Femininity and Metaphysical Boundlessness

Plato's implicit philosophy of disembodiment revolves around hierarchy and with it, axiological and cosmological implications about femininity. Because with *chōra* Plato

⁵⁴ This schema can only be tenable if trinitarianism is to be traced down all the way to *Timaeus*. In fact, both becoming and space are associated with femininity.

identified femininity and the metaphysical workings of becoming, the term *chōra* is a radicalized and gendered notion. Again, the femininity is also reproductive femininity: while in the mythological accounts the ambivalence was predicated on a freer relation to reproduction, with *chōra* the ambivalence was reduced to reproduction in order to account for the field of becoming as a space of birth and creation. Due to hierarchization, the soul-body dualism and the tendency towards disembodiment become more radicalized. In the following subsections 2.D.1-3 I will explore arguments on the passages discussed, focusing on explaining the radicalization and privileging of the tendency towards disembodiment via *chōra*, showing that *chōra* was introduced to qualify femininity as metaphysical boundlessness.

2.D.1. *Chōra* as A Reaction to Hierarchy

duBois states that in the progress of speculative thought from the 5th to the 4th century BCE a crisis of thinking about difference took place in moving beyond polarity towards hierarchy (duBois 1991, 2, referring to Lloyd 1966). Before hierarchy, analogy and polarity served as a reference to a forlorn state of affairs when the polis did not have to deal with internal differences (both *stasis* [Loraux 2006] and sexual difference), largely corresponding to a pre-Pandoran world. The transformation from analogy to hierarchy expressed a new solution to social conflict and collapse (duBois 1991, 16), which is restorationist and elitist (on hierarchy as elitism, see Santos 2013, 29-30). The crisis opened the gates to *discourse for* hierarchy,⁵⁵ and hierarchy was a solution to the crisis in speculating about the form of the polis.

Hierarchy cannot answer entirely to the problem of the Good. The metaphysics of sex espoused through *chōra* poses the problem that the body as something created by divine will cannot be not-good, but it is not *the* good, either. The earlier idea of the Good was also a

⁵⁵ Dillon (1991) also acknowledges *gendered hierarchy*, but without assuming misogyny as a political axis of dividing both the cosmos and the polis.

reaction formation seeking to consolidate republicanism in the aftermath of the Peloponnesian war and the precedent of *stasis* (Loraux 2006, 24). Loraux also defines the transition to hierarchy as “the crisis of the fourth century” (ibid., 15). The Athenian democratic order was “based on exclusion and frequently on imperial expansion” (duBois 2001, 19).

The teleology of hierarchy and difference was *mediation*, and *chōra* is described as a term of mediation. But mediation excluded participation (*methexis*) in the Forms, which is why the *chōra* is hierarchically positioned on the lower status as becoming. This part of *Timaeus* is in line with the *Republic* where only those women who manifest the best qualities acquire an equal status - Plato’s suspicion to the body rejected the idea of participation by all citizens. The divine force of worldly polis and order (*kosmein*) is the subject of concealment and containment of difference. But when it comes to generating the offspring, *chōra* mediates by way of its femininity which isolates it from Forms, not by dint of that femininity’s participation in Forms. In *Timaeus* she merely receives the Forms. duBois explores the polis and participation by using the term “pre-history” to suggest that in the great chain of being (Lovejoy 2001, viii and 99ff.) something is suppressed and alien to “discourse.” The alien is positioned between the animal and the woman, and so the writers of the 4th century BCE moved away from polarity to hierarchy between the citizens (*isonomoi*) of the city, which was possible because the other is excluded from the discourse (duBois 1991, 4) and is set at the boundaries of the city. Since the logic and ideal of male autarky and/as self-sufficiency is ideationally and physically shattered by difference, hierarchy addressed it as political contradiction. Plato’s *chōra* was a response to that problem, because he made of the city’s boundaries a metaphysical entity.⁵⁶ He formulated *chōra* as such a response because the exclusion of difference from the polis was impossible, and the metaphysical solution was *chōra* as a strategy of containment for the benefit of the

⁵⁶ Derrida ([1987] 1995, 89) claimed that *chōra* represents the logic of non-contradiction. Derrida’s thesis however implies that *chōra* cannot be part of a dualism, which is difficult to accept, because non-contradiction entails lack of otherness, which lack is certainly not the case in the dialogue.

common good. *Chōra* is the first *philosophical* manifestation of this strategy that was subject to hierarchical metaphysics.

2.D.2. *Chōra* as A Radicalization of Disembodiment

Juxtaposing *Republic* and *Timaeus* on the role of women and female principles and cosmic optimism/pessimism reveals the tendency to radicalize disembodiment. To recapture the term, disembodiment is the opposite of the material and bodily essence of the human being, formally defined as soul, spirit, noema, etc., terms deducible from and relative to the theory of Ideas and Forms. The Platonic philosophical material undergoing radicalization towards disembodiment is mediated by *chōra* as the realm of becoming and embodiment. While *chōra* is not matter and embodiment, it is the container *out of* which they arise. Thus, its radicalization is relative to developing the identification between femininity, becoming and embodiment. What gets disembodied is the realm of Nous as separated by the one of Ananke.

While in the *Republic* Socrates is made to discuss women by his conversants, in the *Timaeus* no one asks the Locrian symposiast to discuss *chōra* as feminine principle to begin with. In both dialogues, the text accounts for women from a secondary, supplementarily, second-beginning perspective, where masculinity and identity are featured in first and femininity and difference in second narratives. In the *Republic* female citizens are modeled after the best qualities of the male citizen; in the *Timaeus* the receptacle is devoid of qualities/*dynameis* (Cornford [1935] 1997, 188), and the woman as mother is devoid of qualities and properties. Plato returns to a more traditionalist agenda of reproductivity (already espoused by Apollo in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 657-9, as well as Diodoros, see Cornford 1997, 187). In *Timaeus* there is both a recounting of the ideal city and a misogyny, which is expressed in the view that metempsychosis involves a demotion to female lives for those living an ignoble life (see *Timaeus* 90e-92c). Bluestone (1987, 18) claims that misogyny of this sort is more

characteristic for the attitudes of the early Church and the misogynist streak in *Timaeus* “coincided with the prejudices of the educated man of the Middle Ages” and it spread until the 20th century (ibid., 13; Clark 1999, 4-5). The *Republic* carries more emancipatory suggestions about women’s nature than *Timaeus*.⁵⁷ Parker (2006, 25) also notes a tension between the dialogues via the Myth of Er in Book X. The juxtaposition with *Republic* V and X raises two problems with respect to evaluating embodiment: (1) the role of the soul in relation to the sex of the body in which it inhabits - i.e., choice or no choice of sex theory, and (2) the origin of sex differentiation. *Timaeus* raises the second issue, opening the problem how to relate individual and communal and how the dialogue should address sex differentiation and ensouled bodies in the post-mythic world. Both Er and *Timaeus* address the first problem but with conflicting stories; both Er and *Timaeus* support the asexual soul theory (Parker 2006, 33), where asexuality allows psychophilia. But while in *Republic* there is a choice of body theory, in *Timaeus* there is a deterministic story of metempsychosis excluding women from the first generation. The partial cosmic optimism inherent in *Timaeus* should be read against the background of a body choice theory proposed by Plato differentially (ibid., 34⁵⁸).

As has been noted above, while women’s political participation in the polis was endorsed (*Republic*), this is not the case for the female *chōra*’s cosmological participation (*Timaeus*), because it is characterized by the non-participatory activity of *dechesthai* (receiving). These activities are identified with passivity because they are rendered as non-contributing to what is borne.⁵⁹ If the female guardians in *Republic* participate in the political order, *chōra* does not participate in the cosmological order - it receives and bears without

⁵⁷ This is despite, to the displeasure of inculpatory feminists, the analogy of women to guard dogs, or precisely because of it, as it includes the subsumption of men in the comparison too, cf. *Republic* V 451d.

⁵⁸ It is a significant scholarly quandary why Plato does not clarify if the male body is the original carrier of ensouled human being. That he does not clarify this should diminish the inculpatory interpretation and the critique of the *Republic-Timaeus* inconsistency. Perhaps Plato did believe one way or another his followers will be educated enough to know the *Republic* V. But the historicizing restorationism (suggested by Marinov 2012), the recurrence of a Hesiodian golden age motif, returns.

⁵⁹ In the Aristotelian tradition the receptacle is reduced to substratum by virtue of the “participation,” or the lack of it thereof, in the Forms of the properties (see Claghorn 1953).

qualities, which makes it a passive bearer. Thus, the role of femininity from politics to cosmology reduces the function of participation on metaphysical and cosmological levels.

2.D.3. *Chōra* as An Expression of Somatophobia

Because *chōra* is read as resulting from hierarchy and from lack of participation, this has produced a strong inculpatory line against Plato in feminist continental philosophy which largely agree there is extrapolation of axiology to cosmology. In turn, this agreement singles out the *chōra* passage as the epitome of female exclusion. One reason as explained above is the incoherence between politics and cosmology. Another reason is the correlation between gender and reason leading to implied female inferiority. Inferiority could be identified on account of, for example, qualifying necessity as mindless, *anoia* (in the *Republic* it is called “mother of Moira”, 616c-d), as well as the aforementioned problem of *methexis*. The delinking of femininity from reason and intellection can thus be observed in Plato presenting *Nous* as telos/masculinity, and *Ananke* as chaos/femininity. This Platonic incoherence has led feminist poststructuralist philosophy (Ashbaugh 1974; Grosz 1995; Butler 1993; Sadoff 2002, to name just a few) to embrace reading Plato as misogynist exclusively via the *chōra* passages despite the central place of femininity in cosmology, as its centrality cannot explain the reduction to passive bearing (see the discussion of these interpretations in 4.C). The literature is based on a suspicion that hierarchy is responsible for a model of thinking which is misogynistic (Freeland 2005), and hence the cosmology and the ethics would be such, because aligning logical thinking with male rationality as embedded in cosmologically gendered principles (Lloyd 2004) leads to a moral superiority within the cosmology. If it is true that the cosmology is modeled after a political worry of identity, then the hierarchy prevails. Within this hierarchy attention is focused on the grammatical gendering in the feminine and how it functions in opposition to terms whose function (but not gender) is identified with the male.

The literature is also concerned with the question how to value the boundless (see Lovibond 2000, 19). This is particularly related to characterizations of *chōra* as nearly impossible to define, which returns it to the motif of mythic female boundlessness - even while the *chōra* is presented as a metaphysical-cosmological concept. Plato's alluding that to define *chōra* is impossible does not mean he fails to define it. He complicates *chōra* as expressive of boundlessness because the language is both gendered and metaphorical. In a context where definitions of *chōra* are given via female metaphors, the main problem is to explain why would Plato use a metaphor (bastard reasoning, *chōra*, etc.) rather than a *likely concept* while giving a likely account, and why would he use the speculative language of the second beginning and go back to, as Kofman (1991) spells this out, inferior discourse or "useless polysemia." If metaphor was the language of Being for pre-Socratics (ibid., 51), and if *chōra* is a deliberate attempt to avoid the use of pre-Socratic *archai* (Claghorn 1953, 11), then the result would be, following Kofman, that Plato means to link metaphorical language and the femininity of *chōra*. The elemental and the pre-Socratic polysemic language about Being and its elements is reproduced in Plato's terminology of the female: in order to move forward cosmologically, he moves backwards rhetorically. This rhetorical move has radicalized the soul-body problem in Plato and feeds the feminist critique of somatophobia. Thus, the tension between metaphor and concept highlights the relevance of *chōra* as expressive of somatophobia for contemporary continental and feminist philosophies.

Miller (1995, 139) claims the incoherence between politics and cosmology is due to Plato using his standard metaphysics as a basis for an account of the physical world. Sandford claims Plato uses the moral inferiority of women "and justifies it cosmo-theologically" (Sandford 2010, 152; see also Harding 1986, 12). Ashbaugh (1974) explains Platonic cosmology as gynophobic and politics as androphilic with the lower metaphysical status of passive femininity and reproductivity as non-contributing. Again, Spelman (1984, 129) has

offered to call these worries in feminist Platonic scholarship “psychophilic somatophobia.” Feminist continental philosophers often embrace the theory of Platonic somatophobia and explore the male sexing of reason via the delinking of Intellect and Order in women in the dialogue’s “second beginning,” the main reason why continental authors have concentrated so much on the *chōra* passage (52a8) in the last three decades (Freeland 2005, 33).

The feminist philosophical historicizing of somatophobic tendencies in Plato’s cosmology seeks to prove interdependence between cosmology and politics responsible for female inferiority. The introduction of hierarchical metaphysics is generally credited as based on such interdependence and its inconsistencies and is credited as explaining the desire to preserve political *isonomia*. The two accounts, when taken together, differently confirm the superiority of the male sex, but they have different implications. The second account reiterates the originary self-sufficiency of the male sex.

However, the cosmology-politics incoherence needs to be complicated by recalling that both accounts are given as explanations of the generation of the soul and its motions upwards or downwards, towards divinities and towards animals. The *chōra* passage can be read as a vehicle for and towards sex differentiation, that is, in relation to the later passages on biophysiology. These later passages can be framed as the third part of the dialogue, describing the cooperation of Nous and Ananke. The third part presents an account of the soul’s life and its virtues, a life which determines the soul’s movement towards either an embodied or disembodied scenario. The cooperation between the two terms entails sexual desire, contained by one “ensouled living thing” (90e6-91a4). It is related to the philosophical life and the unrighteous life, which ends up in degeneration of bodies (Parker 2006, 23). Because all souls are born without knowledge in bodies, the importance of education progresses with one’s development towards the desired heavenly life (one’s “consort star,” 41e). In these physiological passages after 90e Plato says that one will be demoted to a woman in another life

if one has not lived righteously.⁶⁰ There are two accounts of the generation of sexes. In the first account humans have a twofold nature, “the superior kind should be such as would from then on be called ‘man’” (41e4-42a3). This account involves the twofold nature of human, the superiority of the male, and that *being* male outranks being female (Parker 2006, 24). The third aspect rejects the supposed equal nature of men and women featured in the *Republic*. This is justified in 90e as related to the motif of war in the *Republic*, for it involves fear and evasion of civic duty; it also features the ridiculousness of being reborn as animal, hence “the female body is a form of punishment” (Parker 2006, 25). In the *Republic* Plato also finds female nakedness laughable. Sandford discusses the quality of ridiculousness ascribed to female degeneration. The laughable qualities decried seem to redeem the intra-textual conflict between the mythologizing force of *chōra* and the rationalizing force of the offered biophysiology. After 90 the passages offer only a credible account that involves humor (Sandford 2010, 135), and the language is no longer allegoric. The ridicule offers a sort of “comic relief” to the drama of embodiment just presented through the demoted souls, and the animals carry just enough ridiculousness to release the “pressure” of the sex differentiation theory outlined. Reincarnation is tied to sex differentiation, and the reincarnation of cowardly men is no less laughable. Reincarnation is sexually divided and wreaks havoc in the moral compass of the initial male and self-sufficient embodiment: the right male reincarnation has to be deserved. Here, according to Sandford, Plato’s language carefully patrols the border between *anthropos* and *aner* to emphatically suggest that embodiment is a dreadful business of the soul: so *aner* is normally reserved to mean man “rather than woman or generic humanity” (Sandford 2010, 144).⁶¹ The very division within sex produces a form of hierarchy, or “superiority” and “inferiority” (with duBois above) according to originarity and precedence (ibid., 149).

⁶⁰ Most likely this is an allusion to the original myth of the *androgynos* in the *Symposium*.

⁶¹ See the evidence in Sandford (2010, 150): “In fact, the mention of ‘females’ (*to tholu*) at 91d8 is the first and only time the word is used in the dialogue in relation to human beings, and the word ‘male’ (*arren*) is never used of humans in Timaeus’ discourse, not even where Zeyl’s translation suggests it is.”

Krell (1975) offers an influential solution connecting and reconstructing logical inconsistency with sex differentiation and the supposed misogyny. Krell's thesis is that Timaeus' account is a *failure* because it both requires female parts and degrades them to a different ontological state, since "the female parts are *man's animal parts*" (ibid., 404). For him Plato himself would have somehow restored a balance between male and female parts later in the trilogy; but he stopped at 47-48 where he must begin for the second time; but in doing so he recalls *Nous* while forgetting *Ananke*.⁶² The philosophical misfortune that Timaeus himself causes in his second discourse is irrecoverable and makes his own account unintelligible. If the feminine is formed by the male, how can *Becoming* be other than a perfect image of the father? Or, in the third account, if women are generated by the reincarnation of cowardly men, how can it be that women are not perfect counterparts of men? This contradiction reveals that the reason to seek to identify reason with the male sex/parts is, fundamentally, unreasonable.

Because the sex differentiation theory tendentiously privileges male reincarnation, reading the dialogue outside the *chōra* passage also testifies to psychophilic somatophobia - the account does qualify male and female parts as subjects to hierarchy, even though it aims at describing cooperation between those parts. If in the final biophysiological account we are dealing predominantly with *Necessity*, this is so because Plato has to draw the cosmological and the political implications together and to lower the discussion to biological terms. Even so, the incoherence between politics and cosmology transpires. Male logical thinking never fully prevails over necessity as the straying cause, which is why we can speak of partial cosmic optimism. Yet necessity as the aberration of causality is never disputed, which then never explains why we have to accept the homologization between *chōra* and the female to begin with. If we do not question this implicit essentialization of "what never is but always becomes"

⁶² The opposite argument is offered by Gill (1987) and Freeland (2005).

as female, we also implicitly justify the hierarchical axiology behind the sex differentiation theory and our very categories of sex (and hence embodiment).

In this section I presented a synoptic interpretation of Plato's *chōra* under three problems it articulates in the cosmology of *Timaeus*: hierarchy, disembodiment, and somatophobia. These problems are relative to the way that predominantly the feminist scholarship on Plato's political philosophy problematizes women's role in the ideal state. Because Plato identified *chōra* with reproductive femininity, he made it possible to account for *chōra* as responsible for the field of becoming, which positioned it hierarchically lower than the field of Being. On account of this identification, a psychophilic preference for the soul's disembodiment was radicalized. Finally, because the *chōra* as feminine and as becoming was disentangled from the domain of primary causes and was reduced to the function of receiving, it warranted a somatophobic interpretation whereby Plato's soul-body dualism is sustained by the later cosmological cosmic pessimism rather than the earlier political cosmic optimism.

2.E. Conclusion

In this chapter I focused on how Plato's views on the body can be regarded as an implicit philosophy of disembodiment. The aim was to show that the radicalizing tendencies towards disembodiment come from elements in Plato's soul-body dualism and the later cosmology and were undergirded by a continuous philosophy of disembodiment based on psychophilic somatophobia. My discussion of Plato showed that what has changed with respect to femininity's ambivalence, and more precisely the ambivalence towards relations with death and immortality, is that femininity was subjected to hierarchy (hierarchical metaphysics) and passivity. The boundless was no longer transformative in its ambivalence to death, because true *arete* and wisdom were modeled on both a male prototype of political activity and a female prototype of cosmological passivity. Because *chōra* was described as non-participating, its

femininity no longer correlated with an ambivalent relation to death and immortality but correlated with reproductivity as a mere process of bearing. With an investigation of *chōra* as a *hapax* that cuts across Plato's work and pre-Timaeon tendencies to disembodiment, I defended the argument that under Plato it *became* a conceptual abstraction that expressed metaphysical boundlessness as reproductive passivity. This conceptualization substantialized femininity as boundlessness due to metaphysical concerns regarding the human soul and its separation and redemption from the body. By becoming a concept under hierarchical metaphysics, the mythological ambivalence of boundlessness towards death was lost. The political effect of hierarchy was the de-potentialization of femininity as metaphysical boundlessness. The elements became essence, the ambivalence became hierarchy. The reproductivity of *chōra* diminished the said ambivalence. Just as what stood between the polis and the philosopher was the citizen as the moulding material of the state, so what stood between the *chōra* and the philosopher was the female as the bearer of all becoming. If in the polis women's role was guaranteed by male-centric participation in political order, in terms of *chōra* the female's role was guaranteed by her metaphysical non-participation in reproducing the cosmological order.

The development of an "implicit philosophy of disembodiment" in Plato was the result of the prevailing of the soul from the soul-body dualism. *Chōra* has become the symbol of radicalizing a philosophy of disembodiment in Plato's cosmology: the notion deepened the metaphysical relatedness between the boundless and the feminine by resorting to hierarchy and hierarchical metaphysics. Plato's cosmo-political struggle was to rationally contain difference at home,⁶³ and no longer war with the difference outside the polis. Hierarchical metaphysics was defined by the problem of difference within the polis, and thus Plato's disembodiment

⁶³ Xenophon, *Economics* III, 11-13, VII, 22-25; Plutarch, *The Dialogue on Love* 751B, 9:319; Diogenes of Apollonia, DK A19.

tendencies constructed women as a cosmo-axiological problem for the polis. The mythological boundlessness was no longer determined by the mere physical limitations of reality. Elementality was *formalized* as elemental formlessness and boundlessness: its other was, metaphysically, form and, politically, the *chōra* of the polis.

In Plato, *chōra* was a partially cosmic optimistic solution to the problem of embodiment - depending on what the soul's faith would be after its embodied life. Difference within the polis was inadmissible, but also irreducible. *Chōra* was a compromised, metaphysically boundless solution which could express, or be, that difference from the outskirts of the polis' identity. The political ramifications for women from the cosmic optimism of the *Republic* changed and in the *Timaeus* a cosmic pessimism of the body, and thus femininity as embodiment, prevailed. The move to such pessimism was enabled by the radicalization of an implicit preference for disembodiment which other was *chōra* and its identification with femininity and the field of becoming. The metaphysical boundlessness of the female *chōra* became the sign of cosmic pessimism when associated with earth, and only partially did it receive a cosmic optimistic import due to the cooperation of necessity and intellect: the boundlessness gave way to a "cosmic optimism" only when the soul could ride toward the outer reaches of the universe unfettered by the vagaries of incarnation.

Chapter 3. Disembodiment as Neutrality:

The Plotinian Solution

This chapter presents the problem of disembodiment in Neoplatonism⁶⁴ and specifically Plotinus' notion of the One and the doctrine of divided matter. My argument is that Plotinus radicalized Plato's soul-body dualism and psychophilia with his notion of the One. He abstracted the One away from its initial Pythagorean identification with maleness, culminating in the One's grammatical neutrality as an escape to a disembodied notion of the One.⁶⁵ This resulted in a solution of dividing the notion of matter as intelligible and sensible. The boundlessness identifiable with the feminine *chōra* and the indefiniteness of the feminine Dyad became attributable to matter divided between two worlds, in the somatic here and the noetic there.

I outline the problem of disembodiment in Plotinus in four ways. Firstly, I introduce the notion of the One in Plotinus, as it is situated in the soul-body dualism inherited by Plato and earlier sources. The aim is to see if the One can be interpreted as a further radicalization of the soul-body dualism in Plotinus' emanationism (the series of soul's ascension to the One, *Enneads*, V.1.6⁶⁶) and a means to articulate metaphysical female boundlessness⁶⁷ in the One's related principle, the Indefinite Dyad. This discussion continues the investigation of *chōra* and

⁶⁴ I retain the use of the term "Neoplatonism" throughout, although the term is not unproblematic; for a discussion of arguments by Gerson on "philosophy of late antiquity" as an alternative, see Adamson (2015, 206-7); on the terminology "middle Platonism" and "Neoplatonism," see Catana (2013b).

⁶⁵ Although the terminology involved so far is a vast network of variously gendered notions (*peras*, *apeiron*, *hyle*, *chōra*, *psyche*), I limit myself to the notion of the One and the Indefinite Dyad because of the first's alleged gendered neutrality and the latter's explicit gendering. *Psyche* is an especially fruitful term, yet my focus is on the relation of the One and Indefinite Dyad to matter and femininity. I engage with *psyche* in various places, with respect to the place of the soul as generated by intellect and in generating the sensible world, and with respect to psychophilia, but I do not present the study of Plotinus' psychology. This work has been done by Rohde (1925) and Blumenthal (1969) respectively.

⁶⁶ *Proodos* (and sometimes *eklapsis*) is often standardly translated by many interpreters as emanation.

⁶⁷ I do not use boundlessness (*apeiria*) and indefiniteness (*aoristia*) interchangeably, although there are several textual occurrences where Plotinus uses the terms together (see Sweeney 1955).

metaphysical boundlessness and relates it to Plato's Unwritten Doctrines and Plotinus' One (because Plotinus read matter as the receptacle) and highlights that there is a continuity between *chōra* and the One through the notions of dyad and monad (Xenocrates' fr. 15). Secondly, I discuss Plato's Unwritten Doctrines which lie at the origins of Plotinus' notion of the One, by reviewing the Tübingen interpretation of Plato and the relevant doxography, highlighting the originality of the notion of the One, and I discuss the Indefinite Dyad as its corollary. I claim that the One in Plato and later in Plotinus is a form of radicalization of psychophilia, even though the soul is the third hypostasis below Intellect and One. I investigate if and how the One, which I claim throughout is characterized as neutral and transcending all predicates, including gender, is conditioned by the femininity of the Indefinite Dyad even as it is described as a supreme principle along with the One. Thirdly, I offer an account of Plotinus' views of the body abstracted from feminist philosophical sources. I focus particularly on critiquing Irigaray's reading of Plotinus' notion of matter in *Enneads* III.6, as well as her reading of Aristotle's *Physics* IV, in order to discuss if Plotinus can be consistently critiqued from a feminist philosophical perspective as having qualified femininity and matter as evil. I do this because Irigaray's account leads to reading Plotinus as representative of an extreme form of dualism, given that prime matter is directly interpreted to mean the body, which it is not in Plotinus. Based on the feminist philosophical accounts I present, and which correct Irigaray's reading of Plotinus, I formulate the problem of the One's grammatical neutrality and critique the argument that neutrality entails the incidentality of gendering female principles such as the Indefinite Dyad. Lastly, and fourth, I analyze, through textual analysis and biographical data three treatises (II.4, I.8 and V.8) by Plotinus which present his theory of matter-evil, or, the notion of divided matter and matter as evil and privation. I highlight a continuity between Plato's *chōra* and Plotinus' notions of Indefinite Dyad and matter through the association of those principles with division, extension and space, whereby femininity and/as matter is

sometimes co-extensive with evil.⁶⁸ I claim that through the Indefinite Dyad, in Plotinus boundlessness and indefiniteness were condensed in his notion of divided matter, and he introduced it in order to defend the notion of the One as entirely alien to all generation, and, by extension, gender.

3.A. The One

In this section I present Plotinus' notion of the One (*to hen*), followed by a discussion of Plato's Unwritten Doctrines and their importance for developing this notion. I then focus on the notion of Indefinite Dyad and present its importance as a feminine principle alongside which the One can be understood.

Neoplatonism is a school based on Platonic doctrines, whose founder Plotinus claimed to be an exegete of his teachings (Shaw 2005, 834). Neoplatonist philosophy is a language of communicating the ideas of Plato, culminating in a philosophy of language (Whittaker 1918, 26-40, 155-7; Bigg 1895, 180-91). It should not be read as a set of doctrines derived from Plato, since this will effectively efface the anti-reductionist spirit of the Platonist tradition.⁶⁹

The Neoplatonist system is built on hierarchical metaphysics and tripartite intellectual structures. Three hypostases⁷⁰ are defined by Plotinus: One, Intellect, Soul (or the Plotinian Triad, *Enneads*, V.1). The central hypostasis of being is the One, although terms such as "hypostasis" are incapable of qualifying it. The descent from the One to reality and the sensible world is not a "deduction" from the One. The One is the "power of all things" (*dynamis panton*) (III.8.10.1-14; V.1.7.5-17; V.3.15.32-35; V.4.1.34-39; V.4.2.34-43; VI.7.32.29-39); the

⁶⁸ I will take into consideration the significance of harmonizing Plato and Aristotle in post-Hellenistic philosophy and Neoplatonism where appropriate and refer to Aristotle's influence on Plotinus' reading of *hyle* only *ad hoc*. Cooper (2006, 4-7) is a useful summary, as well as the work of I. Hadot (2015) and Bianchi (2014), which I have consulted.

⁶⁹ I owe this observation on Platonist anti-reductionism to Dr. Edward Butler, personal meeting, March 30, 2017.

⁷⁰ The term hypostasis is maintained by Porphyry.

inexhaustible and productive *dynamis* of life (III.8.10.1-5); the active and infinite power (V.3.15.32-35; VI.9.7-12) which generates Intellect through its “seeing,” Intellect being the second hypostasis of being (V.1.7.5-17). The One is “all things and none of them” (referring to *Parmenides* 160b2-3). It is “all things” because it is the source of all that is in the world, but is “none of them” to the extent that it is transcendent (Gurtler 2007) and distinguished from every particular:

The One is all things and not a single one of them: it is the principle of all things, not all things, but all things have other kind of transcendent existence; for in a way they do occur in the One; or rather they are not there yet, but they will be. How then do all things come from the One, which is simple and has in it no diverse variety, or any sort of doubleness? It is because there is nothing in it that all things come from it: in order that being may exist, the One is not being, but the generator of being. This, we may say, is the first act of generation; the One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows, as it were, and its superabundance makes something other than itself. (V.2.1-10)

The One is the supreme principle because it defies all division and multiplicity (VI.9.5.35-46; V.4.1.34-39). For it to be the One, i.e. itself, it needs to be considered by the intellect as non-composite and, thus, ungraspable. Consider:

... Intellect is not dispersed in itself but is in reality all together with itself and its nearness after the One has kept it from dividing itself, though it did somehow dare to stand away from the One - that which is before this Intellect, this marvel of the One, which is not existent, so that “one” may not here also have to be predicated of something else, which in truth has no fitting name, but if we must give it a name “one” would be an appropriate ordinary way of speaking of it, not in the sense of something else and then one... (VI.9.5.28-37)

Although intellection is the closest to the One, it’s separation from the One is necessary because intellection’s function is to grasp composites as the result of separation and otherness, and otherness is generated by the One’s superabundance, but it does not participate in the *sum total* of being. When the One generates what is other to it, this other looks toward the One and is “filled” and becomes intellect, which then generates being (V.2.1.11-13). Here Plotinus seems to harmonize the doctrine of the One with both Plato and Aristotle. As in Plato, non-composites are identified with the Good. If the One can be grasped by intellect, it will be degradable to compositeness and will thus be removed from goodness. As non-composite, the One is the efficient cause, and as the Good it is the final cause.

In Plato's cosmology, what is not created and have no beginning are the demiurge and the paradigm, out of which intellect is borne (*Timaeus* 29d7ff.); in Plotinus' account, the One is not created. The generative role of intellect falls below the One. Intellect and One do not therefore share the same ontological plane, and the One functions as the Platonic demiurgic God. Intellect is second hypostasis: above the soul and matter and beneath the One. The Nous is two-fold, and the One is absolute unity - a unity of which we cannot say rightly anything at all. The general problem of defining the One is that it cannot be referred to as a *cause* or first principle: it has nothing, it needs nothing. Every-thing emanates or overflows from it. In its "overflowing," it "begets an other than itself" - Nous (*Enneads* VI.9.8), which is a first principle. The One cannot produce something other than itself because it contains all existents and is impersonal. The One is thus neither a cause, nor a first principle, it generates the principle. Intellect and being are principles, generated and turning towards the One and trying to see it, but in fact missing it.

The One is a nodular concept for the Good, Being, Becoming, and Matter. They were all entwined in Plato's receptacle/*chōra*, but under Plotinus the relations between these four notions changed. The One echoes *Republic* VI (the sun analogy) where Plato posited that the Good is beyond Being. This is accepted by Plotinus in V.2.1 but with the caveat that One and Being are not the same. For Plato as the Good is to the intelligible, so the Sun is to the visible world (*Republic* VI 506e). For Plotinus the One is "light", and the Intellect is "Sun": "The first, then, should be compared to light, the next, to the sun, and the third, to the celestial body of the moon which gets its light from the sun" (*Enneads* V.6.4.16-17). Then, he claims that the One, now incorporating the Good in itself, is beyond Being.⁷¹ Plotinus' radicalization of Plato,

⁷¹ Thus, the One is an unknowable hyper-essence beyond form and idea (VI.9.3.40, formless [*aneidon*]; Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, proposition 20: "Every order has its beginning in a monad and proceeds to a manifold coordinate therewith; and the manifold in any order may be carried back to a single monad"), of which all the existents spring. Or, more precisely, of its generative power, not the One itself.

which deepens the soul-body dualism and the disembodied tendency, is possible because of the subsumption of the Good within the One.

The One in Plotinus appears as a practical solution to the problem of anthropological self-actualization, and it follows a philosophical ideal of escape from the world (Armstrong 1979). As a system, the One “is the climax of a series of shifts in self-identification”: body - soul - intellect - the One (see Cooper 2007, 76; *Enneads* I.2.1.4-5; V.1.2.1-5.4; VI.9.1). The One was mediated by borrowings and influences. Apart from Plato’s Unwritten Doctrines discussed below, Plotinus showed continuity with pre-Socratic teachings of first principles (Stamatellos 2007). As *dynamis* it refers to the Good in the *Republic* (VI 509b8-10) and Aristotle’s discussion of it in *Metaphysics* V (1019a15-16; 1046a1ff.). Stoic and/or Pyrrhonist (SVF II.311 [in Long and Sedley 1987, 44]) and Neopythagorean sources have been suggested too (see Mortley 1981, 19).

Dodds (1928) claims that the One is older than Plotinus, but his One is an *original* contribution. Almost all other writers at the time have called God the Nous,⁷² but only Plotinus spoke of the One and effectively the Platonic God is abstracted as the One. If the One gives *access* to the divine, it should first present it to human consciousness (ibid., 141). But this access must be supra-rational and non-discursive, for, just as the cosmic unity transcends the cosmic mind, so must the incarnate unity transcend the incarnate mind. Thus, knowledge of the One will be a mere actualization of potential between the cosmic and man. This is the logic behind Plotinus’ system and the doctrine of ecstasy (as cognition of the One).

According to Slaveva-Griffin (2009), even though the One cannot be reduced to an existent (such as the number), an account providing understanding of the universe’s generation in terms of number is needed. This account implies that matter is wholly beyond the One. The

⁷² Philo of Alexandria, *On Dreams* 1.25, where intellect is unintelligible and indescribable, much as the One; Albinus [Alcinous], *The Handbook of Platonism*, Ch. 6, x.165.21-6, equating “first intellect” with Aristotle’s divine Nous from *Metaphysics* XII. Note Plato did not make the identification, he calls the demiurge the father (*Timaeus* 28c), whereby Xenocrates’ God equals Plato’s demiurge (cf. Drozdek 2002, 46).

One serves as a measure of independence from beings and multiplicity. On this account, the view that the One is itself not being and only provides its principle as it is beyond Being fosters an interpretation that exacerbates the distance between One and matter, and thereby the motif of disembodiedness (here of the nature of number in Plotinus). Because with the One the distance grows bigger and more abstracted, matter is further away from the goodness of being. According to Slaveva-Griffin, in Plotinus' doctrine of Number, in the ascent (or emanation) to the One there is a transition from the realm of the sensible to that of the intelligible; additionally, the procedure is reliant on the opposite: the philosophical descent from the realm of the divine to that of the material in the *Timaeus*. As a result, the account of creation and "Plato's cosmology allow Plotinus to explicate his original understanding that the sensible and the intelligible 'tend to their origin - the One,'" and in turn "Plato's cosmogony becomes Plotinus' cosmology and Plato's descent from the demiurge becomes Plotinus' ascent to the One" (Slaveva-Griffin 2003, 57-66; see also Stamatellos 2007, 26 and his reconstruction of the ascent of the soul).

The One is an inherently religious concept, but not in the monotheistic sense of the word (Butler 2003; Perczel 2000, 510-14). Because Plotinus cannot explain why the self-sufficient One would generate something other than itself, he turns to the theorizing of the soul by offering a sort of religious invocation of the One. Iamblichus' *theurgia* is the extreme development of this mystical experience. The irrational invocation of the One through a spiritual ordeal (the moment of mystical union with the One, which Plotinus claimed to have achieved, see Mazur 2009 on Plotinus' mystical union with the One) is responsible for the mystical-religious language surrounding the One. Ahbel-Rappe (2000, xiii) defines this mystical-religious articulation as "non-discursive thinking," which is the blending of doctrinal and ritualistic thought. It is problematic to call non-discursive thinking irrationalism, because Nous and One are not even able to share the same ontological order. This is why the negative

theology starting from the *Parmenides*, reflected in Plato's Unwritten Doctrines, and explicitly referred to at the beginning of *Enneads* V.2 appears as the logical step towards the development of the doctrine of the One.

3.A.1. Plato's Unwritten Doctrines

In this section I discuss the importance and relationship of the Unwritten Doctrines (*agrapha dogmata*) to the notions of the One and the Indefinite Dyad, and the problem of generating matter and the sensible world. Then I turn to the importance of the *Parmenides* (second and fifth hypothesis) and the problem of thinking the One through "spurious reasoning," a borrowing from *Timaeus*. Finally, I present the principle of the Indefinite Dyad and explain the importance of its femininity for the One.

It is important to discuss the Doctrines because they offer a selective, Neoplatonist and allegoric⁷³ version of Plato which led to the One and has to do with the mathematization and abstraction of the principle of being, featuring a late Platonic ethos of disembodiment. The Doctrines present an esoteric Plato whose relation to the escape motif is radicalized. The work on the Unwritten Doctrines is known as the "Tübingen thesis." The thesis makes sense especially from a Neoplatonist perspective, as it offers continuity with the mysticism in Plotinus' work and Plato's late teaching of the One as the Good. It is in line with a mystical Plato, since Plotinus upheld that Plato and he himself have had mystical experiences of transcendental access to the Good. This is why the Tübingen thesis is often seen as esotericism.⁷⁴

⁷³ As outlined in the Introduction, the allegoric interpretation of Plato sprung out of the Neoplatonist tradition.

⁷⁴ Sources of such "esotericism" can be also found in *Phaedo* and the 7th Letter (341c).

3.A.1.a. The Unwritten Doctrines, the One and the Body⁷⁵

Understanding the late antique ethos of suspicion to the body already starts with Plato and the formula *soma-sema* (*Cratylus* 397c-410e). The overview of the Unwritten Doctrines is an important addition to the Neoplatonist Plato (mainly *Timaeus*, *Republic*, and *Parmenides*) because in the lecture “On the Good,”⁷⁶ the One is identified with the Good. The One has nothing to do with the sensible world of matter and becoming. Yet it cannot be seen in isolation from *chōra* and the receptacle (Plato) and matter (Aristotle). To explain how the One can be interpreted as a radicalization of Platonic psychophilia therefore requires presenting the Unwritten Doctrines, because the Doctrines are conditioned by two elements: by revising the theory of forms and thus matter (*Parmenides*) and by the role of feminine first principle (the Indefinite Dyad).

I have followed the reconstruction offered by Boyadjiev (1984), Krämer ([1959] 1990) and Gaiser (1980).⁷⁷ I do this because Boyadjiev’s interpretation is monist, and as such it is not a *sine qua non* in Plato scholarship. The monism implies that whatever the doctrine might have contained, it has been *one* doctrine. Boyadjiev relies on the conclusion that Plato did overcome the opposition dualism-monism in the noematic sphere but did keep elements of it in theorizing the sublunary world. His approach is to outline the *real* image of Plato by “attracting” his entire set of activities and all the direct and indirect texts characterizing this set, with the emphasis on *Testimonia Platonica* (the non-Aristotelian evidences, collected and published by Gaiser 1963, 441-557; Findlay 1974, 413ff.).

⁷⁵ The use of the term “body” refers to “body as matter” in the sense of the notion of sensible matter in Plotinus’ variegated theories of matter. For the distinction between intelligible and sensible matter, see below 3.C.

⁷⁶ There is no scientific consensus whether this was a single lecture or a series of lectures (see Nikulin 2012). The major interpreter of the Tübingen thesis is J. N. Findlay (1978, 212; 1983). While the lecture on the Good is central to Neoplatonism and my problem here, I remain reluctant to submitting it entirely to the neo-Kantian interpretation and tend to partially agree with Zeller’s (1886) anti-esotericism, who distrusts the doxography’s worthiness. Zeller was also the first to extract a systematic philosophy from Plotinus’ system, see Catana (2013b).

⁷⁷ Gaiser’s influential book, *Platons ungeschriebene Lehre*, appeared in 1963/68. It is noteworthy that the study of Neoplatonism as a serious discipline in the history of philosophy coincided with the popularization in the 1960s, with the work of Gaiser and Szlezák, of the so-called Tübingen thesis; for example, one of the founding anthologies in Neoplatonist scholarship was published in 1969 (see Hadot 1969).

The two fundamental principles of the Doctrines are the One and the Indefinite Dyad: the first as the principle of definition and determinacy and the second as indeterminacy or unlimitedness and boundlessness. This formulation is somewhat misleading with respect to the One, but as it generates the principle of being out of which all existents spring, determinacy is its consequence, although it does not define the One in any way. The core doxography can be summarized as follows: 1. Accounts of the enigmatic lecture (Aristoxenus, *Elements of Harmony* II 30-31 [in Findlay 1974, 413]; Themistius, *Orations* 21, 245c-d on Aristotle, *Physics* IV 209b11-17 [in Findlay 1974, 441]; Proclus, in *Commentary on Plato's Philebus* 14-18 [in Gaiser 1980, 10]). 2. What he is said to have talked about: Simplicius' commentary *On Aristotle's Physics* I 187a12, among others (in Findlay 1974, 414). So, the two major sources of the Unwritten Doctrine are Aristoxenus and/referring to Aristotle, and Themistius. Aristoxenus⁷⁸ simply narrates that the audience expected a *benefit*: to learn practical things about the good life, but it received a story about geometry, numbers, and the statement that “the Good is One.” Themistius' account also reveals the same, noting that “finally the audience was reduced to Plato's trusted followers only” (*Oration* 21, 245c-d, trans. by Konrad Gaiser and W. D. Furley). In *Commentary on Plato's Philebus*, Proclus rhetorically uses the example of the lecture as a propaedeutic advice not to read out texts unrelated to one's audience. Proclus notes Plato knew that at the end the audience will be only his followers, since he anticipated the masses would not understand the teaching on number.

The teaching of the One is already underwritten by the polarity phoneme/grapheme, or disembodied/embodied (with reference to *Phaedrus* 276c). The oral shadow of reality is already a compromise with transcendental access to the Good. The 7th Letter establishes further

⁷⁸ For Boyadjiev, the fact that Aristoxenus compared the lecture with Aristotle's lectures means it was a cycle of lectures. The evidence of the 7th letter reveals regular teaching activity and makes the case of continuity, so the lecture should be dated after 367 BCE. The nature of the lectures sought to affirm the One Good. The contents of the lecture and the Unwritten Doctrine should be identical, which guarantees the authenticity of Aristoxenus' evidence. Cf. also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.A 987b; Nikulin (2012, 73).

the polarity by drifting the analogy between the unwritten (disembodied) and the soul, and implicitly between the written and the body (embodiment), introducing the idea that the teaching can be distorted (344d) when it is not esoteric, i.e., disembodied. What is sayable is, in short, the better shadow and image of reality than what is writable. The rational man will not write about first principles of nature since what is substantial lies in the soul, not in the written words (Boyadjiev 1984, 17, on *ta sygrammata*). The *Phaedrus* passage and the 7th letter do not merit dialogical standards - the written is ultimately the boundary between counterparts.

The direction of esoteric thought on the One is driven by Plato's own mathematization of being: the highest principle of being, if expressed in something like the One, is not *metron*, it should be "measured" by something super-measurable or even immeasurable (ibid., 122). This is why the role of mathematics in the Doctrines is crucial for the teaching of the One. It dimensionally testifies to the existence of realities with differing ontological status. The topological uniqueness of ancient mathematics, i.e., that the number is an *eidos*, is important, because numbers had pictorial imaging - the number thus points to something outside itself. There are four metaphysical hypostases in the Unwritten Doctrine: point, line, surface, and body. They compose the hierarchical structure of being, identical to the first principles (the One and the Indefinite Dyad), then the noetic cosmos is something akin to the ideas-numbers, and the world soul to mathematical object (they are between the images and the things, thus the analogy with surface). Finally, there is the sensible cosmos. These four will compose a doctrine of principles: the One. Boyadjiev notes the deep importance of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: if all existing things, including *eide*, are the unity-of-multiplicities, then the fundamental principles of being will be the One and the indefinite multiplicity (ibid., 136, with Gaiser 1980, 20).

3.A.1.b. The Importance of the *Parmenides*

The *Parmenides* is the most important dialogue to explain the notion of the One in Plato and Plotinus and is important for my subject because it is an inquiry into non-identity/otherness. In Plotinus, as mentioned above, otherness is generated by the separation of One and Intellect. Below I present the importance of the second and the fifth hypotheses.

The dialogue's theses are typically divided into hypotheses or deductions (eight or nine, or ten, 137c-166c⁷⁹) that all concern a revision of the theory of forms. The division in nine hypotheses was proposed by Porphyry and accepted by Iamblichus, Plutarch of Athens, Syrianus, Proclus and Damascius. Amelius proposed a division in eight and the "Rhodian Philosopher", in ten. We have no clear data about Plotinus' interpretation of the hypotheses. In the most popular division into nine, the first five ask the question what follows to the One and all the other things from the condition that the One *is*. According to the later interpretation of Proclus, the aim (*skopos*) of the *Parmenides* is to show that, thanks to the One, all things exist but without the One nothing exists.⁸⁰ For the purpose of demonstrating the importance of the dialogue, here the second (if the one is, then, what happens to the one itself..., 142b-155e) and the fifth (if the one is, and the others do not participate in it, what happens to the others..., 159b-160b) hypotheses will be taken into account. In both hypotheses, Parmenides is testing the two extremes of the One's predication to being on account of its hypothetical being/is.

Perczel (2013) concentrates on the second hypothesis in *Parmenides* (142e-143a) and its intellectual history. If the second hypothesis is taken by heart, then the doublet One-Being makes the One multiple and infinitely divisible. If we accept that the One is, this is in contradiction with "if the One is, then the One is infinitely many." He says that both pagan and Christian interpretations are based on a metaphysical interpretation of the passage: they used

⁷⁹ See the survey of H-D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink (1968, lxxv-lxxxix) in their introduction to the French edition of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*.

⁸⁰ See Saffrey-Westerink's edition of *Platonic Theology* I, 12 (1968, 58, 17-20). There is no knowledge as to what Proclus' understanding of the rest of the hypotheses were.

the same language and had similar exegesis of Plato (for Plotinus, see V.8.7). In this time Plotinus' contemporary Origen developed his own Christian anthropology, most notably the ideas of the pre-existence of the souls and the question of reincarnation (see Tutekov 2009), a teaching falsely ascribed to him. Origenism's duality between God and matter (e.g., *On First Principles* II.5.3) is very similar to Plotinus' One and matter in II.4: matter manifests as a necessary remedy to the embodied and descended world.

The fifth hypothesis (on the "unordered body") is central because it is also read by Plotinus (cf. Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* IV, 1054; VI, 1089.32-1090.3) as having as its result "only many" and this "only many" is associated with matter. So, on this account:

1. First hypothesis = "only one" (= the One)
2. Second hypothesis = "one-many" (= Being-Life-Intellect)
3. Third hypothesis = "one-and-many" (= Soul)
4. Fourth hypothesis = "many-and-one" (= the forms united to the bodies)
5. Fifth hypothesis = "only many" (=matter)

There are numerous systematizations and expositions of all the hypotheses found in *Parmenides* in the Neoplatonist tradition. The same is true for the fifth hypothesis itself. Thus, for Amelius it describes matter having a disposition to participate in the forms; for Porphyry it relates to unordered bodies; for Iamblichus - the lower souls, etc. (Saffrey and Westerink 1968, lxxx-lxxxiii).

Boyadjiev says that *Parmenides* is the dialogue that most consistently gets closer to an ontological conception of the principles of the Unwritten Doctrine (*Parmenides* 137c-156e, first two deductions) with the discussion on what is the other. The other is the other-being of

the One, a “first otherness” (*Enneads* V.1), the pure negation of the One.⁸¹ For Plato the One does not participate in being. In both Plato and Plotinus, the One is neither being nor non-being. This appears to be the result from the conclusion of the fifth “only many” hypothesis: “if [the] one exists, the one is all things and nothing at all, in relation both to itself and to all others” (*Parmenides* 160b1-5). If the One was either being or non-being it will itself be otherness, and it is not, as it generates merely the principle of being, which then produces intellect, and otherness appears as a second-order phenomenon. Again, in order that being may exist, the One is not being, but the generator of being (*Enneads* V.2). There is no longer an Eleatic identity between being and one. *Hen* and *on* are not the same thing: being is the manifestation of the unity of multiplicities. The One is not the being, but it still needs to have a reality, so it can be called a super-existing One (Boyadjiev 1984, 139). In its state of a “super-being,” it can be defined only negatively. If it “is,” it is the pure nothing and the fullness of being. Plato sought to affirm the One which super-exists as a first principle, which is unsayable. For this to be the case, the One should be both being and non-being and should be neither being and non-being.

3.A.1.c. The Indefinite Dyad

In this subsection I introduce and discuss the Indefinite Dyad (*aoristos dyas*) as the One’s related first principle which is variously qualified as feminine. In Platonist and Neoplatonist literature two female principles can be found: *chōra* and the Indefinite Dyad. What unites them both is that they are principles responsible for extension and space, governing the generated world of otherness, which I suggest summarizing as whatever is not the One. They are somehow both related to matter, but as principles of extension whereby the one is

⁸¹ The proximity between *Parmenides* and *Republic* was rediscovered only later by Proclus and Damascius in the “henology of the sun.” See Butler (2003, 151-185; 2010; 2013). Boyadjiev claims that this is an authentic teaching of Plato, and not a scholarly re-invention of followers (Boyadjiev 1984, 190ff.).

already divided in two. Another common feature is that in Plato *chōra* is not identified with matter, and in Plotinus the Dyad is not directly responsible for the generation of matter and embodiment. In the terms of the two writers, hylomorphism has no place and is a later development. However, what unites Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus is the unanimous qualification of those principles as female ones correlative with extension and separation, in short - with otherness, in the sense that anything generated from the demiurge (Plato) or the One (Plotinus) is being, and as such is not the One. Thus, in Plato's terms the question is not that matter is "ugly" and female (because *chōra* is not matter or *noete hyle*), nor in Plotinus' terms that the Dyad generates matter and is therefore "evil," just as the hylomorphic notion of matter is not the body proper, but matter as the potentiality of the body. If these two female principles are neither principles of materiality nor of negativity, and if we do away with the hylomorphic stipulation, what then remains to be accounted for is: How is their gendering understandable on account of their realm, the field of becoming and division? And is it related with the One's neutrality in Plotinus?

In Chapter 2 I have discussed Plato's motivation to single out *chōra* as a feminine beginning responsible for the world of becoming. Since the Dyad is taken up by Plotinus from the Unwritten Doctrines,⁸² I will also here explain how the Dyad is a further abstraction of *chōra* as a female principle. In short, what appears to be the case is that the Dyad has a higher standing than *chōra* in Plotinus (and in Plato), because it is said that it somehow came to be with the One. The fact the Dyad is continuously feminine indicates that the abstraction does not override the metaphysical boundlessness found in *chōra*. And even though the two principles cannot be seen as identical, the retention of their gendering, despite their differing

⁸² Plotinus' own association to the Unwritten Doctrine is best fleshed out in VI.9.11.72. Some sort of materialization of ideas imparts the creation driven by the demiurge: hence the later Plotinian "vision" (IV.5.3 and 8), however irrational and mystical, is synonymous to creation and being to the extent to which the One is unsayable. As Boyadjiev says, the One is conceived as demiurgic cause.

standing in terms of hierarchical metaphysics, can explain the One's alleged neutrality beyond all predicates.

Underwritten by the *Parmenides*' discussion of otherness,⁸³ the One cannot be even properly qualified as causing the inferior place of any embodied being, be it male or female, simply because those responsible for the sensible world of matter are intellect and the soul. In V.8.3.5-15. Plotinus explains the relatedness between intellect, soul and matter/bodies thusly:

There is therefore in nature a rational forming principle which is the archetype of the beauty in body, and the rational principle in soul is more beautiful than that in nature, and is also the source of that in nature. ... it is not an expressed forming principle at all, but is the maker of the first forming principle which is the beauty present in the matter which is soul; but this [primary principle of beauty - S. P.] is Intellect, always and not just sometimes Intellect, because it does not come to itself from outside.

The birth of intellect is related to the state of definiteness and the generated world. Given the indifference of the One to the world of embodiment and matter, it is possible to explain it via the Indefinite Dyad as also a first principle. I take it that Krämer ([1959] 1990) is right to claim that the philosophy of the late Plato is the philosophy of *aoristos dyas*, which is entirely feminine. Plotinus' continuity with Plato is expressed in a program for the harmonization of the Indefinite Dyad of the Unwritten Doctrines with his One.

The Pythagorean origin of the indefinite dyad is largely accepted. Iamblichus testifies that the Pythagoreans call their monad God (*The Theology of Arithmetic* 3.21). For the Pythagoreans the monad is both odd and even, and they identified the Monad with the Male Principle and the Dyad with the Female Principle, at all levels of Being. It is also described as male and female (*arsenothelys*, see the discussion of Mortley 1984, 34-5), and is thus the source of both matter and form. If there were only the Monad, there would be no Other; thus, the Dyad is identified with otherness and she governs separation and brings multiplicity to the One. The Pythagorean doctrine (perhaps coming from Zoroaster) associates the Monad with light and

⁸³ The Dyad is never mentioned in *Parmenides*, but Szlezák (2010) finds Platonic origin of the term. An allusion to the doctrines is found in *Philebus* 24c-d.

the limit (*peras*) and the Indefinite Dyad with dark and the unlimited (*apeiria*⁸⁴). She is unlimited in the sense of *dynamis*. She is identified with a female *arche* and “overflowing” (of matter) - a boundlessness that is constitutive *for the being* of anything below the status of the One (below the “heaven”). She is “the ever-flowing” (*to aenaon*, Xenocrates’ preferred term for the Dyad, see Dillon’s discussion, 2003, 101ff.) and is identified with Rhea (Rheo = to flow). Note that for the Pythagoreans matter is good because the One is all and is good, and as the all it includes matter, so it is not evil.

In the Unwritten Doctrines, the Dyad is not characterized as negative, it is a first principle; if it is second and thus lower principle, it is such with respect to the One (Rist 1962, 101-2 tries to extract from Plotinus all possibilities to present the Dyad as an active subject of contemplation). In a sense, the first non-neutral principle is the Dyad. It is, in a way, the first second principle. Plato considered the limitless to be made of the great and the small. Aristotle’s description in *Metaphysics* XIII 1081b21-22 is vague (“so-called Indefinite Dyad”). Alexander of Aphrodisias explains why Plato called the idea number: because the beginning of number is given by monad and dyad. The Dyad cannot be qualified as number, so it does not directly contain the ideas. Plato’s lecture on the Good as One refers to the Dyad, in Simplicius’s *On Aristotle’s* Physics, having him documenting Alexander saying:

According to Plato the principles of everything, including the Forms themselves, are the One and the indefinite dyad, which he called the great and small, as Aristotle also reports in his *On the Good*. One can get this information also from Speusippus, Xenocrates and the others, who were present at Plato’s lecture on the Good; all of them wrote down and preserved his view, and they say that he treated those as principles. It is altogether likely that Plato should speak of the One and the infinite dyad as principles of everything, since this is a Pythagorean doctrine, and Plato seems to follow the Pythagoreans on many points... (*On Aristotle’s* Physics I.3-4, 151, 1-15⁸⁵)

⁸⁴ The term *apeiron* becomes almost universally *apeiria* in Neoplatonism, and it can be more properly translated as infinity.

⁸⁵ See in particular Simplicius, *On Aristotle’s* Physics I.5-9, 181, 10-30, where he confirms the Pythagorean origin of the One; and Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Aristotle’s* Metaphysics 250.17-20, saying that “sameness is a kind of one, while the other is a plurality. Likewise, likeness and equality fall under one...” (commenting on *Metaphysics* IV 1003b36-1004a1 that “all contraries are referred to the One and plurality as their first principle”), testifying to something like the ontological equality of both the limit and the limitless.

The teaching of the One is a merger between Plato and Plotinus, from the first's teaching of number to the second's One. Yet in between stands Intellect. In his review of Gaiser's later work *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik*, Blumenthal (1967, 336) writes that for Krämer Aristotle is just a Platonist, which is not surprising since a big deal of Neoplatonist logic and ethics is a synthesis of Aristotle and Plato (Hadot 2013). This was a study on the origin of divine intelligence, which traced virtually all the elements back to Plato. The main thesis of Krämer was that all those elements "are developments, and often not radical ones, of the esoteric doctrines of the early Academy" (Blumenthal 1967, 336). The reason why Krämer considered Aristotle a Platonist is that he believed his Nous to be closer to the notion of Xenocrates, claiming that God in Aristotle is the same as Xenocrates' Nous - a monad. Xenocrates, who led the Academy after Speusippus, certainly had restorationist ambitions as to the theory of forms (Dillon 2011). Most importantly, Krämer tries to prove that there is a direct line running from Plato through Speusippus to Plotinus.

The central tenet of the later Plotinian One is that it generates Intellect (*Enneads* V.1.7.5-17). I follow Krämer's idea that Nous and One should be regarded as parallel (but not identical) doctrines. It is this thesis of the One = Nous mediated by Xenocrates' monadic mind that allowed for Plotinus' One as a conceptual development and originality in continuity with an esoteric Plato, a combination which further abstracted the One from personified deity represented by embodiment and gender.

The theory that One = Nous is important for explaining the Indefinite Dyad because according to Krämer's (1990, 77ff.) thesis, the One is mediated by the monadic God, and functions similarly to the demiurge (*Timaeus* 39e). The thesis is elaborated by Drozdek (2002)

and his work on Xenocrates, where we find the opposition monad - dyad. He claims that in Xenocrates' fr. 15 the monad and the dyad⁸⁶ are said to be gods, so Xenocrates considered

... the monad and the dyad to be the gods; the one [monad] as a male [principle] has the role of a father that rules in heaven, and calls it Zeus, the odd, and *nous*, that is for him the first god; the other [the dyad] as a female [principle] in the manner of the mother of gods [*metros theon diken*] rules over the region below the heaven, and she is for him the soul of the all. Also heaven is a god and so fiery stars are Olympian gods and other sublunary and invisible *daimones*. He also says that there are <some divine forces> that permeate material elements. One of them he calls <Hades because of the air that is> invisible, another, because of wetness - Poseidon, and another, because of earth - planting trees Demeter. These [teachings] he passed on to the Stoics; the first part he considered after Plato. (Aëtius I.7.30 = fr. 15)

Drozdek summarizes that this is perhaps the first original post-Platonist tripartite division: above heaven - heaven - below heaven, and he points out that the same division is found in Sextus Empiricus having him saying that there are three beings: the sensible, the intelligible, and the synthesized. The sensible is inside the heaven, the intelligible is everything outside it, and the synthesized is of the heaven itself - it is what can be grasped by the senses (Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematicians* 7.147 = fr. 5 in Drozdek 2002, 46; for the full doxography, see Dillon 2003, 89-156). According to Dillon, if in *Timaeus* 50d Plato describes the Paradigm as mother, he “seems to give it a status akin in honor to the Dyad, and this has productive results ... in such entities as Xenocrates' Dyad and Philo's Sophia” (Dillon 1991, 110). The Dyad is also termed *plethos* by Speusippus and Plutarch (Dillon 2003, 99-100).

In Plotinus the *aoristos dyas* is *not* multiplicity and the manifold, but a higher principle responsible for multiplicity; as with the One, the principle cannot be identified with its consequents. The One is not purely alone. In the *Enneads* there are about 60 mentions of *aoristos*, and most importantly one-fourth of them are in the second *Ennead*, with 10 mentions in precisely II.4, the treatise on matter which I will discuss below at 3.C. In I.8.3.10-20 evil is a kind of *aoristos*:

The whole world of sense-experience is non-existent in this way, and also all sense-experience and whatever is posterior or incidental to this, or its principle, or one of the elements which go to make

⁸⁶ The theory of the One is based on the embrace only of ideal numbers, since Xenocrates refuses mathematical ones. Ideal numbers are divine and express a divine correspondence between the number and its idea. This is evidenced by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* VII 1028b21-24 who speaks of “some who say forms and numbers have the same nature,” which can be only Xenocrates.

up the whole which is of this non-existed kind. At this point one might be able to arrive at some conception of evil as a kind of unmeasuredness in relation to measure, and unboundedness in relation to limit, and formlessness in relation to its formative principle, and perpetual neediness in relation to what is self-sufficient, always undefined [*aei aoriston*], nowhere stable, subject to every sort of influence, insatiate, complete poverty...

Plotinus does not, however, say it is evil, but it can appear to be. In the next chapter, in I.8.4, he makes two related points about the Dyad. First, the perfect soul is always directed at intellect, turns away from matter and “neither sees nor approaches anything undefined and unmeasured and evil” (I.8.3.25). Second, the soul of that which is not directed at intellect is “filled with indefinites and sees darkness” (*ibid.*). This does not qualify the indefinite as evil, but rather divides it, and indefinites functions as the border between the decision of a soul to turn to the divine *aoristos* on the side of the One or the profane *aoristos* on the side of matter. The presentation changes in II.4 and, as with the discussion of the two matters, sounds more perplexing and ambiguous:

So first we must enquire about this second matter ... If what is of the matter kind must be something undefined and shapeless, and there is nothing undefined or shapeless among the beings there, which are the best, there would not be matter there. (II.4.2.15)

Matter is definitely *aoristos*, yet the perfect beings, who are created, contain no indefiniteness. But in II.4.4 it is said that what is prior to the forming principles we have in our mind about matter “is shapeless and undefined and is none of these things that are on it and in it” (II.4.4.15-20), which must mean that indefiniteness cannot account for evil. Likewise, it is void of *morphe* (II.4.6), as the substrate of matter is undefined because it is not form. Forms are generated from both the One and the Dyad, and we can distinguish three stages of reality: original indefiniteness, which is the imposed on with measures; the irrational aspect of the soul; the material principle in the physical world, i.e., the receptacle/*chōra*. If it is possible to assume that second matter (not *noete hyle*) is generated, it is not generated by the One but by the Dyad and its generation of intellect and then soul. The primary cause of second matter as evil, then, cannot be located in the One, nor in the Dyad, but not in the soul as well (see Corrigan 1995, 8).

Where to locate the cause of matter as evil depends on accepting (O'Brien 1991) or rejecting (Corrigan 1995) the idea that matter is generated at all. Thus, on account of accepting that matter is generated, it must be located in or below the Dyad, but this seems impossible because it is void of form. If the indefinite dyad is also somehow at the beginning of ideas and forms, but is not them, then this is in contrast with *Timaeus*, where matter is the sensible cosmos and thus becoming.⁸⁷ As with the One, a development is being made by responding to Plato. Given that for the Pythagorean tradition the One was male and the Indefinite Dyad female, Plotinus' One transcends all genders.

Now, accepting or rejecting the generation of matter has to do with the One's neutrality and the Dyad's femininity in the following way. For the Pythagoreans, the One's grammatical neutrality did not entail de-gendering, but in Plotinus the grammatical neutrality corresponded to gender neutrality. In Plotinus, the Monad is the One, the overflowing is the Dyad, while the moment of the return is the Triad, so it appears that Plotinus pursued a familial logic in the grammatical gendering of the hypostases (the One is neuter, the Nous is male, the Psyche is female). The same familial logic is true in the Pythagorean One as male and Dyad as female, but this changes in Plotinus, as the One is not qualified as male. But while retaining a gendered Dyad, he does not tell us that second matter springs out from it. In fact, it is nearly impossible to locate the source of evil anywhere.

The notion of monad should be located as the principled source for Plotinus' admission that the mother too participates in form (see below on III.6.19ff.). But a dyad cannot be defined eidetically. So, there are two types of the limitless - the great and the small. This will lead Simplicius to say that the limitless is both in the ideas and the things (*On Aristotle's Physics* III.207b). But for someone like Plotinus, the Pythagorean influence will result in an attempt to

⁸⁷ To his credit, in his *Great Ethics* I 15-25 Aristotle criticized Plato for linking virtue with the doctrine of the Good. Regarding the teaching itself, testimony can be found in Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I 987a29-988a17.

transcend opposites, which is often seen as a psychological and religious reaction against a Neopythagorean motif (Mortley's thesis, 1981, 34).

In this section I presented Plotinus' notion of the One, its influences and in what ways it continued and differed from the legacy of Plato's soul-body dualism. Coining the notion involved continuity with Platonic psychophilia. The notion posed the problem how to further dissociate the One from matter and the body, and even away from soul. This is not impossible, as evidenced by the introduction of the Indefinite Dyad as a first principle which is feminine; what is impossible is to predicate any willing onto the One. Any adjudication on the One's relationality to the body is an alienation from the One; this would be a descending from the One. The object of inquiry cannot undergo analytical procedures that are presumably pertaining to human reality. While the Good is an aim for the human, and we can locate a gendered speculation inherent in it, this is allegedly not true of the One. On the contrary, in Plotinus the Pythagorean gendering of the One was reduced to grammatical neutrality. And while Plotinus does not tell us directly that the Dyad is the source of matter's evil (if and when it is qualified as such), his retention of the Dyad's femininity leaves open the opportunity to suspect the generation of matter there in her realm.

3.B. The One, the Body and Gender in Plotinus

In the following section I first explain why Neoplatonism in general is worth investigating in terms of gender, an account that continues the above presented discussion of the gender of the Indefinite Dyad. I then present a critique of Irigaray's (1985) reading of Plotinus' matter as mother, and the reason why I present the critique before presenting Plotinus' doctrine of two matters (I will use the term divided matter hereafter) is that Irigaray's reading first needs to be corrected in order to evaluate the doctrine from a gendered point of view. I then provide an account of Plotinus's views on women and the body from the perspectives of

feminist philosophical literature, and my aim is to relate the earlier literature reviewed in Chapter 2, describing psychophilia/somatophobia, with the one on Neoplatonism more broadly and Plotinus specifically, with the proviso that the body is not prime matter. Finally, I formulate and discuss the problem of the One's grammatical neutrality.

3.B.1. Gendering Neoplatonism

Studying gender/ing and the body in Neoplatonism meets two general problems. First, the source literature does not invite gendered analysis explicitly because it is organized around a *spiritual* tendency of anthropological self-perfection. Unlike later Christian Neoplatonist and Patristic thought (Ruether 1974), the source texts do not openly deal with the question of *who* (male or female) can achieve it. This is a general reason why there is not much scholarship on gender and the gendering of body and matter in Neoplatonism and particularly in Plotinus as he “scarcely mentions women and [they are] not an obvious target of either praise or blame” (Cooper 2006, 25, 81-2). Consider that in the *Enneads*, “women” are mentioned some mere four times, only two of which deserve gender-coded analysis (II.17 on the value of women's death and III.5.1 on love and copulation). Second, in researching gender and the body in Neoplatonism, the focus constantly shifts between the categories of embodiment and disembodiment. This problem stems from the apophatic approach to the One: because the One is disembodied and unknowable the only way to discuss it is non-discursive, yet our own *camera obscura* is embodied, as our mind is in a body. When we study the body in Neoplatonism, we should avoid reducing it either to the soul or the One or the Dyad, as in either case we will produce a degeneration of the higher term. To sum up, Neoplatonism is worth exploring for gendered subjects because its intellectual tradition has largely metaphysical and theological perceptions of gender without *obvious* codifications of the latter.

Because Neoplatonism is largely a language of speaking about two realities - one describable but negligible and one indescribable but desirable - to discuss gender and the body in Neoplatonism entails their reduction to linguistic codifications of philosophical and Platonic ideals. The language represents a perfection of the Platonist intellectual legacy that includes soul-body dualism and, as will be shown in 3.C, its radicalization in the idea of matter as evil and privation. It is this radicalization which can be read as a tendency towards disembodiment.

3.B.2. Revising Irigaray

In this section I present Luce Irigaray's (1985) influential reading of Plotinus' matter. I do this because of three reasons: (1) her interpretation focuses on the doctrine of matter I discuss below in 3.C; (2) because the interpretation adds an erroneous problem to researching gender and the body in Neoplatonism and Plotinus in particular: conflating Plato and Plotinus on matter's participation in forms; and (3) because as a consequence of presenting the female body as matter this incorrectly represents Plotinus as an extreme dualist.

Irigaray's influence on feminist studies in ancient philosophy is rarely challenged, and it is often a truism to turn to her book *Speculum of the Other Woman* to deconstruct Platonism. She defends the feminine as a model of alterity and the *antecedent* of genesis (ibid., 346). Irigaray's reading is based on the idea that Plotinus' treatment of the body is a direct continuation of Plato's cave allegory from *Republic* VII. She introduces both Plato's *Republic* and *Timaeus* (ibid., 152-9, 243-55) and Plotinus' *Enneads* (ibid., 168-79), by devoting whole chapters made of quotes. This is a "reading" because it is thought of as subversive mimesis. She comments largely on Plato's idea that the universe is the image of time, and for her time is projection of masculinity. Irigaray explores the question how, in the aftermath of Plato's *Timaeus*, to pass from being place to having one's own place.

Using Plotinus (III.6, “On the Impassibility of Things without Body”), in her reading of *Timaeus chōra* is subject to its Aristotelian reading as *hyle*. When *chōra* is read as *hyle*, this necessarily means that woman is identified as both space and matter (Irigaray prefers the term *place*); it is then easy to reclaim women-as-space as antecedent form of alterity before all creation. Thus, as stated in the Introduction in more detail, accepting Aristotle’s identification of *chōra* as *hyle* is consensual in feminist philosophy largely because of Irigaray,⁸⁸ but also because in III.6 Plotinus decided to discuss *hypodochē* and *hyle* (see Butler 1993, 16-17). Reading *chōra* as matter becomes *locus classicus* in feminist studies of ancient philosophy because of interiorizing Aristotle’s identification *chōra-hyle*. Identifying *Republic*, *Timaeus* and *Enneads* as threading the same line of excluding the feminine from participation in form, she reclaims this femininity by allegorizing it with the cave allegory and the interior space of the womb:

The cave gives birth only to phantoms, fakes, or at best images. One must leave its circle in order to realize the factitious character of such a birth. Engendering the real is the father’s task, engendering the fictive is the task of the mother - that “receptacle” for turning out more or less good copies of reality. (Irigaray 1985, 300)

The problem Irigaray highlights is that the emergence of the philosopher from the cave parallels the transcendence of phantoms and likenesses and escaping the feminine as embodied, by allegorizing the cave with the female womb/*hystera* (see Cooper 2006, 33). In order to present Plato and Plotinus as expressing the *same* description of matter as passive receptacle, she devotes an entire chapter made of quotations from Plotinus’ III.6, intending to prove that Plotinus’ notion of matter continues the same somatophobic tendency as in Plato’s psychophilic soul-body dualism, thus rendering Plotinus as extreme dualist. Irigaray imputes to Plotinus and the entire Platonist tradition a homogenized understanding of obliterating the body and thus the feminine, because she does not distinguish between Plato (*chōra* does not

⁸⁸ See also Irigaray (1998) on Aristotle’s *Physics* IV, especially p. 43 on women as the principle of extension and space.

participate, *methexis*) and Plotinus (matter partially participates, see below). None of this will be possible had she not accepted hylomorphism.

Unlike Plato's *Timaeus*, in *Enneads* III.6 Plotinus does not offer "disparaging remarks about women's (lack of) intelligence" (Cooper 2007, 85). Plotinus had a gendered view of embodiment challenging the "received view of generation" (III.6.13) where the female contributes the matter while only the male contributes the form of the offspring, a point dismissed by Irigaray. What is more, this affects also her brief discussion of the Indefinite Dyad in a section called "The Infinite of an Ideal Which Covers the Slit (of a) Void" (Irigaray 1985, 357-61), where she writes:

The one will therefore be empowered to fix the dual movement of progression and regression that expresses the nature of the dyad. Stopping it continually at a *stasis*, a station, in the present. Thus the balance point between two, getting bigger, and four - or 2 squared - getting smaller, is obtained by the stabilizing operation of the One, which thereby engenders the first triad. But the One owes its effectiveness to the fact that it has already set out in evens, in twos - prototype of the first determinate dyad - anything that threatened to go beyond measurement and move toward the infinitely small or big: evil. (ibid., 359)

In this passage Irigaray repeats the Plotinian truism that the One and the Dyad are co-terminous, but to a different effect, qualifying the Dyad as threatening *metron* with evil. This identification, as shown above, is difficult because even though in I.8.3 the evil is a kind of *aoristos*, indefiniteness is also defined as preceding generation. It could be objected that Irigaray's discussion of the Dyad as evil holds because of Plotinus' embrace of hylomorphism. But this is incorrect too, because there is no textual evidence showing that for him the Dyad is evil; it can only be said that its femininity could be interpreted as evil if we agree with Plotinus' theory of matter-evil - but the Dyad is not evil as such. However, this theory, as demonstrated by Corrigan (1995), underwent an evolution and is not one unified theory. Additionally, matter is not body proper, and while there is evidence the body was viewed negatively, this does not have the same results for matter, not to mention the Dyad.

Irigaray's selections of III.6 indicate her tendency to accuse Plotinus of Plato's more pessimistic views on embodiment, since "[a]fter quoting Plotinus's comparison (following

Plato) of the Forms entering matter with the insemination of a mother(-to-be), Irigaray omits lines 19-26, in which Plotinus questions the assumption on which Plato bases that comparison” (Cooper 2007, 85-86). Here are the omitted lines of comparing matter and mother:

But those people seem to call it “mother” who claim that the mother holds the position of matter in respect to her children, in that she only receives [the seed - S. P.] and contributes nothing to the children ... But if the mother does contribute something to the child, it is not insofar as she is matter, but because she is also form, for only form can produce offspring, but the other nature is sterile. (III.6.19.19-26⁸⁹)

The lines show that the mother also contributes to the offspring and Plotinus is not contributing to the received theory of generation. Vassilopoulou (2003), on which Cooper’s analysis builds, problematizes Irigaray’s influence, and her article is the first to claim it is fruitless to investigate Plotinus as an anti-feminist writer. She lists the reasons for lack of interest for feminist work (ibid., 130, 131), and overviews Plotinus’ attitude toward body and generation. As with the justificatory tendency in Plato scholarship, Vassilopoulou too tries to prove Plotinus was egalitarian and ahead of his time (e.g., by pointing out the evidences given by Porphyry that in his seminars he accepted women, see *Life of Plotinus* 9.1-10). Firstly, while she is ready to admit that the equation between motherhood and materiality in III.6 is the by-product of metaphysical teachings in the Platonist-Aristotelian synthesis, she turns to a biographical approach and Porphyry’s data. This is an educationally democratic Plotinus (Vassilopoulou 2003, 133-4), anti-authoritative and anti-patriarchal (ibid., 134), and she compares his method of teaching with existing feminist pedagogies (ibid., 137; see also Cooper 2007, 75). Secondly, Vassilopoulou focuses on the use of metaphor in his teaching (ibid., 138; see also Ahbel-Rappe 1995). She gives two examples. The first example is a more optimistic notion of the body “as a net emerging in the soul-sea, an image that reverses metaphorically the dominant notion of soul as contained inside the body (IV.3.9).” The example demonstrates the opposite of Irigaray’s interpretation: the chapter with Plotinus’ quotes is called “Une Mère

⁸⁹ The full account of seed and sterility should include the difference between Aristotle’s and Hippocrates’ and Galen’s theory on conception. Plotinus largely follows Hippocrates and Galen.

de Glace,” and Irigaray relies on the homophony of *mer* (sea) and *mère* (mother) to demonstrate that there is a mirroring (*glace* [ice/mirror]) in Plotinus, as in Plato, of woman as the reflection of body and matter, and this mirroring is conditioned by hylomorphism too. The second example is Plotinus’ representation of the Pandora myth where she is not associated with evil whatsoever (IV.3.14). In IV.3.9 Plotinus discusses the soul of all, by saying:

... there never was a time when this universe did not have a soul, or when matter was not set in order; but in discussing these things one can consider them apart from each other. [When one is reasoning about] any kind of composition, it is always legitimate to analyze it in thought into its parts. For the truth is as follows. If body did not exist, soul will not go forth, since there is no place other than body where it is natural for it to be. But if it intends to go forth, it will produce a place [*topon*] for itself, and so a body.

After providing these two examples, Vassilopoulou comments on the passages reproduced by Irigaray: III.6.26 on the association of the role of the female in reproduction with matter (*ibid.*, 139). She states that

Plotinus’ treatment of this association appears as a complete revision: “receptacle” and “nurse” are more proper terms for it [matter]; but “mother” is only used “in a manner of speaking, for matter itself brings forth nothing” (III.6.19.17-9). The first thing to notice is that, for Plotinus, the description of matter in terms of the female and vice versa is “a manner of speaking,” a metaphorical expression and not a factual statement. (*ibid.*)

For her, Plotinus bifurcates his own earlier and more radical dualism, having him saying that the mother cannot be just matter, and is also form. This is evidenced by the lines preceding those omitted by Irigaray in III.6.9.23-5ff.:

The forms which enter into matter as their “mother” do it no wrong, nor again do they do it any good. Their blows are not for it, but for each other ... in beings endowed with soul the affections are in their bodies, when alteration takes place according to their qualities and immanent powers. ... But matter abides, for it was affected in no way ... for neither [hot and cold] where in friendly association with it or alien to it. So that “receptacle” and “nurse” are more proper terms for it; but “mother” only used in a manner of speaking, for matter itself brings forth nothing.

The mother-matter formula needs to be reconsidered against the Platonic notion of receptacle. Plotinus wanted to distance himself from “those people” that called matter mother (Cooper 2007, 86) while he had to accept the name “mother,” as Armstrong says in his note *ad locum*, on the authority of Plato, and finds the name an “embarrassing one, as it conflicts with his conviction of the essential bareness of matter, and does his best to explain it away” (III.6,

p. 285 n4). Irigaray's selection draws the analogy matter-mother in a way that "leave[s] the reader with the impression that this is precisely the view Plotinus endorsed" (Cooper 2007, 86).

That Vassilopoulou focuses on the use of metaphor and verbal images to arrive at the conclusion that such a gendered metaphor should be revised is probably an optimistic reading of the Plotinian presentation of femininity (Vassilopoulou 2003, 141) given Plotinus' varying discussion of matter in all four related treatises (12 = II.4; 25 = II.5; 26 = III.6; 51 = I.8). Optimistic, because Plotinus still insists that, although receptacle and nurse are more appropriate terms for matter, this is a reference to the ancient sages who show that "matter is sterile" (III.6.19.35; Irigaray 1985, 178-9 focuses on precisely this word.). Still, this is a dramatic difference in interpretation. The reason lies in how Vassilopoulou and Cooper approach Plotinus' language as metaphoric, not factual, a quality that reproduces Plato's gendered language in the *Timaeus*. In Irigaray, the language is presented through the alleged "self-evidentiality" of the quoted text. This self-evidentiality is supposed to embody the point she is making, a point which misses the difference with Plato's view, and thus Plotinus' text appears entirely quagmired by *chōra* as *hyle*. As Vassilopoulou says: "... verbal images should not be treated as conveying indisputable evidence either for the content of their truth or for the truth of their content, but as containing a meaning that is open to several and often contradictory interpretations" (Vassilopoulou 2003, 141). Irigaray undermined and abandoned what for Ahbel-Rappe and Vassilopoulou is Plotinus' most original contribution: a synthesis of discursive and non-discursive elements, language and images. Because Irigaray's reading of Plotinus posits homology with Plato's cave allegory, her position is that the woman should resist the paternal order characterized by the dominance of form from the inside of the cave/the womb, against the proclaimed sterility of matter. Because of this significant omission, Irigaray's homologization of Plato's and Plotinus' views on matter has generally contributed

to accepting the following chain of equivalences in feminist studies in ancient philosophy, which can be schematized in the following way:

the body = the female; the female = matter; matter = evil; evil = the female (body)

However, such a reading is incorrect because it does not credit Plotinus with revising Plato's reading of the receptacle as non-contributing to form, nor with the fact he seems to both embrace and correct Aristotle (Corrigan 1995, 158-60, 339-51). This is why revising Irigaray's legacy should precede the problem how to approach gender and the body in Plotinus, which is presented in the next section.

3.B.3. Gendering Plotinus

Cooper (2007) focuses on Plotinian embodiment, as Vassilopoulou, in order to uncover gender in Plotinus. They both, however, do not conflate matter and body. Cooper summarizes Plotinus' views on women and the body: sense perception is implicitly gendered with the lower part of the soul, and reasoning in the higher (I.6.8-15; I.7.13-14; I.1.3.23-24). In her overview, as Plato, Plotinus presents embodiment as an obstacle to the soul and offers a division between civic and intellectual virtues (Cooper 2007, 76), but goes further than Plato to transcend knowledge and unite with the One. Based on the division, Cooper identifies the following three feminist concerns with respect to embodiment and the One (ibid., 77-9): (1) The centralization of ontological power, which disembodies male reason and results in the oppression of women, but as Vassilopoulou and Miles (1999) claims that Plotinus is no authoritarian, emphasizing the use of immanence and dynamism of the One as coinciding with feminist theologies. (2) The centrality of rational thought. However, because this is rationality within a "rational mysticism," and because Plotinus' highest type of knowledge is intuitive, this can associate

him easier with feminist emphasis on intuition. (3) The contemplative ideal. This ideal is closer to the ideal of disembodiment, as it suggest developing Plato's escape from the body. Cooper claims that his one-soul thesis, along with his teaching on virtues, offers "a rational justification for human responsibilities" (Cooper 2007, 79).

The three concerns bring closer Plotinus to a more essentialist feminism reliant on intuitive knowledge. If Cooper is right that Plotinus can be seen as a feminist, then this is true only of a certain kind of maternalist feminism. Cooper does admit that the One makes the body a problem for feminist spirituality, and that Plotinus does not differentiate between those who have and those who do not have access to knowledge and wisdom (ibid., 79, 81). Even if the mother participates in form, the one-soul thesis and the Platonic psychophilic somatophobia are still largely modeled on the male prototype of the ideal citizen and his soul. Plotinus has a context-specific notion of embodiment: "negative when related to the soul's progress toward greater unity, but highly positive when countering the claims of the Gnostics that the material world is evil" (ibid., 80; cf. Corrigan 2000). In short, his dualism is more pronounced in his psychology.

Miles (1999, 162-65) discusses Plotinus' considerations on embodiment and relevance to feminism by focusing on his teaching of beauty (V.8⁹⁰). The distinction between soul and body is important for him because of the degree of independence from matter and sense perception, so soul is superior because it can exist without body and is thus identified with life. The Plotinian pessimism is the result of his view that the body is essentially lifeless, but soul enlivens it:

We must certainly too consider soul as being in body ... since it is from the combination of body and soul that "the complete living creature takes its name" [*Phaedrus* 246c5] (I.1.3.1-4)

What nature, then, does this have? If it is a body, it must be completely separable into its parts, for every body is composite. But if it was not a body, but of another nature, then the nature also would

⁹⁰ Cooper mentions Miles, claiming sense perception of beauty creates a sense of universal community that unites us in the pursuit of wisdom and becoming one with the One. The pursuit of continuity between aesthetics and ethics does not explain away the ideal for bodily detachment, but Plotinus' view does not present the body as evil proper (Cooper 2007, 92).

have to be investigated ... What body, then, could there be which has life of itself? For fire and air and water and earth are lifeless of themselves; and when soul is present to any one of them this makes use of a borrowed life - but there are no other bodies besides these. (IV.7.2.16-19).

The lower status of bodies is derivative of their function to divide the living beings as separate. In short, the world of becoming is one of division, and division and separation are always less desirable than the One. Plotinus, like Plato, oscillates between pessimism and optimism, and is caught in a sort of inadvertent dualism. Cooper and Miles both agree that Plotinus acknowledged the sensible world when challenged by Gnostic despise of the body, but the ascent to the One always entails disparaging the body (Miles 1999, 163). It is noteworthy that the Dyad is not disparaged. This divided approach to embodiment is both metaphysical and practical. Miles' conclusion is that such combined approach demonstrates that both soul and body reveal interdependence, but it is not obvious that the distinction between intelligible and sensible was a pure demonstration of the interdependency of the two worlds.

As Vassilopoulou, Miles also turns to Porphyry's biographical data (ibid., 167-71) favoring Plotinus' work with female students and living in a woman's home. The suggestion is that Plotinus confessed a counter-cultural respect to women and linked this attitude to the practice of his philosophical commitments (ibid., 168). More importantly, Miles claims that Plotinus might have literalized Plato's maieutics (midwifery) and has adopted the perspective of the woman who gives birth, which in turn can also explain why nurse is a better name for matter than mother. Both Vassilopoulou's and Cooper's arguments on the value of the body rely on Miles' conclusion that Plotinus "did not disparage physical birth-giving in relation to visionary experience" (ibid.; Miles discusses the same treatise III.6.19). All of this is not to say that Plotinus' views on childbearing and generation are a substitute for a viable and optimistic appreciation of embodiment: "it cannot be argued that he transcended the common gender assumptions of his time" (Miles 1999, 169), but the Platonic motif of escape from *Theaetetus* was pacified.

These three writers inspect gendering and the body in Plotinus through a concern with the practical dimension of ascension, manifesting a decreased inculpatory tendency. However, the practical dimension remains lower than the metaphysical, just as the Dyad remains a sort of first - or *the* first - second principle. Avoiding a conservative masculinist theory of generation does not evade the ineffable experience of ascent to the One. Practicality is overridden by ineffability; the One remains an escape route from embodiment. The intersection between feminism and Neoplatonism arrives at an ambiguity over the question whether Plotinus is an anti-feminist or not. In fact, the question almost never arrives beyond Irigaray. This is the by-product of Plotinus' careful cosmological exegesis and his tendency to appease the reader with modifications of earlier "radicalizations," as well as avoiding discursive reasoning where it does not belong - the noosphere.

3.B.4. The Problem of the One's Grammatical Neutrality

In Plotinus' One the political dimension of problematizing embodiment and thus femininity as boundlessness is largely covered over in philosophically gender-neutral lexis. The One, as demonstrated with the discussion of the Indefinite Dyad, retained gendering only for the Dyad as the One's other. This further abstracted the Platonic One from embodiment by guaranteeing the One's "neutrality" and radicalizing its disembodiedness. In this section I discuss the One's grammatical neutrality, which allows me to show that the One is a correlatively de-gendered term. The neuter itself is not treated as a gender, so it does not function as such. The problem of grammatical neutrality lies in how it culminates in unknowability, and I discuss whether unknowability can be qualified as unrelated to gender

and embodiment in Plotinus: a person who refused to be portrayed on account that since he is already embodied in the body as a shadow, there need not be another shadow added to it.⁹¹

As if testifying to the escape *to* the One, the level of abstraction intensifies and becomes more significant in Plotinus. As in Plato's *chōra*, the more extensive the abstraction, the stronger the expression of disembodiment. If such an abstraction does express development of hierarchical metaphysics, in Plato's *chōra* the ascription of quality (femininity) is unproblematic, while in Plotinus' One qualities are impossible to impute. This is offset by the femininity of the Dyad. While it can be stated that the One's irreducibility to anthropic realities is a gender-free category, what guarantees this genderlessness is the indefiniteness. If in Plato the demiurge is figurative and conceptual, the One is not even a concept, let alone a deified personification.

Plotinus' harmonization of the Indefinite Dyad with the Unwritten Doctrines was presented as neutrality of the One. The Plotinian One as an escape from any sense perception is thus also an escape from embodiment and an escape into neutrality. The One does not merely perpetuate the escape motif of *Theaetetus* 176b, it is also an escape from the Dyad's correlative embodiment altogether and its femininity, culminating in grammatical "neutrality." The neutrality is precisely what indicates disembodiment. The escape to the One as an escape into neutrality is only possible because there is something to escape from - the Dyad and its offspring.

If the escape motif culminates in grammatical neutrality of the One, then one obvious question is why, if the One is no longer male in Plotinus (as it was for the Pythagoreans), the Indefinite Dyad is still female? This question should be asked as a reaction to the view that if female principles (Indefinite Dyad, World Soul, Matter) in Platonism are negative and "evil,"

⁹¹ See Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 1.1-9: "And he objected so strongly to sitting to a painter or a sculptor that he said to Amelius, 'Why really, is it not enough to carry the image in which nature has encased us, without your requesting me to agree to leave behind me a longer-lasting image of the image, as if it was something genuinely worth looking at?'"

this is so only incidentally so (Dillon's view, 1991, 117⁹²). Even when not evil and negative, female principles are intentional, not incidental, so if they are negative, they are intentionally so. Dillon claims the principles are incidentally evil, so there is no presumed teleology, but the origin of this intentionality is hardly incidental. The view rejects causality between gender and evil. However, just as it is not an incident that the Dyad is still female, it is not an incident that the One is grammatically and functionally neutral. There is a *decision* to alienate the category from the male-female binary, and this decision cannot be imputed on the view of femininity's "incidentalness of evil."

For Cooper (2006) the question is whether the One and the Indefinite Dyad are gendered or gender-coded, and are they thus incidentally associated with the higher/lower levels of hierarchical metaphysics? Her solution to this question is that some concepts are "gendered" explicitly as masculine and feminine, and some are "gender-coded," meaning that they are "incidentally and gratuitously linked with gender" (*ibid.*, 21, following Bordo 1988, 622-7). I suggest that Cooper's "gender-coding" can replace Dillon's "incidentalness." Grammar does not correspond to a notion's metaphysical function. Neoplatonist terms, while being gendered, "do not consistently correspond with the grammatical gender of the entities [Plotinus] is describing" (Cooper 2006, 41). Cooper claims that there are cases of gender-coding, but that generally in Plotinus most are *gendered*. Cooper does not claim the analysis of gendering needs to refute incidentalness, but admits it is exclusionary because it covers over *intentionality* (*ibid.*, 26).

Although some scholars explicitly claim that female principles in Platonism are lower (Macquarrie 1984; Roemischer 2012), the feminist literature on Plotinus is apologetic and justificatory about Plotinus' harmonization with feminism. This ambivalence is important

⁹² Dillon does not hold strongly they are evil but responds to feminist concerns. The argument in this section against Dillon's view likewise does not assume femininity as evil, but femininity as responsible for division and becoming.

because the border between Plato and Plotinus becomes more expressed and merging the two is a famous complication in the scholarship. Yet the thesis for a gender-neutral language (of the One) is not the same as lack of continuity between Plato and Plotinus in hierarchical metaphysics (see Cooper 2007, 73) and on femininity as embodiment and boundlessness. In fact, such position will be impossible without the notion of divided matter I discuss below, and the question whether it is generated or not, and which warrants from early on (II.4) that only the Dyad's femininity has anything to do with intelligible and sensible matter. The de-gendered neutrality of the One is thus itself generated by the gendered non-neutrality of the Dyad: whether or not matter is generated or not generated below the Dyad does not affect that neutrality.

There are critics of the tendency to explain hierarchical metaphysics via a deliberate gender disparity suggesting that there is a balanced cosmological complementarity of male and female principles. Macquarrie says that the lower status of women is misleading in view of the Plotinian Triad, since there is an oft-met asymmetry between grammatical and functional role in Plotinus' treatises (resounding Dillon's argument, 1991, 107 and Cooper 2006, 41). For him this complicates the sexual distinctions (as Mind is in the male and Soul in the female) because the Triad as the moment of return is an attempt for a balanced notion of God (Macquarrie 1984). The ultimate reality of the One is beyond gender (as it is in neuter), because for Plato the Good (and by extension the One in Plotinus) is beyond Being. If Mind is grammatically male, it does not mean that its grammatical "nature" takes over its functions, for it is not appropriate to think of it merely as Mind = Father. Plotinus rejects language as a vehicle of expressing metaphysical truth: truth is self-certifying, and language is not, as it refers to entities outside the linguistic system (Ahbel-Rappe 1995, 156). Because the reality of language is unpertaining to the One, what better way to approach it, then, than formalizing it linguistically in neuter? For the apologetics of neutrality, thinking categories via a certain grammatical

gender would be wrong, because language as sense data equals belief. The grammatical gender does not serve the function (think of Psyche, in female, but largely identified as masculine psychophilia), for the One should be beyond all predicates. It should be enough that since the soul is oriented towards unity with the One, the negative rendition of embodiment and the ways the body is manifested as soul logically follows (cf. IV.8.5.36-38), because as soon as “the soul becomes enmeshed in the world ... [it] ceas[es] to recognize its divine nature and source” (IV.8.2.43-44).

The benefit offered by this small literature is the conclusion that we must maintain the difference between Plato and Plotinus and refuse to subsume the latter to a “caricatured ‘Platonism’” (Miles 1999, 165, 169), which will bring him closer to feminism. The *neoplatonization* of Plato obfuscates the problem of gender and embodiment, because of Plotinus’ originality (e.g., calling God the One). But the justificatory emphasis on a “practical Plotinus” obscures the fact that we are dealing with hierarchical metaphysics: its incorrigible condition remains dividing lower and higher strata of reality. Miles (1999) and Roemischer (2012) maintain this thesis of neoplatonization, against Spelman (1984). Resisting neoplatonization means to “filter out those post-Hellenistic interpretations” (Roemischer 2012, 7) of Plato.⁹³

The thesis against neoplatonization is undisputedly beneficial, yet it does not explain the continuity despite originality and does not answer the question why one out of the two principles - the Dyad - should be *both* female and responsible for division. That is, why the Dyad as a “first second principle” remains gendered - why its grammatical gender is not neutralized? On account of originality and invention, and grammatical neutrality, how would one explain the references of the One and the Good to the “father” (especially in VI.7 and

⁹³ A similar comment relatable to Plato is made by Sandford: “[i]t is ‘sex,’ not Plato’s philosophy, which has to answer for itself today” (Sandford 2010, 7). This also means that we cannot close the debate on Plato’s feminism, and by extension on Plotinus’.

VI.9)? The thesis cannot explain the interdependence between femininity and the abstraction of the One from gender. Thus, the political lacuna of the apologetics of grammatical neutrality is that all concepts describing the intelligible are equally part of it, but some are more equal than others. Avoiding this problem amounts to an apology of “grammatical femininity” and its “incidentalness.” This apology only conceptually balances the schema, but this was probably enough for Plotinus. Most importantly, this account does not explain *incidentalness as the causality* behind any principle’s ontological status. Simply, incidentalness as a function cannot serve as its own argument. So, maintaining the distinction between Plato and Neoplatonism is important in order to avoid inhibiting gender analysis, but it is impossible on account of admission of originality or grammatical neutrality to qualify Plotinus as a “feminist.”

In this section I presented Plotinus’ views on embodiment and how we can study his work from a gendered perspective. To do this, I presented a critique of Irigaray’s reading of Plotinus’ matter and *chōra* as *hyle*, which corrected the problem of aristotelianizing Plato and platonizing Plotinus and, by extension, neoplatonizing Plato. I showed that the literature is apologetic first because it must recognize that Plotinus corrected Plato’s idea that matter does not participate in form, and second because of practical concerns with feminism and trusting biographical data. I then presented gender-sensitive approaches that consider the difference between both writers, which was followed by presenting the problem of the One’s grammatical neutrality. By formulating the problem, I showed that female principles such as the Dyad are intentionally gendered, which then allows to qualify matter variously as indefinite, boundless, etc. The Dyad’s gendering serves the purpose of warranting the One’s abstraction from gender towards grammatical neutrality. The neutrality of the One guarantees its disembodiedness, correlative to the other first principle’s gender. The neutrality of language and the wish not to profane the intelligible does not mean lack of gendering. It does not mean that the body is

rendered negative because it is human and not specifically a female one.⁹⁴ In short, whatever subtle and original diversions from Plato's *chōra* and Aristotle's *chōra* as *hyle* Plotinus has performed in his discussion of matter, they cannot explain the hierarchization of the One as neutral on account of incidentality. To claim that the One's neutrality is self-sufficient and unrelated to its other and its gendering would amount to saying that the One does not need the Dyad as the principle of separation. This is why the problem of the One's grammatical neutrality reveals that there is a subtle hierarchy between it and the Dyad, and that the hierarchy itself is irreducible to neutrality, but is reducible to gender.

3.C. Matter

After my presentation of understanding the body and gender in Plotinus I now turn to a discussion of his notion of matter. Plotinus' views on matter are characterized by his division of matter as intelligible and sensible matter. I discuss his notion of divided matter and show that the One and matter as mother are related to the Platonic *chōra*, rendering divided matter a compromise theory between Plato and Aristotle engulfing in itself femininity. There are numerous teachings in Plotinus that can be pursued to show the relations between the One, *chōra* and matter. To repeat, he has four relevant treatises: 12 = II.4; 25 = II.5; 26 = III.6; 51 = I.8. Of all, here I present Plotinus' doctrine of divided matter (II.4, "On Matter"), and matter as evil and privation (I.8, "On What Are Evils"), and part of his aesthetics (V.8, "On the Intelligible Beauty"). I will inspect matter in Plotinus in two ways: via biographical and theoretical material.

⁹⁴ This is pointed out by Dunning (2011, 62-3) in his analysis of Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*, Book IV. There Clement says: "...we do not say that the nature of the female is the same as that of the male, insofar as it is female. ... we say that pregnancy and childbearing belong to the woman as she happens to be female, not as human."

Whereas the originality of the One is obvious, this is less true for matter. The views on matter before Plotinus make him effectively a follower of Moderatus of Gades. Following Moderatus, Plotinus inherits two problems: is matter evil and is it generated? Corrigan's (1995, 16-19) inquiry shows that in Aristotle and the Stoics matter is not evil; in the Old Academy and Moderatus it is. For Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, matter is ungenerated. For Moderatus and the Neopythagoreans, it is generated by the One. Plotinus' notion of matter responded to both Plato and Aristotle. He integrated Aristotle's *chōra-as-hyle*, and accepted matter's femininity as mother (and with this femininity as reproductivity) as a received view from Plato. Plotinus seems to try and synchronize the One with Aristotle's causes. He partially accepted that matter is substrate but was left with the question if intellect was somehow spurred by matter. He arrived at the compromise that there is an "intelligible matter," but that this kind of matter differs dramatically from sensible matter in the sense of the world "here."

3.C.1. Divided Matter

Matter is divided because one part of it is noematic and one is somatic. According to O'Brien, both matters are relative to truth. He says that "[t]he matter which follows 'of necessity' from principles prior to itself, and which, even though it does not 'participate,' does not wholly stand 'apart,' is the matter of the sensible world. The matter which, since it 'is,' cannot not 'participate' in goodness, is intelligible matter" (O'Brien 1991, 25). Intelligible matter is generated by otherness; sensible world matter is generated by partial soul, by the sensible and vegetative part of the soul.

If we accept the theory that matter is generated (ibid., 11, 23) against Corrigan (1995) then the three hypostases One (plus Dyad) - Intellect - Soul are generated thusly so that they produce matter: Intellect is generated by the One out of necessity (V.4.2.27-33); Soul is generated by Intellect (V.1.3); Soul generates Matter (II.9.12.39-44; I.8.14.49-54). If matter is

evil, how is it that it is, as the last element of generation, the *primary* evil? For O'Brien, it is both the primary evil and the cause of evil in the soul, i.e., it is both itself and what generates it. The Plotinian psychophilia here is manifested in that soul is indirect and "accidental" generator of evil. So evil is accidentally produced by generating the physical world. This schema poses two problems: if matter is generated or not, and if both the positive and negative characteristics of matter allow coexistence in the physical world? Plotinus does not answer those questions directly, although at II.4.5.28-30 he almost seems to say that matter is generated (*poiein* at II.4.5.29). But *where* is it generated? In O'Brien's view, *in* the intelligible world and *from* otherness. Both types of matter are true because both are generated (O'Brien 1991, 25).

The difficulty here is to understand, if the One is neither being nor non-being, then how is it possible that the otherness of which matter is generated and is correlative to the Dyad can be non-being, given that what is generated is in the domain of becoming, and given that if matter participates in some way in form, it cannot be not participating in being? There can be discerned three types of non-being, two of which are retained from Plato: otherness is non-being (*Parmenides*) and absolute non-being (O'Brien 1991, 17 takes it that Plotinus speaks of absolute non-being in I.8.3.3-9); the third type of non-being is Plotinian - matter, with reference to Plato's criticism of Parmenides in the *Sophist* 237b7-8 (*to medamos on* - "what is not in any way at all"). "Absolute non-being" is not matter, and it cannot be mingled with being (III.6.14.20-21: *to de panto me on amikton to onti*), but this presents us with the puzzle of how matter is a substratum of embodied things? For O'Brien, whose solution I accept as a reasonable explanation of the problem, "the solution implied to the puzzle is that matter, although it is 'non-being,' is not 'non-being absolute'" (O'Brien 1991, 19 n17). But how can matter participate without participation? In other words, how does an entity such as matter devoid of qualities execute itself with a quality it cannot have? For it cannot be united with form (III.6.14). The answer is, for O'Brien, that it is covered by soul with the mere appearance

of form (III.6.11.29-31), in other words, matter somehow simulates forms and executes its own participation without causation from above.

For Plotinus matter is the receptacle of the eternal *eide* (Peters 1967, 90), and involves their corrupting. This means that matter as the feminine is the container of images, which in turn are the imperfect likenesses of ideas. The receptacle is sensible matter with quasi-existence (*pos on*, as in *Timaeus* 52c). Plotinus says that matter is divided as Here and There:

... there is matter which receives the shape, and is the substrate in every case. Further, if there is an intelligible universal order There, and this universe here is an imitation of it, and this is composite, and composed of matter, then there must be matter There too. Or else how can you call it universal order except with regard to its form? And how can you have form without something on which the form is imposed? Intelligible reality is certainly altogether absolutely without parts, yet it has parts in a kind of way. If the parts are torn apart from each other, then the cutting and tearing apart is an affection of matter: for it is matter that is cut. (II.4.4.6-15)

As in characterizing matter “in a manner of speaking” at III.6, here Plotinus again speaks of “parts” and compositeness correlative to matter in “a kind of way.” Because form cannot exist only for itself There, its counterpart of matter as substrate Here receives, but without discontinuing form’s non-compositeness. Of this responsible is the receptacle, and Plotinus says it is second to Intelligence:

That there must be something underlying bodies, which is different from the bodies themselves, is made clear by the changing of the elements into each other. For the destruction of that which changes is not complete; otherwise, there will be a being which has totally perished into non-being. ... there remains that which has received the form of the engendered thing and lost the other one. ... what is being destroyed is composite ... the elements must be either form or first matter or composed of matter and form. But it is not possible for them to be form; for without matter how could they be in a state of having bulk and dimension? But they are not first matter either; for they are destroyed: form is in relation to their quality and shape, and matter to their substrate, which is undefined because it is not form. (II.4.6.1-20)

Now, because in Plato the receptacle is female, this does not automatically mean that the One is inherently anti-female because neutral; it can be qualified as an an-human construction irrelevant to gender. But the fact that the receptacle is not an obvious candidate for first matter does not disqualify it as feminine, nor does it explain away how the soul might generate matter with certain qualities which did not originate from it (unless matter indeed can simulate forms). So later in the treatise souls make matter as darkness (II.9.12.39-44) and matter is described as a consequence (at II.9.3.15-16) and as sterile (II.9.8.24-25). And again,

in III.6 it is described as lifeless (III.6.19.17ff.). Simultaneously, it is also divine matter, which unites with form (II.4.5.12-23; “divine” at II.4.5.15; “bathed in light” at II.4.5.23).

Let me review the influence of the personal and biographical data and try to relate it to Plotinus’ understanding of matter, and why his matter is correlative to radicalizing disembodiment of the One. The most important attestation to Plotinus’ treatment of the body is found in Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus* with the opening statement: “Plotinus, the philosopher of our times, seemed ashamed of being in the body” (*Life of Plotinus* 1). We also know that Plotinus was milked by his nurse until the age of eight and continued to do so sporadically until the age of twelve. Miles (1999, 90) claims that Porphyry’s intention in presenting Plotinus’ own self-perception was to bring the affect of shame, since there is only one place in the *Enneads* where Plotinus would discuss shame. Dodds (1951, 28-64) also claims that ancient Greek culture was gradually transformed from a culture of shame to a culture of guilt, which became more ambivalent in the Roman realities (Konstan 2003, 1032). Porphyry’s approach imputes somatophobia to Plotinus: this approach influenced his organization of Plotinus’ treatises (III.8, V.8, V.5 and II.9 - see Miles 1999, 94), an approach which is itself an interpretation (ibid., 91). This gives Porphyry the locution of pessimism concerning embodiment. Miles claims that Porphyry was more pessimistic about the body than Plotinus (ibid., referring to III.2.3). She offers to understand Plotinus’ ideas about embodiment topologically through the violent spectacles of the Colosseum and the care of the self in the public bath houses. Allegedly, Plotinus did not go to the baths (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 2.1-15), but he did have daily massages. In *Life of Plotinus* 2 we read that by the end of his life he rejected treatments altogether and eventually died from acute diphtheria (see Miles 1999, 92). While Chapter 1 opens with the motif of body disdain, Chapter 2 discusses Plotinus’ health and sickness and his refusing to undergo the treatment of enema, and taking any medicine, as they did not suit his age. Slaveva-Griffin (2010) offers an interpretation of Plotinus’ own

embodiment and self-care illuminating his views on the body by reconstructing his views of medicine and metaphysics as one unity: although the relationship between soul and body is crucial, the body's susceptibility to sickness is to blame (*ibid.*, 102) because sickness can only be ascribed to the body, not to the soul. Thus, Plotinus calls sickness "alien" (*alotrion*) and "something which does not belong to us" (*ouk oikeion*) (V.8.11.27-31).

If we want to explain Plotinus' matter via biographical approach, the question is: "What does sickness has to do with contemplation of intelligible beauty?" (that is, V.8). Slaveva-Griffin gives two interrelated answers. The first is philosophical: much to the chagrin of Plotinus, he felt he must address how the body inserts its influence onto intellectual abilities, which makes contemplation a subject of medical considerations. He never agreed, for example, with Galen's medical evidence of the soul's craniocentric place. The second answer is biographical: the use of medicine for the soul-body relation provides the philosophical context for *Life of Plotinus* 1's opening with Chapter 2's sickness considerations (*ibid.*, 103-4). For her Porphyry desired to illustrate along his teacher's lines "the deleterious effect of illness and the impermanence of the body" and offer a two-fold Plotinian lesson: "not the strength of Plotinus' character but the imperfection of his body" (*ibid.*, 107, 111). Given these personal-theoretical details, it is no wonder that "Plotinus was preoccupied with how to establish a secure place for body" (Miles 1999, 92) in an age brimming with anxiety, violence, militaristic spectacle, and death. Accepting medical wisdom of the time was not easy, as it exposed the human as a compromised composite of soul and body that is defective and not malleable to salvation. Defying death is thus a relevant subject affecting Plotinus' understanding of One and matter: anthropological self-perfection and salvation can thus be codified as an ideal of disembodiment as the logical consequence of an age of public violence, open carnality and the gradual medical anatomizing of the soul.

I now turn to relating the biographical data with the theoretical one from II.4 and V.8.

The question of embodiment arises as soon as we begin to recognize “somatophobic” tendencies, especially in II.4. The immediate object of feminist scrutiny is to see a division between gender and *noesis*, as if the body and the female were an obstacle to the actualization of the soul as intellect in the ascent to the One. This implies a feminist aspiration to a democracy of souls. Spelman (1984, 121-127) criticizes it on the ground that embodiment lacks universality. Plotinus might have had a similar objection to embodiment yet driven by a different set of motivations. They were perhaps no less emancipatory but were certainly not “feminist.” There are two problems of feminist interpretation I want to warn about regarding the theory of (divided) matter: the first is that Plotinus’ writings are unjustly colonized by Spelman’s thesis regarding Plato’s somatophobia; the second is that, as in Plato, Plotinus does reveal certain ambiguities concerning the role of embodiment as an instrument of a self-actualization that is ultimately a good in this world. Those ambiguities resulted precisely in the compromise reached at II.4.

That the Good cannot be a predicate of the One opens a whole set of difficult questions, and they all are entangled in late antique theories of matter (the classical overview is Sorabji 1988, especially 106-25). For example, the very impossibility of goodness of the One, i.e., the impossibility to ascribe goodness to the highest hypostasis (if it can be called that) opens the odd question whether the One might be or generate evil. Because this is impossible, some other object of culpability should become central to the Plotinian henodicy. But, as Miles remarks, if “[f]orm imposes limit, matter is the unlimited. Paradoxically, the One is matter’s source” (Miles 1999, 97). Thus, if the One is matter’s source on account of the thesis it is generated, then its grammatical neutrality demonstrates itself as dissimulating the problem of multiplicity and “matter Here.”

In what sense is II.4 a compromise? It is a compromise theory because it embraced Plato’s receptacle with Aristotle’s hylomorphism which posited that *chōra* is *hyle*: matter is

substrate/stuff. Plotinus partly disagreed. Yet if matter is not a substrate, the pressing concern is: is there matter in intellect? Theoretically, this need not be a contradiction in terms, as Intellect is below the One. So, Plotinus answers that there is “intelligible matter,” but that it differs dramatically from “matter here.” The motif of dividing matter here and there perpetuates the journey model of the soul from the *Phaedrus*. The distinction imparts necessity of matter, which is not too grave a contradiction for the theory of the One, for the Platonic *chōra*, identified as it is by Aristotle with *hyle*, is identified in turn with need and Ananke (see Bianchi 2014, 51ff.). Neither matter in intellect nor “matter here” is ever truly without *morphe*. Intelligible matter *is* a forming principle, and matter here is always formed. It is body, a composite of matter *and* form. The difference between them is that intelligible matter there is “all things at once,” and “always the same,” while matter here is “all things in turn and only one thing at each particular time” (II.4.3.95).

Plotinus makes a concession and correction on the question of (matter as) substrate. If intelligible matter is substrate, this will be acceptable, for in intellect, shape is the true shape. There are many forms, but something of their multiplicity is unifying, and this is the difference of shape. Because there is shape, there is a shaped, which brings about the difference. The multiplicity of this difference has a unifying tendency. When form alone is present, there can be no existing bodies. Plotinus confirms matter as substrate in two occasions: “Therefore, there is matter which receives the shape, and is the substrate in every case” (II.4.4.7-9). And: “For when they [the ancient sages - S. P.] make matter the mother of all things, they apply this title to it taking it in the sense of the principle which has the function of substrate...” (III.6.19.31-33).

What follows is a series of denials on what matter is not: it is not body, it is not composite “like sight in darkness.” Here the soul receives an “impression of shapelessness”; and the “soul is distressed by matter’s indefiniteness” (II.4.10). The theory of intelligible matter

should be understood as a compromise that saves the integrity of the noosphere: at once indifferent to existence and caring of humanity. Perhaps, this is why, as Miles claim, “Plotinus follows roughly the same procedure for identifying matter that he uses for describing the One” (Miles 1999, 97), and which explains the supposed inter-determination of matter and the One. Matter is non-existent, but has a certain kind of existence: it “is apprehended by a process of reasoning, which does not come from mind but works emptily [*alla logismo ouk ek nou, alla kenos*]; so it is spurious reasoning [*dio kai nothos*], as has been said [in II.4.10 with reference to *Timaeus* - S. P.]” (II.4.12.33-35).

As can be evidenced, Plotinus’ use of *nothos logismos* (spurious reasoning) is most certainly a reference to Plato’s *logismo tini notho* (bastard thinking) in *Timaeus* 39ff. When it comes to the body, Plotinus feels free to speak about matter being its essence; when it comes to matter itself, he constrains the argument to a compromise with Aristotle’s hylomorphism (“and [matter] is not an empty name but it is something underlying,” II.4.12.23-24); intelligible matter “there,” unlike sensible matter “here,” is not composite, or is not the same kind of composite. So, matter does not give itself to the action and motion of the bodies but is constitutive of the bodies doing the action. Each time “matter here” is discussed, it is reduced to its being thought to the opposite immateriality of, e.g., action, thought, etc. (as action is matterless for Plotinus).

Even as the One does not generate anything, the subsumption of matter, necessitated by hierarchical metaphysics, under a super-noematic principle such as the One makes of becoming something necessarily topological.⁹⁵ This “kind” (matter) is defined negatively as something with no trace (*ichne*) of goodness. Again, in II.4 Plotinus does not want to reject entirely whatever residual goodness there might be to matter here; but he accuses this matter

⁹⁵ There are hundreds of examples throughout *Enneads* that testify to this, especially when Plotinus uses *en* to relate to matter, corporeality, becoming and the sensible world, while the One cannot be “in” anything proper.

of being absent of form, or rather “form alone,” as it can simulate form. Because “matter here” is all things as particulars, it is ever changing, therefore mixed, and composite. True self-identity is being all things at one and the same “moment” (II.4.3.53), and matter cannot manifest such identity.

Let me turn to matter and *aoristos*. In II.4.15.60 Plotinus states that matter of the intelligible realm is the indefinite/unlimited, continuing the association of boundlessness, indefiniteness, matter and femininity:

... matter must be called unlimited of itself, by opposition to the forming principle; and just as the forming principle is forming principle without being anything else, so the matter which is set over against the forming principle by reason of its unlimitedness must be called unlimited without being anything else.⁹⁶

It can only be generated by some undefined nature, which equals the eternal being. It is this indefiniteness that is oddly divided. The permanence of one indefiniteness/unlimitedness “there” is archetype; the one “here” is an image. These divisions serve Plotinus the purpose, again, of defending an inalienable identity of the One. Hence matter should be described as something that is indefinite of itself (II.4.15.63). Finally, if matter is evil, it can never be properly explained because of its partial goodness or “participation” in it. Its evil is originary: “it was not a possessor (as the land or the female organism are, of some specific character)” (II.4.16.66).

3.C.2. Matter as Evil and Privation

Plotinus’ view on matter as evil (*kakon*) and privation (*steresis*) is espoused in the last (51st in number) of the four relevant treatises, I.8. There he says that matter is evil before the soul, causing instances of evil in ensouled bodies:⁹⁷

⁹⁶ See also I.8.3-4: *aoristos* as evil; II.4.2-5: matter as *aoristos*; II.4.10: *aoristos* of the soul.

⁹⁷ Again, Plotinus deals with this problem because the soul cannot be generated without the One, which should in some ways contain it in itself as an existent, since, on its positive dimension, the One contains all beings and is beyond being.

This is the fall of the soul, to come in this way to matter and to become weak, because all its powers do not come into action; matter hinders them from coming by occupying the place which soul holds and producing a kind of cramped condition, and making evil what it has got hold of by a sort of theft - until soul manages to escape back to its higher state. So matter is the cause of the soul's weakness and vice: it is then itself evil before soul and its primary evil. (I.8.14.45-52)

Since matter is the condition for the possibility of the sensible world, matter is identified with the receptacle of Plato's *Timaeus*, but *before* the deed of the demiurge. Plotinus' cosmos excludes any traces of contingency (IV.5, V.9.4.14) - if there is a philosophical enemy in the *Enneads*, these are the psychology of the stoics and the atomists' godless, extreme materialism.

I return at length to I.8, where we read:

At this point one might be able to arrive at some conception of evil as a kind of unmeasuredness in relation to measure, and unboundedness in relation to limit, and formlessness in relation to formative principle, and perpetual neediness in relation to what is self-sufficient; always undefined, nowhere stable, subject to every sort of influence, insatiate, complete poverty; and all this is not accidental to it but in a sort of way its essence; whatever part of it you see, it is all this; and everything which participates in it and is made like it becomes evil, though not essential evil. What sort of entity, then, is it, in which all this is present, not as something different from itself but as itself? For if evil occurs accidentally in something else, it must be something itself first, even if it is not a substance. Just as there is absolute good and good as a quality, so there must be absolute evil and the evil derived from it which inheres in something else. (I.8.3.15-25)

In addition to this characterization of matter as evil, V.8.7 and V.8.22 discuss the descent of the soul, and there Plotinus defines matter as "last and lowest form" (*eidōs tī eschatōn*).⁹⁸ In VI.9 he also says that "one must lift oneself up from the things of sense which are last and lowest [*ton aisthēton eschatōn ontōn*]" (VI.9.3). Plotinus might be discussing matter as form in an allegorical way, but he nonetheless does not deny participation, albeit an apparitional one. In V.8.7 he says:

All this universe is held fast by forms from beginning to end: matter first of all by the forms of the elements, and then other forms upon these, and then again others; so that it is difficult to find the matter hidden under so many forms. Then matter too, is a sort of ultimate form [*eidōs tī eschatōn*; rendered "last and lowest form" by Mackenna - S.P.]; so this universe is all form, and all the things in it are forms; for its archetype is form; the making is done without noise and fuss, since that which makes is all real being and form.⁹⁹

As Armstrong says in his note *ad locum*, this is the closest that Plotinus gets to a positive evaluation of matter. And even at its most positive, there is no significant concession on

⁹⁸ Cf. "the form of the good is the last thing to be seen, and it is reached only with difficulty" (*Republic* VII 517b-c).

⁹⁹ Perczel (2014) reconstructs allusions to *Theaetetus* 156a-157c a little later in V.3.9.11, passages that pertain to the forms as potentially "last" and their perception by sense data vs. by soul.

Platonic cosmic pessimism. Matter is “held” by the ideas of the elements, which are divided further into other elements, all the way down to the intelligible and sensible realms of the earth. In its lowest, the world down here is an idea, though a very degenerated one, in the process of the descent of the soul. To this characterization Plotinus adds then a brief summary of creation to juxtapose it to the non-derivability of matter to the higher realm of ideas and by extension the One. He says that in the creation all is made silently, since there was nothing that “had part” other than being and idea. The archetype of creation was first silent, and then it was all things at once (V.8.7.45-46). Matter’s doings are noise and hiss opposite to the impermeable silence of something Plotinus call creations, but which is extremely suggestive of non-creation.

Narbonne says that the limitless is evil in as much as it hosts the undefined things. The limitless/indefinite “remains definitely and totally infinite ... just as the receptacle of the *Timaeus*, to which Plotinus associates his matter, is unchanging” (Narbonne 2011, 49). The limitless or the unbounded is simply that which is without limit (*peras*). Now, in Plotinus the very opposition between being and non-being, or Good and Evil, is based on the opposition of *peras* and *apeiron* (*Philebus* 23c). The two concepts are older than the Platonist tradition and lead us all the way to the Pythagorean table of opposites. Generally, *apeiron* is what is unbounded and has no proper limits, while *peras* is the limiting principles, something bounded. Plato inherits and follows the steps of the Pythagorean table of opposites, which contrasts limit (*peras*) and the limitless (*apeiron*). While the first is attributed to the male, the second is attached to the female gender. In Plotinus those identifications between shapelessness/unboundedness are harder to track and are not as explicit as they can be found in Plato, because of the role of the Dyad and due to dividing matter. It is true the division of matter comes from Plato (the journey model of the soul), but it is still an individual solution which portions matter into here and there on the mould of Plato’s psyche.

Viglas discusses the doctrine of matter as *eidōs tī eschatōn* and summarizes that it is thus formless (his preferred term) and non-being (referring to I.8). Matter is evil as a “kind of form,” but it is elusive to the definition of form; it is such a form *before* being in that in which it is (Viglas 2005, 1). Matter as a “kind of form” in I.8 and II.4 is very reminiscent of the description of *chōra*/the receptacle as “bastard reasoning”: in both cases the notions are in-between the term that defines goodness (for matter this is form, for *chōra* this is reasoning) and the opposite of that term: the partiality and bastardism, suggestive of their quasi-identity with non-identity. The qualification is, again, in a manner of speaking, as a kind of form. For Viglas the central issue here is that Plotinus refuses to give an objective hypostasis to evil although it is identified with matter. Matter is not evil because it participates in the good but because it *lacks it* (II.4.16.18-19). Matter is defined negatively: it is the privation of good. This is why unbounded matter, as a type of non-being introduced by Plotinus (O’Brien), cannot be absolute, but only relative: “The ancient terror of infinite and unbounded (Plato and Aristotle) changed in Plotinus. The term infinite became an attribute, with negative concept to matter and an attribute with positive meaning to God” (ibid., 4¹⁰⁰).

It is this change in Plotinus that is, in effect, what I am calling a “solution.” The solution of Plotinus resolves the question whether the One, in all of its supposed neutrality, can be the wellspring of matter. It cannot. And because of that, by dividing matter into two as Here and There on Plato’s model of the soul, by identifying matter with the receptacle, and by describing matter “here” as an evil, Plotinus moved the debates on matter to a closure. The argument that there is rejection of the body and matter is thus not self-evident. It is evident only if, following Irigaray, we read body as matter and vice versa. The theory of divided matter and the one of matter as evil regarded above cannot be regarded as an absolutization of the mistrust in the

¹⁰⁰ Further examples and arguments in the history of Neoplatonism which I do not regard here, but have consulted, can be found in Proclus and Iamblichus. See respectively Phillips (2007) and Shaw (1995).

body, but as a radicalization of the mistrust in matter. Plotinus' views on matter were a new and original figuration of late antique social uncertainties in a cosmological garb culminating in a discrete dualism between the One's neutrality and the Dyad's and matter's femininity. The repeated characterization of matter as indefinite and thus female warranted that neutrality as a safe passage to a disembodied One.

3.D. Conclusion

In this chapter the argument I presented was that Plotinus radicalized Plato's soul-body dualism and psychophilia with his notion of the One, and to this end I presented Plotinus' notion of the One and discussed Plato's Unwritten Doctrines and their importance for this notion. I claimed that the One in Plato and later in Plotinus is a radicalization of psychophilia and that Plotinus' One in turn radicalized Plato's radicalization by turning to an ultimate pseudo-de-gendering of metaphysics with his original notion of the One. What had changed, however, is that Plotinus complicated the Platonic cosmology and the access to the One, which did not disparage the central role of the soul. I then presented the influence of *Parmenides*, followed by a discussion of the Indefinite Dyad and its femininity. Subsequently I explained why Neoplatonism and Plotinus are worth investigating in terms of gender and the body, and critiqued Irigaray's reading of Plato's *chōra* as matter and Plotinus' matter as mother alienated from form by focusing on a niched body of feminist literature on Plotinus. This critique allowed me to provide an account of Plotinus's views on matter as female outside (feminist) hylomorphism, which in turn made possible to delink Plato's and Plotinus' views on the question whether matter participates in form.

These discussions led me to formulating the problem of the One's grammatical neutrality as dependent on the Dyad's femininity which allowed the radicalization of the Platonic escape motif. Based on formulating the problem, I critiqued the argument that the

One's neutrality is delinked from the incidentality of gendering female principles such as the Indefinite Dyad and showed that female principles such as *chōra* and the Dyad are intentionally gendered, without claiming they are evil. The Dyad's gendering serves the purpose of warranting the One's abstraction from gender towards grammatical neutrality, and the neutrality of the One is its disembodiedness. This tendency to further radicalize disembodiment in Plotinus was performed by the One's deliberate de-gendering. Thus, the discussion of the One's grammatical neutrality allowed me to show that the One, whose neutrality is not qualified as gendered, is predicated on the Dyad. I showed that the problem of the One's grammatical neutrality reveals a discrete hierarchy between it and the Dyad, and that the hierarchy is irreducible to neutrality alone but is reducible to gender. Subsequently I discussed Plotinus' notion of matter as divided and as evil and privation and showed that the One and matter as mother were related to the Platonic *chōra*, because Plotinus read matter as the receptacle. This I claimed rendered divided matter a compromised theory of matter, mediated via a debate with Aristotle's hylomorphism and the notion of receptacle as substrate. By ascribing indefiniteness to matter, Plotinus offered a solution by trying to resolve the question whether matter is generated and is evil. Plotinus' views on matter, continually characterizing it as indefinite, boundless and feminine, were a new and original solution, but this solution was warranted by the One's neutrality, which in turn was safeguarded by the Dyad's femininity. Through the Indefinite Dyad, in Plotinus boundlessness and indefiniteness were condensed in his notion of divided matter as sensible and intelligible, as well as matter as evil and privation.

The Plotinian solution was a radicalization for several reasons. Earlier I claimed that with *chōra* Plato kept the gendered association with boundlessness to allegedly both explain it as the source of noetic matter and transcend it, a move I called radicalization. Plotinus kept that association via the Dyad, and the radicalization happened within the One's domain. First, by the subsumption of the Good within the One. Second, by presenting the Dyad as a female

principle of abstraction, which is less passive than *chōra* but more non-neutral than the One. Third, by dividing matter as what springs out under the realm of the Dyad into two on Plato's journey model of the soul. Fourth, by trying to reject the paradox that the One is matter's source by identifying it partly with evil on account of matter's femininity. By performing a radicalization of what was already a Platonic radicalization, in Plotinus the boundlessness identifiable with the feminine *chōra* and the indefiniteness of the feminine Dyad became attributable to matter divided between two worlds, in the somatic here and the noetic there. The problem of boundlessness emanated to a state of abstracted universality and genericity of the One whereby the radicalization of psychophilic tendencies reinforced the One as a disembodied solution. The arrival of the One on the philosophical lexical scene with its garb of neutrality was a radicalization of Platonic dualism and psychophilia because the One's alleged neutrality, if and when accepted, can no longer refer to the problem of boundlessness as an originary issue. This quality of boundlessness now transpired in the Indefinite Dyad: the One had no part to play in its own separation from the Dyad, whereby the alleged irrelevance of the problem of boundlessness.

With this trajectory that I named radicalization, what Plotinus offered was the solution of dividing matter and linking it with unboundedness but allowing it - however apparitionally - to participate in form. Against the spectacle of the Colosseum, a notion of divided matter, ambivalently attributable to evil, might not save the body, but it will certainly save the soul and, with this, *some part* of the soul's embodiment. With the One Plotinus offered a *Weltanschauung* solution to the problem of matter and, with it, to embodiment. At the end, the solution embodied the very problem of disembodiment as the notion of the One, culminating in grammatical neutrality and delinking from the male principle.

Part II. The Problem of Disembodiment:

Revising Boundlessness

Chapter 4. The Problem of Disembodiment in Continental Philosophy

In this chapter I introduce the fields of non-philosophy and new realism as realist strands in contemporary continental philosophy and explain what the legacy of Platonic and Plotinian notions of *chōra* and the One entail for contemporary continental philosophy in general and continental feminist philosophy in particular, with focus on the problem of disembodiment as conceptualized in Part I.¹⁰¹ The aim of the chapter is to present the non-philosophical inversion of the notion of the One and investigate what it entails for continental feminist philosophy, its understanding of the subject and the category of embodiment. With the help of Laruelle's non-philosophy (of the One and the Real), his critique of decisionism, as well as new realism's critique of correlationism, I show a way to bridge the Neoplatonist disembodied One with the continental philosophical notion of embodiment via the non-philosophical notions of *chōra* and the One. This bridging opens the opportunity for a continental feminist approach to disembodiment.

I first present Laruelle's notion of the One and the way it undergoes an inversion in collision with the Plotinian One, discussing what the difference is. Rather than taking the One for granted, the One is intentionally denuded as the hidden term of the Real. I present also Laruelle's (and his collaborators' from Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale [ONPhI]) notion of *chōra* and relate it to his One. Secondly, I present together non-philosophy and new realism: in the first case I emphasize the role of the critique of philosophical decisionism, while in the second case I highlight the importance of anti-correlationism

¹⁰¹ As mentioned in the Introduction, p. 18 n6, in the present Chapter 4, I have relied partially on some of my published work. Section 4.A.1, pp. 153-5 reproduces some altered passages from Panayotov (2018b, 71-2), and pp. 158-9 from *ibid.*, 73, 75; and Section 4.B.1, pp. 164-6 features reworked passages from Panayotov (2016b).

(Meillassoux, Harman). Discussing these two positions helps me to address how the problem of disembodiment matters from the perspective of continental realism (Ennis 2011). By following Laruelle’s inversion of the One and the two theoretical positions, I relate both fields to the Plotinian notion of the One and to the disengagement with this notion in continental feminist philosophy. Thirdly, to engage with the importance of the disembodied One and the problem of disembodiment for continental philosophy and feminism, which is largely anti-realist (Braver 2007), I present briefly continental feminist readings of *chōra* based on Irigaray’s reading (critiqued in Chapter 3). I focus only on this reading and its subsequent influence because it accepts Irigaray’s identification of *chōra* and matter and results in a defense of the embodied nature of female subjectivity on account of what I earlier called aristotelianizing Plato. Lastly, to critique the continuation of this position, I engage with Kolozova’s work (2006; 2014) which combines all of these fields (non-philosophy, new realism, continental feminist philosophy) and her critique of the subject in feminist poststructuralism, as well as her reading of *chōra*, which proceeds from a non-philosophical treatment of the gendered subject. With the aid of Laruelle and Kolozova, I explain how the “philosophical materials” (such as *chōra/One*) can be used for/from continental feminist philosophy in particular to reconsider the category of embodiment so that I can arrive at a continental feminist understanding of disembodiment later in Chapter 5.

The main texts and commentaries used in this chapter used to relate to the problem of disembodiment and the fields mentioned are by Laruelle et al. (2013), Laruelle (2012b; 2013b), Srnicek (2010), Smith (2012; 2013), and Armogida (2019), texts that relate Neoplatonism to non-philosophy. The main reference relating to the category of embodiment, non-philosophy and continental feminism is Kolozova (2014, 118). I use these writers’ works because by combining their research I can simultaneously explain the non-philosophical reading of the disembodied One and the continental feminist problematization of that subject. Kolozova’s

work is central to all these issues because she provides a theoretical bridge between the Platonist tradition, non-philosophy and continental feminist philosophy. The main thesis I follow and build upon is laid out by Smith, who claims that in Laruelle the One is a subject of radicalization (Smith 2012, 24). By following this thesis and these authors, I engage with the inversion and revision of *chōra* and the One in continental philosophy from a non-philosophical and new realist perspective: the One is treated as immanent, and not a transcendental source; *chōra* is treated as partly transcendental and partly empirical realm. In both cases there is an inversion of the original conceptions which serves a realist program.

My specific contribution in this chapter lies in the way I combine all these fields to produce a meaningful trajectory to discuss disembodiment from continental philosophical perspective. I do all of the above steps to defend the argument that the category of embodiment in continental feminist philosophy should be re-read and re-vised according to Laruelle's reading of "non-philosophical" *chōra*.¹⁰² Implicitly remaining loyal to Plato's analogy between *chōra* and the feminine, Laruelle however claims *chōra* is partly empirical: if so, it has an agency. This opens the gate to read *chōra* and the body in cosmology as agentic which, therefore, accommodates a feminist understanding of *chōra* which is not pessimist-constructivist and does not end up in anti-realism. By offering such a re-vision, this chapter foregrounds only the trajectory for a continental feminist philosophical interpretation of disembodiment.

The reason why it is crucial to relate all these fields together lie in the so-called program of anti-correlationism (see 4.B.2) shared across them. New realism particularly aims to uncover

¹⁰² Because there is an inversion of two fundamental Platonic principles, the re-reading might appear to be an additional contribution to a materialist and *philosophical* defense of embodiment. The immanence of the One, however, does not necessitate such a defense, because the non-philosophical account of the unilaterality of the Real-One describes the latter's access to the embodied human realm, and not the other way around. This is why the inversion requires an account of the disembodied and unilateral nature of the One, and not of the embodied nature of the human.

the autonomy of reality as actor and agent.¹⁰³ New realism's anti-correlationism makes possible a critique of the hierarchization between soul and body and disembodiment and embodiment, whereby theories of matter always subordinate the latter below the One. This does not entail an anti-ontological program, but a strong epistemological agency.

The reason why in this chapter it is crucial to read together new realism and non-philosophy, on the one hand, and Neoplatonism in relation to them, on the other, is that for those fields ontology is privileged over epistemology. This is where the fields meet. Neoplatonism's anthropocentrism and correlationism and its implied somatophobia is a problem because anti-correlationism's program entails the autonomy of reality and materiality without lending primacy to epistemology (Bryant 2011b, 35). Primacy is given to ontology where a region of being is not reducible to the human (Bryant 2011b; 2011c, 22). In this sense Neoplatonism victimizes reality through the hierarchization of disembodiment and the One, and it functions as a philosophy of access. As a result, the problem is not that Neoplatonism as a philosophy of access and a form of decisionism mediates the One, but that there is a selective mediation: it provides a privileged access to the Real via the One *for* the human, itself divided via male and female principles in hierarchical relations.

4.A. The One and *Chōra* in Non-Philosophy

In this section I outline the non-philosophical notions of the One and *chōra*. I first do this in order to juxtapose the non-philosophical framework, explained in more detail in section 4.B.1, to the previously presented Plotinian notion of the One in Chapter 3, and showcase the

¹⁰³ See Mackay (2007); Bryant, Srnicek and Harman (2011); Harman (2011b). Similar arguments can be found in new materialism, e.g., Alaimo (2000, 12); Hemmings (2013, 35, 45). This research orientation in, e.g., new materialism and ecofeminism, which has been in touch with the theoretical production of object-oriented ontology and object-oriented feminism (Behar 2016; see also Sheldon 2017; Panayotov 2018a), is not the byproduct of a non-philosophical "impoverishment" of philosophical materials, but its spirit embodies a similar program.

difference that Laruelle's project aims to achieve. This presentation thus has the aim to introduce how the Laruellian notions and re-readings feed into the problem of disembodiment as it is inherited by the Neoplatonist tradition.

4.A.1. Non-Philosophical One

In Laruelle's non-philosophy, the One is the effect of being and is immanent to it. The One is "in effect indifferent to what it determines" (Laruelle et al. 2013, 44¹⁰⁴). This is so because whatever it determines, it does so (a) in-the-last-instance and (b) through its being-foreclosed. "In-the-last-instance" means that the One effectuates a refusal to split objects (in the way philosophy does that, see below 4.B.1); that in trying to overcome philosophical dualisms (the result of its decisionism) it relates unilaterally to them.¹⁰⁵ "Being-foreclosed" means that the One is foreclosed to thought and is thus relationally unilateral to thought. The One in Laruelle is "a kind of 'spiritual element,' which he calls relative transcendence ... in addition to something that outstrips philosophy, that is foreclosed to philosophy: this is what he calls the One" (Smith 2012, 23). The One is also "one of the 'first names' of the real. As with the other 'first names,' the name of the One refers to an inalienable or immanent aspect of the real. It is not a transcendental interpretation of the real but an effect of its immanence" (Kolozova 2014, 155). In this sense the primacy of the One over the Real as a transcendental is impossible.

As I have already explained elsewhere, Laruelle also proposes the notion of the Vision-in-One, which is *to think from* the One rather than *thinking about* the One (see Panayotov 2018b, 71-2; the next two paragraphs, with citations, are reworked from this publication). This

¹⁰⁴ *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy* (2013) is written by a collective behind Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale.

¹⁰⁵ This is a very condensed and selective extraction from Smith's work on Laruelle and the concept in-the-last-instance (Smith 2013, 87-88, with the precise definition found on p. 89).

“thinking from” does not describe a full identity of the thinking subject with the One. One of the elements that differentiate non-philosophy (as a science of philosophy) from philosophy is its practice of the One as Vision-in-One (Brassier 2012, 117). The practice of the One is done by the human in flesh and blood, and this practice suspends the transcendental-empirical doublet of philosophy. The Vision-in-One is thinking from the One, not for the One (Smith 2013, 87), and therefore it is its practice, because in thinking from the One the collapse between thought and reality is superseded: a process dependent on the assumption that the rift between thinking and reality is overcome by accepting both terms are from-the-One. Smith explains that in proceeding from the Vision-in-One (Laruelle et al. 2013, 165-8), thought is “according to the Real,” and not *of* the Real, i.e., thought’s source is directly (from) the One, not from an irreducible rift between thinking and reality which is then mediated by the rift and is of the One. Vision-in-One thus describes a *non-decisional relation to the One and the Real*. As well as the subject, all things become equal before the Real (Smith 2011, 55). The ONPhI group states:

In any case, vision-in-One “gives” the One and it alone; it is “the” given entirely, the given as the identity (of the) given, as given-without-giveness, outside-the-fold or the doublet of the given and giveness. It is thus radical phenomenon without the phenomenological hinter-world in its broadest sense: without Being behind the phenomenon or connected with it, without giveness behind the given or connected with it. (Laruelle et al. 2013, 167)

Non-philosophy does not remain “blind” to its being reliant on the Real, and there is a certain dividing of the Real, but it does not take for granted the One as overarching the Real as a superstructure. It is not malleable to synthesis and is beyond its own description: a rupture between the Real and its intellection. The “thinking” of this rupture is exercised by the human-in-person who is practicing the Vision-in-One: a subject that thinks from the Real. To understand non-philosophy’s One is to understand formally the practice of non-philosophy in its Vision-in-One. Under the rubric “Vision-in-One (One, One-in-One, Real)” we find the following definitions:

Vision-in-One is radically immanent and uni-versal; this is why it gives-without-giveness the givenness of the world-thought. ... Non-philosophy formulates an open series of axioms on the One understood as vision-in-One and no longer as desired One:

- 1) The One is radical immanence, identity-without-transcendence, not associated with a transcendence or a division.
- 2) The One is in-One or vision-in-One and not in-Being or in-Difference.
- 3) The One is the Real insofar as it is foreclosed to all symbolization (thought, knowledge, etc.).
- 4) The One is given-without-giveness and separated without-separation - of givenness.
- 5) The One is that which determines or gives in-the-last-instance world-thought as given (object of a givenness). (ibid., 165-6)

Laruelle also defines the One as: “[a]n ancient transcendental utilized as a first name under the forms One-in-One, One-in-person, vision-in-One” (Laruelle 2010a, xxvii). The simplest way of summarizing Laruelle’s axioms is to reduce them to the claim that initially the One requires no mediation.

Now, let me clarify the connection between non-philosophy and Neoplatonism. There is an ongoing debate whether Laruelle is a contemporary Neoplatonist (Woodard 2009; Hickman 2012), and writers agree to some extent he is. Laruelle himself rarely provides references to any works in his mature writings, so the question remains speculative, yet on certain occasions (2012b) he signals that non-philosophy licenses non-religious gnosis, and in others he engages with *Parmenides* as among the key texts for Neoplatonism (2009). For example, he states that:

... we recover here a triad which corresponds to the One, to Being or the Intelligible, to the Soul of the Neoplatonists, with affective changes to the term “soul.” This neoplatonizing interpretation of non-philosophy goes against its sense as well as its modern, scientific and universal *aspects*. Only the “discovery” of the Real as immanent saves gnosis from Neoplatonism. (Laruelle 2012b, 249)

He further states that the committal to non-religious gnosis can only be a second stage of developing non-philosophy. In his own terms, for him to be read as a Neoplatonist is heretical.

According to Smith (2012, 21) it is clear that there is a relation between the two fields, but we have to figure out the nature of that relation. The general difference with the Neoplatonist One is that the non-philosophical One is immanent rather than transcendental. Laruelle states that the principled question of non-philosophy is the radicality of immanence

(Laruelle 2012b, 216), and the “non-” of non-philosophy is derived by both treating immanence in an immanent manner and by the “refusal of the Platonic *chorismos*, symbol of all abstraction, and thus all transcendental appearance” (ibid., 20). The position on the radicality of immanence differs from the Neoplatonist conception that the One is beyond Being, which makes of the One an absolutely transcendental entity. In Laruelle’s terms, the One is the effect of being, it is immanent to it. It is relatively transcendent only in the sense that it is an effect of being. Plotinus’ One is a good example of transcendentalizing the One and the ineffable rupture between the Real and its intellection which is defended as philosophically sufficient. Laruelle’s One is radical and not absolute; it is indifferent rather than transcendent to the world (Woodard 2009). Smith’s thesis is that in Laruelle the Neoplatonist One is *radicalized*¹⁰⁶ (in as much as demonstrated as immanent) since the One serve as a “means” to reveal that forms could be emplaced. Therefore, the notion of radicalization which Laruelle uses to any philosophical material is hellbent on his inversion and radicalization of the One. Forms are not hallucinations of the Real and “oases in the philosophical desert” (Smith 2012, 24), as the One of Plotinus would have us think - that it generates “an Oceanian zero as the repeatability of the intelligences” (Woodard 2009). Since one of non-philosophy’s axioms is the exclusion of any type of doctrinal positions, including Platonism, it “can make use of Platonism but as already reduced materials, not as a doctrinal position” (Laruelle 2012b, 216), thereby justifying the thesis that the One is radicalized (as One-in-One).

If non-philosophy can utilize Platonist materials and at the same time appropriate Neoplatonist terms, how does the status of Plotinus’ One change when opposed to Laruelle’s One? This problem is treated by Woodard (2009) and Armogida (2019). Woodard’s answer is that it has the nature of a specter of divinity, because Plotinus is the first one to have used the

¹⁰⁶ I follow his thesis by embracing the term radicalization. Note, again, that the One is not *absolutized*. The One is radically immanent as One-in-One (cf. Smith 2013, 255 n85).

predicate infinite to God (ibid.; Viglas 2005). According to Srnicek (2010, 1), Laruelle works deeper in the Neoplatonist tradition than we think, since his One is openly opposing hierarchical metaphysics typical for Neoplatonism (see more at Laruelle 2012b, 226ff.). For Neoplatonists the One is both simple and incapable of being the subject or predicate, and remains always the same: it neither acts nor is affected, for if it is the product of an act, it will be degraded to the world of matter and embodiment below the One and Intellect. Laruelle resolves the problem of “degradation” by showing that the unilaterality of the Real-One is already a relative-immanent immersion into the One: and embodiment is only a part of the lived experience on the unilateral side of the Real-One we can access with minimal mediation. Because some form of minimal mediation is necessary, the One is not absolutely immanent. Armogida offers a synoptic reading of Plotinus and Laruelle and does more than Woodard’s comparison by trying to subtly genealogize Laruelle’s One in Plotinus. The common point for Armogida is that “both for Laruelle and Plotinus, the duality is second as well as contingent and is founded in the One, which refers (to) self immediately, since it is completely ‘internal’ (to) self, without any relation to itself or any disjunction” (ibid., 2). The One does not manifest by way of duality with the Dyad, it is already manifest; the Dyad does not add, it impoverishes the One. For Armogida too, the One, even as embodying the radicality of immanence as relatively immanent, is a transcendental minimum, it is “ontologically indeterminable but already self-determined” (ibid.). He claims that as in Plotinus, the One is all possibles and none of them, so that it is not other. But whereas for Plotinus the fact that the One cannot be otherness (leading to the Dyad as responsible for separation), for Laruelle the One corresponds to “a multiplicity of Transcendences, Universals, Unities and Totalities” that are in the last instance equivalent to the One, and calls this “a multiplicity-without-scission” (ibid., 2-3). By offering this term, Armogida claims to explain a continuity between the two authors, without identifying their notions of the One.

The immanence of the Real/One does not lead to an absolute detachment from the subject.¹⁰⁷ Brassier (2007, 128-31) claims that Laruelle insists on identifying the unobjectifiable immanence of the Real with “man” or “the human,” because for him the essence of man resides in the One. This is why the pretension that we now have a perspective of thinking according to the Real seems anthropogenic, for the unobjectifiable immanence of Laruelle’s One is situated on the side of the subject rather than on the side of the object. There is nothing that constitutes the Real’s immanence: “the real is axiomatically defined ... as ‘already-constituted’” (ibid., 128), it is “given-*without-givenness*.” As an always-already given, the Real constitutes the transcendental material; without it the material cannot be even thought.¹⁰⁸

The Laruellian conception of the Real-as-One (Laruelle et al. 2013, 125-7) changes the way we can read the limit (*peras*) and the boundless (*apeiron*). The change is in effect a radicalization of boundlessness. Instead of the boundless being in the domain of the unthinkable, it is already in the domain of the Real. This involves treating the boundless not as transcendental and irreducible to the Real, but as immanent, on the side of the Real-as-One. Since *chōra* is what originally triggered the speculative organization of cosmic genesis in such a way as to keep the One intact from the mundane world of matter and becoming, Laruelle’s conception of the One, unlike that of Plotinus, does not involve degradation of the Real-One (and by extension *chōra*, in as much as it is responsible for the “production of offspring”), as it is treated as immanent. This is in effect an inversion of the Neoplatonist conception of the One since the radical immanence of the One is relatable to the Real as its unilateral aspect.

¹⁰⁷ Kolozova’s work (2006; 2014) is the manifestation of this: that the return to some form of realism does not mean the restoring of the metaphysics of presence, and that it does not mean the destruction of subjectivity either.

¹⁰⁸ This is the weak point of accusing Laruelle in Heideggerian residues and adherence to “finitude.” Later in his book Brassier deals with an alternative offered in Lyotard’s *The Inhuman*, which I discuss elsewhere (see Panayotov 2019a). Also, it is possible that at this juncture Brassier’s analysis unjustly bypasses Laruelle’s procedure of “cloning” (rather than reflecting) the Real.

Because the One is an effect of being and is not beyond being, the One cannot thus be a subject of degradation.

Through the notion of the Real-as-One, the status of the Real in non-philosophy changes also because the very question in non-philosophy about the One has changed. The question is not “What the One is?” but “What the One does?” Srnicek says that, unlike philosophy, non-philosophy abandons the idea that it should aim at knowledge of the One. Since “philosophy has always framed the Real in its own philosophically-saturated terms, rather than letting the Real itself act” (Srnicek 2010, 3), the Real is liberated by the epistemological program of philosophy’s and Neoplatonism’s One (see Panayotov 2018b, 73). If the changed question leads to a covert type of epistemology, it can be named a pragmatic epistemology channeled directly from the One. With the changed question Neoplatonism (more precisely its doublet One-Being) is reversed by non-philosophy, since the idea of knowing the One is questioned by the idea that the Real gives us access to knowledge: in Laruelle, the Real-One is radically unilateral and alien to thought. Non-philosophy as a science of philosophy opens the gate to speak from and according to the Real (and the One) instead of foreclosing them as unknowable philosophical decision. The One is immanent and in and *from* the world.¹⁰⁹ As such, it is also relatively embodied. Both philosophy and the One are instances of producing knowledge about reality, but they do so from different instances. Here the One is productive, unlike Plotinus’ One which is unmoving.

In conclusion, there are two positions regarding the non-philosophical theory of the One and the Real. On the one hand, Smith says that non-philosophy as a science does not remain blind to its being reliant on the Real. On the other hand, Brassier says that there is a Real which is not malleable to synthesis and is beyond its own description: a rupture between

¹⁰⁹ The transcendence/immanence relation is much more complex for Laruelle. He does not simply idealize radical immanence and expresses both via, respectively, the concepts non(-One) and (non-)One.

the Real and its intellection. Allegedly, the “thinking” of this rupture is exercised by the human-in-person through the practicing of the Vision-in-One: a subject that thinks from the Real. The One is what is already-given prior to any thought of it (ibid.). Srnicek calls the One “infinitely conceptualizable.” Because the One has always already determined in-the-last-instance everything in the world (since it is immanent to it), every object pertaining to reality is already a perspective on/from the One (see Panayotov 2018b, 75). If for Neoplatonism the One is infinitely ineffable, for non-philosophy it is infinitely inexhaustible and effably infinite. In Neoplatonism the One determines philosophy via the practice of emanationsim (and later Iamblichus’ theurgy¹¹⁰), and in non-philosophy the One determines it via “determination-in-the-last-instance.”¹¹¹ The Dyad is founded in the One but the Dyad does not determine the One. As Armogida states, the One’s essence remains undivided, but the Dyad is conditioned by the One. This irreversible order of causality explains its unilaterality and this order is called determination-in-the-last-instance (Armogida 2019, 3).

4.A.2. Non-Philosophical *Chōra*

After the exposition of Laruelle’s notion of the One, I will now present the non-philosophical understanding of *chōra*. As with Plato and Plotinus, Laruelle deals with both notions, and is interested in the topological aspect of *chōra* as a site/space of genesis. In short, while the non-philosophical interpretation of *chōra* is different, it does retain the assumed aspect of generation and becoming along with femininity.

¹¹⁰ I have dealt with a comparative analysis of Iamblichus and Laruelle elsewhere (see Panayotov 2018b).

¹¹¹ Determination-in-the-last-instance is defined as “the causality of philosophically unforeseeable (undefinable and indemonstrable) theoretical and pragmatic emergence” (Laruelle et al. 2013, 52). Srnicek explains the differences between the One and determination-in-the-last-instance: in Neoplatonism, the deductibility of forms from the One degrades them to the status of (noetic) materiality; in non-philosophy, what the determination-in-the-last-instance determines is never a degradation (Srnicek 2010, 4).

The ONPhI group calls *chōra* a “place” (*lieu*¹¹²). Through this “place” thought wants to be equal to the Real. Without claiming it is entirely knowable, they define the (non-philosophical) *chōra* as “a name for a particular mixture of the transcendental and the empirical, the... feminine” (Laruelle et al. 2013, 43). In this way ONPhI admits the existence of an outside not entirely accessible by way of perception. According to ONPhI’s definition of a “(non-philosophical) *chōra*,” [c]hōra is the place that philosophy has become (as identity) through unilateralization by claiming to be the Real (although not as transcendental unity). It is the phenomenon or given-without-giveness (of) this real hallucination” (ibid.). Philosophy has established a relation to the Real by generating a dialectic of the One and the Multiple (or the Dyad, hosting the world of becoming) developed from that of the One and Being (where according to Plotinus the One is beyond Being and unknowable and according to Plato the Good is beyond Being). In this way the One can be seen as acting (against Neoplatonism): it enacts *chōra* as a non-self-positional position (of) the World which defies dialectics. Laruelle even claims that *chōra* is the first determination of the world *par excellence*. Last, but not least, it is anti-correlationist: it does not establish correlation but unilation (see Laruelle 2012a, 129) to the Vision-in-One (Laruelle et al. 2013, 45). Just as the One is unilateral to us, so is *chōra* in unilation to the Vision-in-One.

Despite the refusal of all philosophically doctrinal positions, Laruelle does reveal continuity with respect to Plato’s analogy between *chōra* and the feminine. As a mixture between the transcendental and the empirical, *chōra* is partly empirical (even including prime matter). The qualification of *chōra* as partly empirical relates it to the generation of matter and

¹¹² The word only appears to bear Aristotelian connotations of substance metaphysics. The exact meaning of the terming is transcendental site/place, i.e., a non-place. Laruelle often plays with *lieu* as *mi-lieu* (Laruelle 2013c, 238; Laruelle et al. 2013, 84; Adkins and Smith translate it as “mid-place”). Consider this passage where it is further characterized: “*Chōra* will be called not this spontaneously self-knowing Place, which is philosophy in the totality of its claim, but what vision-in-One sees in this claim, including the reduced identity (of the) philosophical Place. Unlike that of the philosophical imagination, this *chōra* is not an emplacement of the spatial order” (Laruelle et al. 2013, 43).

the world of embodiment, and thus some form of subjective agency (“if the Real is nowhere, utopic, it ultimately gives a real Place (in-the-last-instance...) to philosophy,” *ibid.*, 44). This qualification then opens the gate to read *chōra* as agentic since it is crucified between the two worlds of the transcendental and the empirical. As partly a place of the empirical and the experiential, such non-philosophical notion of *chōra* accommodates a feminist understanding of *chōra* which both identifies it with embodiment and becoming and still disidentifies it with hylomorphism. The opportunity given is thus for a feminist-realist non-philosophical reading of *chōra*.

According to such reading, because *chōra* is such a mixture, there could be a gendered subjectivity (not alienated from the multiplicity of other subjectivities) apart from empirical and transcendental philosophical determination (Norris 2013, 24). For Kolozova “the *chōra* is the ‘place’ where the transcendental ‘lives’” (Kolozova 2006, 75), but we can unilate to it through a minimal mediation by the immanent Real. Since *chōra* provides the “transcendental material” for the lived reality, and it would always be minimally mediated (the production of a “real Place”), we cannot avoid mediation, but we can try to reduce it by thinking from the Real. The procedure is not to de-realize, but to confront the One with a minimal procedure of mediation. Mediation cannot be entirely overridden because the Real is unilateral and we have unilateral relation (unilation) to it.

Such description of *chōra* deviates from the both the Platonist notion of *chōra* identified with matter and embodiment and the Neoplatonist One as a disembodied ascension, with the proviso of anti-correlationsim that I explain below (Smith 2012, 21-4). As a mixture, here *chōra* is not judged as good/bad; it involves a discourse of minimal mediation. Under this reading of *chōra*-as-mixture, the One by extension cannot be beyond being, because it is seen

as immanent.¹¹³ It is thus possible to think from the perspective of the object (of investigation and generation) because it is a discourse on reality which does not begin with the doctrinal material of philosophy, but from the *subject* of philosophical thought hosted by *chōra*. This mode of thinking itself is dictated by the object of investigation and the Real and is channeled by the subject conducting the investigation (Kolozova 2006, 74).

The cosmological place of *chōra* as feminine is thus one with a certain agency. This is why Laruelle is at the center of inspiring a new realist reading of *chōra* which revolves around the category of the One and identity rather than a poststructuralist anti-realist emphasis on difference (see 4.B.4; Laruelle seems to claim that the One already contains all differences, see 2012a). This does not require a full-scale repudiation of theories of subjectivity constitution developed by continental philosophy and (feminist) poststructuralism.

4.B. A Synoptic Presentation of Non-Philosophy and New Realism

Having presented both Laruelle's One and *chōra*, in this section I turn to present together non-philosophy and new realism as continental realist tendencies within continental philosophy. By following Laruelle's inversion of the One, I synthesize these fields together to reconsider the relation to the category of embodiment so that I can arrive at a continental feminist understanding of disembodiment later in Chapter 5.

4.B.1. Decisionism According to Non-Philosophy

Laruelle is one of the figures who inspired new realism. One reason is that he salvages the ancient notion of the One from the philosophically sufficient (Laruelle et al. 2013, 119;

¹¹³ Srnicek claims that for non-philosophy Being is beyond the One, but this is an ongoing debate. There seems to be some consensus it is partly beyond the One.

Kolozova 2010, 158) domain of Neoplatonism in order to develop a non-dualist and intellectable notion of the Real. In non-philosophy the concepts One and Real are identical. I retain the use of both as the One is more closely tied to Neoplatonism and the Real/reality are associated with new realism. To present together both non-philosophy and new realism, I accept that the former should be treated as the background framework for the latter. I follow Galloway's thesis that Laruelle should be read as a pre-speculative realist figure, both because the gist of his project is to withdraw from correlationism and because he finalized the details of such a maneuver ten to twenty years prior to Meillassoux's argument (Galloway 2015).

Laruelle's theories of the One and Real can serve to explain how to approach disembodiment from a continental realist and feminist perspective because he does not go on to identify his One as a form of transcendence actualized in the flesh. In turn, these perspectives can be updated through non-philosophy in order to critique some disembodiment tendencies within new realism (see examples from new realism in Panayotov 2019a). I use non-philosophy to claim that concerns over the focus of embodiment in continental feminism can be countered from a feminist realist position that does not have to require the expulsion of all disembodiment tendencies to the domain of malestream philosophy in order to be apologetical to embodiment. I maintain this is possible because non-philosophy offers a way to counter both *philosophical* engagement with disembodiment and apologetics of embodiment.

This and the next two paragraphs are revised from Panayotov (2016b). Non-philosophy and new realism pretend that they could now think about both philosophy and the Real from the One-Real itself. The new question about the One (What it does?) restores a forlorn primacy to reality long rejected in continental philosophy and feminism. Consequently, all philosophical projects are treated as objects, deprived of their decisional character. As I, following the work of respected Laruelle commentators such as Kolozova and Smith, have discussed this, Laruelle achieves this through the procedure of "unilateralization," which turns philosophy's dualisms

into “materials” (Smith 2013, 88); “unilateralization manifests that philosophy is an object determined by the One” (Panayotov 2018b, 73). Thus, the program of non-philosophy and new realism is to have philosophy determined by reality. In this way new realism is of non-philosophy’s scientific order of practicing the Real-One and cloning the Real into concepts minimally depredating objects.

Laruelle opposes philosophy to non-philosophy. He calls non-philosophy a science of philosophy. By science Laruelle means that it is synonymous with non-philosophy, and in *Principles of Non-Philosophy* (Laruelle 2013c) this is also called “unified theory” (of science and philosophy, see below). Science is “primary” vis-a-vis science and philosophy (Galloway 2012, 195). What is the aim of non-philosophy? While the question of non-philosophy is the radicality of immanence, Smith says that “[t]he general aim of non-philosophy is to think a transcendental realism that fosters a certain equality among objects and discursive materials” (Smith 2012, 28). In *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, Laruelle lays out some of the most important rules for practicing non-philosophy in the aftermath of “philosophies of difference.” By this term Laruelle investigates Hegel, Nietzsche, Deleuze, Heidegger and Derrida (Laruelle 2010b), to explain that philosophy itself has gained its identity through the notion of difference which is qualified as a self-positing decision. By developing a theory of philosophical decision (ibid., 196ff.), which is the most central feature of his project in its iconoclastic phase (Philosophy II and III), based on the self-positing of philosophy, Laruelle’s non-philosophy can be enacted only through a “cloning” of phenomena, which means acting according to the Real. The Real cannot be reflected, it can only be cloned (see Laruelle et al. 2013b, 52), i.e., it has a stand-alone autonomy. According to Laruelle, concepts can be “cloned” *from* the Real (Kolozova 2010, 18-19, 40). This leads Laruelle to define “unilateral duality” (of the Real), an understanding that posits a singular and non-communicable relation to the solitary Real. There

is thus no “sublation” of the Real, as it is unilaterally foreclosed to us, and acts only through its “unilateral duality.”

The pretension of non-philosophy is to be able to demarcate and operate with the “pre-speculative” state of the world (Laruelle 2013c, 231-302). The task for Laruelle is to invent a thought that outstrips philosophy but is not a “meta-philosophy” (ibid., 9). Historically, philosophy has made itself equal or superior to science in order to redeem itself from the problem of grounding, thereby producing itself as an epistemological “blind-spot.” Philosophy is based on a “decision” to split the world into two - the noumenon and the faculty of understanding. In order to avoid epistemic regress, philosophy needs to remain blind to its decisional nature. Within the confines of Laruelle’s attack on philosophical sufficiency and decisionism, “[s]ince a decision is external, any particular philosophy is incapable of thinking its own decision; rather the decision is its blind-spot” (Srnicek 2010, 5). To the extent to which non-philosophy does not generate the blind-spot of decision, it is a “science of philosophy.” This science is not productive of meta-philosophical positions, because it remains uninterpretable (Brassier 2003) and is not part of philosophy itself.¹¹⁴ Since non-philosophy is not a meta-philosophical thought, it responds to the simple desire to know the object. It is thus not an absolutely isolated anti-philosophical enterprise, as it needs some interface *to work with the materials* of philosophy. Such materials are the One and the Real.

Despite the use of philosophical materials, non-philosophy willingly avoids the use of examples from the world (see Panayotov 2016a; Konior and Granata 2018; Laruelle and Schmid [2003] 2014 for a more specific example on how a “feminism without example” works). But how then to relate non-philosophy to the human and/or the problem of embodiment? After all, the unilateral duality serves the human-in-person to relate to the Real-

¹¹⁴ This thesis is best expressed in Laruelle’s dialogue with Derrida (2012), who aimlessly demands philosophical legibility and understanding within the limitations of meta-philosophy in order to account for that decision.

One.¹¹⁵ Laruelle’s answer comes in the form of a division between philosophy and science, explaining systematically how these are distributed in philosophical groupings according to Identity and Difference. Laruelle offers a “third way” entitled “unified theory” (of philosophy and science). Given that the task of non-philosophy is to submit philosophy to “regional knowledges,” Laruelle’s solution is not simply a “science of philosophy,” but a “unified theory of science and philosophy” (Laruelle 2013c, 69-78; Laruelle et al. 2013b, 43-8, 69-79), which allegedly outstrips philosophy. Now, what is unified theory? By this, Laruelle describes an overcoming of the convertibility of both fields as they constitute an “epistemological difference” by excluding reciprocity. The relations of reciprocity form a “reversible antidemocracy” (Laruelle 2013c, 69). In contrast to antidemocracy, only the force-(of)-thought could establish a democratic order of thought outside the realm of reification (ibid., 213). This third option is not dependent upon its relation to Being or Difference; a relation is kept, but it is not a “blending with”. The solution of unified theory brings about not a theoretical democracy but a theory of democracy that is directly enactable without example.

4.B.2. Anti-Correlationsim According to New Realism¹¹⁶

Now I will summarize the project of new realism in order to explain how it problematizes the agential, anti-realist pessimism of continental philosophy and feminism, and

¹¹⁵ When Laruelle speaks about the human in general, his concern is to produce axioms that are directly relatable to intellection. He follows the precepts that just like axioms are made for man, and not vice versa (Laruelle 2009), so “philosophy is made for man, not man for philosophy” (Laruelle 2010a, xvii, a periphrasis of Mark 2:27).

¹¹⁶ Along with its birth, the field of speculative realism was actively questioned by some of its creators. Almost every founding member has been critical of the term itself, rather than the overall orientation of the field (thinking from the perspective of the real or the object). The problem with labeling the field is related with the anticipation that it might become a stable theoretical short-cut to a research paradigm whose premises have not been set yet (e.g., the anti-correlationsim), as well as its connectedness to other fields (e.g., neuroscience). As Kolozova claims, “the notion of ‘speculative realism’ has taken a life of its own” (Kolozova 2013) even though the prominent representatives often reject the label (except for object-oriented ontology scholars such as Harman and to some extent Bryant). Brassier goes as far as rejecting the term as a concoction of social factors rather than a veritable dialogue between scholars (Rychter 2011). Even though the term is often rejected, it is still being used to describe various forms of allegiance to the philosophical projects undertaken by names such as Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, and François Laruelle. At any rate, “new realism” still describes a speculative kind of philosophy. With that proviso in mind, there are two common objectives for this field: “refuting the postmodern and poststructuralist

how new realism is reliant on the Laruellian non-philosophy and the One. The non-decisional relation to the One and the Real is assimilated and translated in so-called new realism and its anti-correlationism. I present the so-called program of anti-correlationism and the correlationist circle (Meillassoux 2008), also called philosophy of access (Harman 2009, 122). By these two terms new realists problematize the correlation between being and thought.

New realism is “the umbrella term for a variety of research programs committed to upholding the *autonomy* of reality... against the depredations of anthropocentrism” (Mackay 2007, 303 [my emphasis - S. P.]). To do that, one has to start from either the Real or the object; the minimal condition would be to treat the human as an object among others.¹¹⁷ The ontological region which this philosophy wants to communicate rather than mediate is the “autonomy of reality.” New (speculative)¹¹⁸ realism is a form of critical thinking and theory which does not deny objects their autonomy (Harman 2011b, 7). For such a project to develop, two terms were introduced: correlationism and philosophy of access.

Correlationism was defined by Quentin Meillassoux (in Mackay 2007, 408, 409; Meillassoux 2008, 13ff.). It “underpins the Kantian-Hegelian account of the relationship between reason and nature” (Brassier 2007, xii). The term represents the inseparability of thinking and content: “All we ever engage with is what is given-to-thought, never an entity subsisting by itself” (Meillassoux 2008, 62). Correlationism splits reality according to the way philosophy does that, through the division between empiricism and transcendentalism. For correlationism, there should always be a “transcendental operator” mediating reality (or the

claims (a) that the real is unthinkable and (b) that thought is closed off within itself without the possibility of accessing ‘immanence’ or explaining external reality” (Kolozova 2014, 157 n1). In this dissertation I have avoided the use of “speculative realism” and use “new realism” as the shorthand for what was until recently seen as a conglomerate of closely related projects in contemporary speculative philosophy. I avoid the use of plural (realisms) in order to leave space for connections between concurrent types of realism that might run against each other.

¹¹⁷ This raises the question of treating women as objects on the ontological level, or their re-objectification. I address this question in Chapter 5, following Morton (2013) and Behar (2016), who have already dealt with this problem.

¹¹⁸ “‘Speculation’ is nothing but the Hegelian overlapping of being and thought. What the use of this term disputes since the anti-correlationist thesis was launched is the status of contingency.” (Panayotov 2019b)

empirical). Transcendental operators fill in the gap between being (phenomena) and thought (the Kantian noumenon), and they found the indivisibility between the two.¹¹⁹ Consequently, this provides anthropic thought with privileged access to the correlation between being and thought; in this sense correlationism is anthropocentric; the aim for many (not all) new realists is to move on to an a-subjective description of reality with the help of science.¹²⁰ New realism describes any philosophy which privileges the human over other entities as “philosophy of access”: “the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other” (Meillassoux 2008, 13). This is a consequence of Kant’s transcendental idealism, who sought for “a conversion of the metaphysical questions about the things-in-themselves into the transcendental questions about our access to things” (Damle 2014, 2). Philosophy of access thus posits that we never know reality directly, so the access to its “autonomy” is impossible.¹²¹

A joint target of both fields are so-called philosophies of access (Harman 2009, 122; Wolfendale and Mackay 2014, 1-2), In such philosophies, the “real” and the “One” are separated in order to form the access privilege, which is a continuation of Plato’s oligarchic epistemology of the select philosophers. In non-philosophy the Real and the One form an inseparability, and the notion “Real” is used in this sense, such that there is a (unilateral) reality which is independent of thought. When Laruelle uses the Real(-One), what he means in those instances is the following: Because the Real-One is closed in itself, because of its indifference,

¹¹⁹ New realist representatives follow Laruelle’s procedure of “transcendental impoverishment” of philosophical concepts to do precisely this. In that, new realism is always already a variant of the non-philosophical procedure of “radicalization” of concepts. Only transcendently and philosophically impoverished concepts are non-philosophical concepts. They undergo the procedure in order to allow non-philosophy a positively relational attitude to philosophically impoverished thought. The procedure aims at objectifying and radicalizing concepts. The call for “transcendental impoverishment” of philosophical concepts denies the sublation of ideas; ideas descend to Man in the name of Man. See Laruelle et al. (2013, 143); Kolozova (2014, 63); Panayotov (2016b).

¹²⁰ This a-subjectivism has been promoted as “transcendental naturalism” by Brassier (see Ieven 2009).

¹²¹ According to Bryant’s Ontic Principle, “*prior* to any claims about the nature of reality, *prior* to any speculation about objects or being, we must first secure a foundation for knowledge and our *access* to beings” (Bryant 2011c, 262-3). Bryant only articulates rather than endorses the principle. This is his own strategy of answering the question he himself poses: “What is the most fundamental and general claim we can make about the nature of *beings*?” (ibid., 262).

it cannot be approached by philosophy. If philosophy assumes that the Real-One relies on it in order to be manifested, in reality the Real-One expects nothing from philosophy and thought as such. In its indifference, the Real-One cannot be reflected, it can only be “cloned.” This is why it has autonomy. Explaining the merging of the Real-One, Brassier says it is not bound to abstraction: at best it is abstraction-without-abstraction. What blocks the abstraction (as philosophical thought) is the identification of the Real-One with the “human in flesh and blood”: every-one is the One-in-person. As defined by Armogida, “[t]his is a ‘realism’ of-the-last-instance, or rather a real-without-realism, not an absolute idealism: in the One we do not see a simple ‘image’ of the object, furthermore supposed ‘in itself,’ because the One is not a surface or a screen redoubling the object, but the object’s ‘in-itself’ itself, the reality or the thing itself” (Armogida 2019, 5). The Real-One is not split by philosophy, but it also does not split objects.

4.B.3. Relating Non-Philosophy and New Realism to Neoplatonism

I have so far clarified Laruelle’s theories of Real and One and his notion of *chōra* and made a synoptic presentation of his non-philosophy with new realism, with a focus on their realist orientation and the shared anti-correlationism. Now I will explain the connection between the orientation towards the autonomy of reality from the anti-correlationist perspective and the critique of the disembodied Neoplatonist One.

New realism offers a contestation of philosophies of access through the articulation of the “correlationist circle.” According to the circle’s conditions, since we are thinking of a mind-independent reality it cannot be mind-independent at all, because our mind does the thinking. The attempted break with this circle aims to reclaim the autonomy of reality on account of the passivization of the Real and the “object” (Bryant 2011b, 39-40) as inert containers of matter

devoid of agency. As I have discussed, in the implicit philosophy of disembodiment of Plato and in Plotinus, matter and embodiment are rendered such a container.

How can this agency be contained rather than negated in the process of knowing what is outside the epistemological limits of embodiment? So long as matter and nature are associated with metaphysical boundlessness, they are tied to both femininity and hierarchical metaphysics, and the correlate between matter and femininity limits participation in and knowing the Real. In the correlationist circle, such knowledge is possible only via a subjectivist lived experience of the Real's noumenal limitations. If matter is not an agentless container, the body is not a limitless container of arbitrariness.

For Neoplatonism, non-philosophy, and new realism, ontology is privileged over epistemology. This is where the fields meet. But Neoplatonism is a correlationist philosophy of access. In comparative perspective, Neoplatonism's anthropocentrism and correlationism and its implied somatophobia is a problem because anti-correlationism's program entails the autonomy of reality and materiality without lending primacy to epistemology (Bryant 2011b, 35). Primacy is given to ontology where a region of being is not reducible to the human (Bryant 2011b; 2011c, 22). In this sense Neoplatonism victimizes reality through the disembodied One, and Neoplatonism functions as decisionism and philosophy of access. The problem is not that Neoplatonism as a philosophy of access and a form of decisionism mediates the One, but that there is a selective mediation: it provides a privileged access to the real via the One *for* the human. This human and her world is divided via male and female principles in hierarchical relations.

The Real and the One are separated, and the very separation forms access as epistemological privilege. The form of access to the noumenon is similar to the one of noesis and the unknowability and indivisibility of the One. Just as according to correlationism we cannot know reality's autonomous region, so according to Neoplatonism we cannot speak of

the One. In either case epistemological limitations are bound to irreducible ineffability. Platonist philosophical agendas rely on “transcendental operators.” If for Neoplatonism few have privileged cosmological access to the Real via the One, for modern philosophies of access transcendental operators provide a partial access to the Real via the noumenon. Either way, we are never in contact with the Real, and those that get close to it via an ineffably mystical communion are the select few.

New realism does not set out to destroy access as such: it aims at introducing an egalitarian minimalism of understanding the reality of matter and the world of becoming, or *chōra* (see Kolozova 2011). Kolozova claims we are still living “in some Platonism - the Real as the superstructure of the One” (2006, 76). Neoplatonism is a philosophy of access because it aims at reducing reality to the One as a singular disembodied unity. It is the One, not the Real that is the telos of Neoplatonist concern with the body. In Neoplatonism the body is a stipulation on the side of the Real for the disembodied access to the One. In new realism the body is a problem and obstacle only in as much as it abets the access to the Real as arbitrariness: disembodiment from new realist perspective is also an epistemological vehicle to knowing the Real, but the category of the One does not negate the body.

4.B.4. Relating Non-Philosophy and New Realism to Continental Feminist Philosophy

I have so far claimed that non-philosophy’s theories of One and Real have been assimilated in new realism and its anti-correlationist program and embraced Galloway’s claim that practitioners of both non-philosophy and new realism are united by those theories of Laruelle. I will now turn to relating these two fields to continental feminist philosophy, for two reasons: one, it deals with the problem of *chōra* in great detail from a largely anti-realist perspective; two, there are instances (Kolozova, 2006; 2014; Norris 2013) of realist treatments

of *chōra* and gender in continental feminist philosophy which showcase the relevance of anti-correlationism from feminist perspective.

As with the majority of contemporary continental philosophy, from a non-philosophical point of view feminist philosophy can also be qualified as a philosophy of access. Philosophy of access is a particular feminist concern because from a non-correlationist perspective knowing reality is a political premise for agential liberty of the subject, but without the condition that epistemology is unconditionally defined by the limitations of embodiment. Submitting oneself to the access privilege in the correlationist sense perpetuates the idea of subjectivity's arbitrariness (and thus disjunction with the Real), itself contained within embodiment, which then results in political depotentialization exactly of agency and its reality. Countering philosophy of access from a feminist epistemological standpoint accommodates a realist politics of being.

Thinkers associated with non-philosophy and new realism engage with ontological, not phenomenological projects. This is often read (see 5.A.3) as a regressive return to "master narratives," because ontological projects have historically contrived the Western metaphysical canon as male-made and have privileged epistemological (male-gendered) arguments from disembodiment. The way these two fields can question the largely anti-realist and phenomenological continental tradition, which has long integrated Kant's noumenalism (Braver 2012, 262-3), is through a problematization of the notion of ineffability (which is also applied to the Plotinian One). "Ineffability has historically served to retard the analysis of the reality of any object under the scrutiny of speculation and/or scientific rigor" (Panayotov 2019b). It makes impossible any knowledge of the One and/or the Real. As a result, if those categories are ineffable, and if our knowledge of them is reduced to their unknowability, they cannot be situated in any type of realism. The ineffability of the One or God (Plotinus called the God One) can only be substituted by a scientific realism which is anti-correlationist. Non-

philosophy and new realism as anti-correlationist projects reject ineffability as subjectivist and phenomenological pessimism.¹²² Since ineffability-as-unknowability is rejected, the anti-correlationist position can appear as idealizing an unreconstructed disembodied knowing subject against the conditioning limitations of phenomenal embodiment. The synthesis of non-philosophy's Real-One and new realism's anti-correlationism leads to a position which can combine both realism and feminism if ineffability is rejected.

4.C. *Chōra* in Continental Feminist Philosophy

Before I discuss how non-philosophy and new realism affect continental feminist philosophy and the problem of disembodiment through a merging of realism and feminism, in this section I present what can be termed the feminist poststructuralist engagements with the Platonic *chōra*.¹²³ I need to review these engagements in order to explain the problem with feminist and continental anti-realism (see 5.A), as well as explain why anti-realism is problematic from non-philosophical/new realist perspectives, especially with regards to the body and embodiment. This account will help me to transition to the non-philosophical critique of the subject and of feminist poststructuralism offered by Kolozova (2013; 2014). Below I review the work of Irigaray, Butler and Grosz on the Platonic *chōra*.

4.C.1 Butler's and Grosz' Readings of Irigaray

In Chapter 3 I already discussed and critiqued Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985) and her reading of Plotinus and *chōra* and here I discuss the key commentaries on Irigaray. Butler claims that Irigaray's strategic re-reading via miming the canon cannot change

¹²² The most salient formulation of this position can be found in Grelet (2016).

¹²³ It is noteworthy that there is no specific literature in this field on the notion of the One with the significant exception of Irigaray as discussed in Chapter 3.

the fact that *chōra* is deprived of properties. Plato's "phantasmatic economy" has already occasioned the feminine to be without a form (*morphe*). So, if we try to look for embodiment in the "earth" and the humans we will see that Plato's passage on *chōra* does not permit the notion of the female body as a human form (Butler 1993, 53). The mother must be either *amorphon* or *eidos*. For Plato to have *eidos* is to have a corresponding form in the embodied world, and the *eidos* is always more supreme than its realization. Since the mother does not govern forms, but reproduces and bears in herself, she is then closer to *amorphon*. In Irigaray there are two kinds of feminine: specular and excessive (the *other* feminine). It is this second feminine and her location - the "elsewhere" - which is central to Irigaray. For Butler, Irigaray's terms "tend to mime the grandiosity of the philosophical errors that she underscores" (ibid., 36). She isolates the feminine as constitutive exclusion in the area of properties (ibid., 38). The political significance attached to the excluded feminine that Irigaray propagates does not secure the right to property and a space of her own. *Chōra* has no attributes and property "just as the guardians of the city are to own no property" (Alfonso 2002, 147). As Butler reads Irigaray, *chōra* has "unthematizable materiality" and thus *becomes* the very site/receptacle of inscription. Because *chōra* is unthematizable and bears all offspring, she lacks articulation and discursivity, and as a result *chōra* as "place" is not approachable.¹²⁴ The receptacle is identifiable with the feminine *within* a phallogocentric (Plato's) economy. For Butler this outside does not have autonomy. The coherence-producing "outside/elsewhere" (Irigaray) of the system is based on a "set of exclusions" *internal* to that system. In as much as the internal "set of exclusions" is *necessary* to the system, this set should bring anti-systemic effect in order to testify its *separation* from that system. The most Irigaray achieves is that "the feminine survives as the *inscriptional space* of that phallogocentrism" (Butler 1993, 39) inherent in

¹²⁴ This is the one place that could connect non-philosophical and poststructuralist interpretations of *chōra*: that it is a transcendental place. However, only the first offers a theory of this unthematizability (via unilaterality).

Plato's cosmology. *Chōra* and the reproductive function of femininity are "transferred" to the masculine function of productivity, creating self-sameness. Butler calls the vicissitudes of the feminine in Plato's cosmology "the topographical suppression of *physis*, the dissimulation of *physis* as *chōra*, as place" (ibid., 41). Her questioning of Irigaray's "elsewhere" reveals a heterocentric exclusion which lies at the heart of Irigaray's miming and reading of Plato.

Grosz (1995) tries to "develop an embodied and gendered conception of dwelling" (Alfonso 2002, 211). She wants to emancipate the term "dwelling" as a way towards women's political potentiality. For her, *chōra* as dwelling contains an irreducible connection with femininity (Grosz 1995, 112). She differs by other readers of *chōra* in emphasizing the word "dwelling" to connote the following: if *chōra* is deprived of properties and if then metaphysically women are disenfranchised from properties, they become the property of men; if politically women have no place to dwell in except the home and this makes them exterior to the life of the city, then a feminist politics is impossible. As the politicalness of *chōra* is metaphysically concealed, we have to raise the question of woman's place in the city and her social life outside the home, as a form of public participation of/dwelling in space.¹²⁵ If men are the best guardians of the polis, then women are best in being the guardians of their own inferiority (their bodies). As a result, the reduction of women to private dwelling is a "homelessness within the very home itself" (ibid., 122). Neither rejecting male productivity, nor denouncing female reproductivity, the point is not to de-spatialize the sensible world, but to spatialize forms to the extent to which they relate to the excluded subject of femininity (ibid., 116).

I returned to these readings of *chōra* because they are representative as feminist poststructuralist readings of the canon: they either remain outside it or try to subvert it from

¹²⁵ This is what the feminist scholarship on Plato tries to do, and more precisely the inculpatory tendency as discussed in Chapter 2.

within for political ends. Despite their differences, these writers tend to agree that there is an alterity to be salvaged from the depredations of the Platonist legacy on women as it is tied to the notion of *chōra* and women's political depotentialization, and that there is no ontological and realist approach to salvaging *chōra* from the Platonic hierarchical metaphysics. As I showed in Chapter 3, the notion of *chōra* gradually transformed into the original Plotinian notion of the One via the Dyad, which then in turn moved to a rather pessimistic anthropological theory of disembodiment. What is important here is that these readings of *chōra*-as-matter and *chōra*-as-femininity also present arguments in favor of femininity as a subject excluded from participation in forms (an argument critiqued in Chapter 3) and by extension from the disembodied world of ideas/ideal forms. They represent the privileging of a subjectivist recovery of femininity as embodied and enmattered, and do not pursue an agenda to include - or simply see - metaphysical femininity and boundlessness within the disembodied realm. As such, those readings accept both the hylomorphic reading of *chōra* and the conditions of femininity's exclusion whose identity is then defended as embodied and primal.

4.C.2. Kolozova's Critique of the Postmodern Subject

In order to approach the disembodied One and the problem of disembodiment from a continental feminist-realist philosophy perspective, three steps are needed: (1) to align continental feminist philosophy with the realist program of non-philosophy and new realism; (2) to sidestep from continental feminism's anti-realism; (3) to explain what does the retrieval of the disembodied One mean from a feminist-realist perspective. To address these points, let me consider what the emphasis on difference and embodiment in continental feminist thought entails for the problematic of disembodiment. To this end I will use the work of Kolozova (2014; see Panayotov 2017a), and I use her research because she is the example *par excellence* unifying new realist and non-philosophical thought via continental feminist philosophy. She

builds on these fields to offer an escape route from what she sees to be feminist poststructuralism's subjectivist pessimism and to offer a critique.

Since non-philosophy comes from the One, that is, the Real itself, it has inspired a return in new realism and a small region of feminist poststructuralism to categories foreclosed by postmodernism.¹²⁶ The poststructuralist emphasis on difference has produced a plethora of postmodern¹²⁷ analyses of the *constructedness* of humanity and the gendered embodied subject. For example, when it comes to Plato and gender, we can note that the continentalist emphasis on the *chōra* passage in the *Timaeus* is a particular manifestation of an urge to prove the discursive constructedness of alterity and embodied female subjectivity. However, this is done without offering an alternative that describe subjectivity from within the domain of the Real. If there is a necessity to produce the analysis from an alleged (source of the) Real, it comes from the anti-correlationist rejection of the unbridgeability between thought and being. By and large, contemporary continental and feminist philosophy goes under the banner of “philosophy of difference.” As a result, it has created a unified authorized way of approaching difference that is formally prohibitive of metaphysics and metaphysical notions such as the One.

Kolozova offers a critique (2013) of postmodernism in general and feminist poststructuralism in particular through a paradox she identifies: a paradox constitutive of all pessimistic theories of the ineffable and inaccessible Real in continental anti-realism. The paradox is that the moment postmodernism embraces the “limitlessness” and boundlessness of thought and the subject's arbitrariness, limitations on thought itself generally and on the thought on the outside particularly are being introduced. The defense of arbitrariness transforms into a dogma that precludes the transformative (and thus political) use of any former

¹²⁶ The problem this approach poses is that the return to oneness risks compromising theories of subjectivity and agency that are politically important for feminism. Laruelle's project provides grounds for theories of subjectivity.

¹²⁷ I do not conflate postmodernism and poststructuralism through and through; I read the latter as a symptom and manifestation of the former.

doctrinal material from, e.g., the history of metaphysics that has been deconstructed. Against the position that the Real is unknowable, Kolozova claims that the posited limits of the subject's constructedness and its epistemic capabilities thereof make manifest an "outside" of that subject, but for postmodernists the outside belongs to the domain of "nonsense" - it deserves no theoretical consideration because it has the status of an "unthinkable real." This is an idea that is shared with non-philosophy, because the phenomenological post-Kantian retention of reality is rejected as philosophical quietism, a position according to which we need to accept the limitations of what we can know (as if those limitations are never changing). Thus, for Kolozova the unthinkable status of the Real in postmodernism is founded on the same "decisional character" as that of (phallogocentric) philosophy, thus qualifying as Laruelle philosophies of difference, including feminist poststructuralism, as decisional.

The most salient demonstration of how this paradox has evolved particularly in continental feminism is the disengagement with (or unawareness of) either the category of the One or a theory of (rather than a theory against) the Real. To the extent to which the thinking of a category such as the Outside or the One becomes occluded, the investigation of "reality" in turn remains in very strict, dogmatic, poststructuralist conditions of being studied. The limitations posed by a limitless play of differences (Kolozova 2014, 80) is *the* dogma.¹²⁸ The assumption that "reality" belongs to the domain of non-sense cannot be questioned if this dogmatism is not addressed in the first place. Kolozova's paradox explains it, but teleologically so: the no-Outside assumption forecloses any theory of unitary subjectivity; without such a project, there is no reason to study social reality. But a unifying tendency in new realism is precisely to unearth a post-poststructuralist way of such subjectivity and a recovery of scientific truth that is both realist and feminist. If we accept Kolozova's diagnostic paradox, we can move

¹²⁸ Neither Kolozova's, nor my position are anti-dogmatic; rather, these are revisionist positions and claims of what the dogma should include or exclude.

on to say that due to the charge in decisionism pitted against feminist poststructuralism, there are theoretical reasons to pursue a feminist and politicized version of disembodiment based on realism and interest in foreclosed categories such as the One. This tendency cannot be founded on a similar notion of the subject's limitlessness even while the subject of limitlessness/boundlessness can be investigated as distinctly female. Disembodiment will then remain a limit to agency, but it will no longer be a pessimistic boundary for the political freedom of a (gendered) subjectivity.

It is for these reasons that very diverging thinkers (including Irigaray, Butler, Grosz, Braidotti) can be included under the portmanteau term decisionism and can be seen as continuing philosophy's production of transcendence of the One: even as they explicitly politicize immanence. The paradox reveals that feminist poststructuralism does away with the Real at the expense of subjectivity's arbitrariness. However, the non-philosophical notions of One and *chōra* which I presented in 4.A accommodate an engagement with the One which does not degenerate embodiment, whilst being able to theorize disembodiment from a realist, anti-correlationist stance. The paradox just discussed is constitutive for a new realist critique of subject construction and the lived experience of the Real. The limit which the limitlessness finds is indirectly related to the feminist interest in elementality, boundlessness and femininity so often interpreted via *chōra* in continental feminism. In continental feminism and anti-realism, the "lost ambivalence" of female boundlessness discussed earlier becomes a political vehicle for voluntarist rejections of a realist politicization of the world itself. The end result is an anti-realist apologetics of embodiment that is reliant on this limitlessness and constitutes, as Kolozova argues (*ibid.*, 9), an illegalization of the search of universal political subject which cannot be reliant on that prohibition. The outlawing of the limit is a technical condition for an absolute (not radical) political somatophilia. The erstwhile Neoplatonist hierarchy between limit and limitless, soul and body, is the paradigmatic condition for selective

political somatophobia. If embodiment lacks universality, if “indeed what woman’s liberation ultimately means is liberation from our bodies,” as Spelman (1982, 124) has suggested, then the question would be: Can a universal gendered subject be reliant on the limit without erasing the politico-theoretical successes of feminist poststructuralism? Can a feminist, disembodied, knowing subject be positively directed towards the invisible and eternal reality, as Plato would have this, but without rendering the disembodied as ineffable? For feminist anti-realism, work on metaphysical categories relapses into accounts of a-subjectivism, conflated with the erstwhile Plotinian disembodiment and One.

4.C.3. A Non-Philosophical Continental Feminist Reading of *Chōra*

In the work of Kolozova non-philosophy and new realism offer a way to engage with poststructuralist legacies of alterity by thinking from the perspective of either the object rather than the subject or from that of the so-called “unthinkable real” rather than the non-sensical constructedness of the subject. To return to *chōra* as the limitless receptivity of matter as Kolozova does and which I will show in this subsection would require to establish a critical relation to the limitlessness and the boundless as used by postmodernism:¹²⁹ in other others, the boundless needs to be radicalized again, to bear a double legacy of radicalization, but this time from an anti-correlationist and non-philosophical stance. This requires to both accept Kolozova’s critique of the poststructuralist subject and the Laruellian conception of the One. A critique of feminist poststructuralism’s understanding of “limitlessness” and boundlessness is needed in order to reclaim the domain of the “non-sense.” This critique is needed in light of the identity-difference tension that feminist poststructuralism finds unsettling in the return to

¹²⁹ As Sandford says, “what may be of more significance ... is a mode of thought in which positive value is associated with the limitless *as such*” (Sandford 2010, 19). The non-philosophical analysis of the One (the One is, strictly speaking, always already a dyad of *chōra* and One) offers a platform for such axiological rethinking of the limitless.

the One, and especially in view of the fear of re-objectification of women (Reid-Brown 2011, 57; Morton 2013).

As I showed, in contemporary continental philosophy (Mackay 2007; Brassier 2007; Meillassoux 2008; Kolozova 2014; Morton 2010; Bryant 2011b; Bogost 2012; Frost 2011) generally and Laruelle's non-philosophy particularly there is also a return to concepts such as the One and the Real (4.B.2-3). Poststructuralism traditionally invests in uncovering alterity; non-philosophy and new realism are specifically interested in oneness and "self-sameness." From a feminist poststructuralist point of view, this interest should be inspected as anti-feminist because the field is subsumed in continental anti-realism and because the return is reminiscent of Neoplatonism's One. Since new realism questions assumptions of poststructuralism, this is not to say the former is merely the philosophy of oneness and unity. It is not a Neoplatonist restorationist project of the One, but a monist and speculative neomaterialism. As such, it engages with philosophies of difference (Deleuze in the case of Brassier 2007) and is indebted to (feminist) poststructuralism (Irigaray, Braidotti and Butler in the case of Kolozova 2006; 2014¹³⁰).

The return to the problems of the boundless as *chōra* and the One in these fields underlines two things: the One is taken from philosophy but was forgotten by poststructuralism. Regardless of one's allegiance to projects of either transcendence or immanence, poststructuralism has focused on Being (Heidegger) and Alterity (Deleuze) at the expense of oneness. This is why the One "becomes a privileged name for the Real in non-philosophy, because it is beyond Being and Alterity" (Smith 2012, 25).¹³¹ This orientation can be synchronized with feminist philosophy.

¹³⁰ Consider that for both Brassier and Kolozova, the common denominator is Laruelle (see Laruelle 2010b).

¹³¹ The immersion into oneness is not the same as the neglect of difference. Kolozova's work proves precisely that. Unfortunately, even Braidotti does not appreciate this balanced position of Kolozova and prefers to accuse representatives of new realism and object-oriented ontology as neomasculinist and anti-feminist writers, which rehashes on debates on "false universalism" that are regressive in nature (see Vermeulen 2014).

Besides Kolozova (2014), Norris (2013) has also addressed the question how to conceptualize the gendered subject non-philosophically so that the Real would ultimately occupy the vacated place of the “non-sense.”¹³² Norris claims that a non-philosophical gendered subject would be “immediately experienced apart from any empirical or transcendental philosophical determination” (ibid., 24). The division of philosophy that Laruelle analyzed and claims to have superseded cannot be retained in the study of gender. This move enables a whole set of analyses and opens a gendered perspective on the subject within non-philosophy and new realism, specifically in the work of Kolozova, who blends them.

Kolozova tries to work out a theory of the subject based on immanent oneness that is not an exclusive or hierarchical metaphysics; in short, a subject of non-totalitarian unity, “multiple in one sense yet an instance of oneness in another” (Kolozova 2006, 9).¹³³ Her non-philosophical definition of *chōra* is as follows: it is “[p]hilosophical universes, concepts organized in coherent unities establishing a (philosophical) reality in its own right...” (Kolozova 2014, 155). The content of these philosophical universes is the *chōra* as “transcendental material.” This contents can be used without referring to a philosophical “doctrine” or “system” (of philosophy).¹³⁴ Kolozova thus renders feminist poststructuralism’s doctrinal positions as universes offering such a material, and theorizes *chōra* as emptied from “philosophical discipline” (ibid., 11), and from the non-philosophical (unilateral) posture of thought. This posture is “an empty position - a non-position - within philosophy which makes use of this position as a sort of conceptual material (*chōra*)” (ibid., 62). The only faithfulness

¹³² Reid-Bowen (2011, 58) has highlighted that the problem with studying gender from non-correlationist angle is that gender already begins with the human, which implies an inherent anthropocentrism and correlationism. This is one reason why new realist perspectives are often indifferent to gender subjectivity.

¹³³ This search for a subject organized around a non-philosophical reading of the One, while being recognized as gendered, is a subject that will not be founding a new breach with reality but will be in immediate contact with it. It is important to remind in this sense that speculative/new realism is often identified with futurity rather than the present (Ennis 2010; Harman 2010), and its ethical implications are still not formalized in a particular agenda.

¹³⁴ In this sense we should not leave the impression that non-philosophy is dissociated merely from Neoplatonism as a particular philosophy of access, but as delinked from philosophy through and through.

of this posture is to the oneness of the Real. This position can be called transcendental minimalism of subjectivity and it allows a new realist engendering of a cosmos which is unorganized (but real) rather than systematized (but inaccessible and ineffable) according to the needs of philosophy.

Kolozova admits of a vacuum between the Real and *chōra*: while the non-philosophical posture of thought is faithful to the Real(-One), we are “*always already* facing the fact that what it has at hand is the transcendental *chōra*” (ibid., 106). The split between the two originates from Laruelle’s notion that *chōra* is “a materiality or an absolute transcendence” (ibid., 110) (unlike the One).

If for Neoplatonism the One is absolutely transcendent, for non-philosophy it is *chōra* that partly occupies this inaccessible position. Such position, however, does not donate the existence of a pre-existing discursive cosmos and then cosmology, which is then realized in the domain of the real. The reason for this is that *chōra* is literally “the ‘place’ where the transcendental ‘lives’” (ibid., 106). So, it is not from the One as an unmoving principle, but from *chōra* as the site of disorganized and absolutely transcendent materiality and cosmos that the world comes to be and is. This reading reinstates *chōra* in a way that can be qualified not as continental anti-realism but as realism. As such, it offers a framework for discussing the problem of disembodiment also from continental feminist-realist philosophical perspective, which is the focus of my next chapter.

4.E. Conclusion

By following the realist research programs of non-philosophy and new realism, as well as the Laruellian understandings of One and *chōra*, in this chapter I showed the relevance of those two Platonic/Plotinian notions for contemporary continental philosophy. I did so in order to utilize the non-philosophical inversion of the (disembodied) One from a realist perspective

that is also synchronizable with continental feminism, which is largely anti-realist. I claimed that the Neoplatonist disembodied One has been foreclosed by continental anti-realism in general, and that continental feminist philosophy focuses only on the Platonic *chōra* in order to defend an embodied notion of subjectivity while bypassing the Neoplatonist One. With the aid of Laruelle and Kolozova, I made an exploration into *chōra* and the One as philosophical materials that can be relevant for continental feminism, which in turn opens the opportunity for a continental feminist notion of disembodiment that considers the One as the hidden term of the Real. In such a context, the One is not taken for granted as the condition of false universality.

On account of Kolozova's problematization of the subject of postmodern philosophies which deny the objectifiability of the subject's reality, such continental feminist reading of the One also accounts for a non-philosophical notion of *chōra*, which is crucified between the transcendental and the empirical. Especially the One presented in these terms does not any longer have to be juxtaposed to an anti-realist apologetics of embodiment which treats the Real as ineffable but defends women's real lived experiences as thematizable. The juxtaposition is not necessary because accordingly *chōra* is not interpretable via Irigaray's/Aristotle's hylomorphic optic of *chōra*-as-matter. The status of the non-philosophical *chōra* is partly transcendental and thus disembodied, but this status does not lead to its being read as entirely embodied and juxtaposed to the realm of intellection, the soul and ultimately the One. As consequence of the radicality of immanence ascribed to the One in Laruelle's theory, even while *chōra* is the first determination of the world, it is still inalienable from the realm of embodiment. However, this does not mean *chōra* generates embodiments absolutely detached from the reality of the One, for the simple reason that the One and the Real are identical terms. The non-philosophical *chōra*, here conceptualized with the aid of Kolozova, constitutes an interface between the Platonic *chōra* and the Plotinian One.

Just as the One should not be automatically and axiomatically relegated to the realm of disembodiment, given that its status is warranted by its alleged neutrality, so embodiment should not be automatically treated as a unifying conceptual and nodular space for feminist philosophy and poststructuralism against the One, given that *chōra* cannot be identified with (sensible) matter and body. Non-philosophy in particular is instrumental for resolving concerns over anti-realist treatment of embodiment (often epitomized via *chōra*) and the refusal to engage with metaphysical notions such as the One on account of fears of theoretical apologetic of masculinized disembodiment. Non-philosophy's critique of decisionism and new realism's anti-correlationsm, when merged, thus offer an avenue to counter both a renewed idealization of disembodiment and an apologetics of embodiment. By combining these fields, I offered a trajectory for the reinterpretation of the problem of disembodiment that is neither anti-egalitarian/anti-woman, nor is a continuation of the Neoplatonist religious idealization of disembodiment, to which I turn in the next chapter. The non-philosophical *chōra*, in short, is a realist radicalization of the old Platonist problem of disembodiment.

Chapter 5. Disembodiment as A Problem for Continental Feminist-Realist Philosophy¹³⁵

The final chapter of this dissertation aims to synthesize the research on the problem of disembodiment and lead to the dissertation's conclusion and thus offer a final contribution to continental feminist philosophy, namely, offering a non-philosophical contribution to the problem of disembodiment via a feminist-realist approach. In this chapter my aim is to offer such an original contribution in the form of an argument from¹³⁶ and approach to, but not a wholesale theory of, disembodiment, building on the trajectory outlined via non-philosophy and new realism in Chapter 4. To reach and develop such an interpretation, I first present continental anti-realism and realism, and relate them to feminist philosophy.¹³⁷ Secondly, I return to the work of Kolozova (2006, 2014) and build on both her critique of feminist poststructuralist theory and her mixture of the latter with non-philosophy and new realism. I then explain the core of her non-philosophical critique and its relevance for continental feminism in general and the problem of disembodiment in particular. Thirdly, I expand Kolozova's argumentation by looking at arguments from the ongoing and niched literature in continental feminist philosophy and feminist poststructuralism influenced by new realism and non-philosophy that defend continental feminist realism without abandoning the generalized feminist concern with embodiment. Fourth, I build on Kolozova's non-philosophical realism

¹³⁵ When I use the term "feminist philosophy/philosophies," I subsume feminist poststructuralism within that term. When I use the term "continental feminist philosophy," or, "continental feminism," I generally mean both realist and anti-realist types of thought. Where needed, I add the necessary qualifications to distinguish between them.

¹³⁶ The term "arguments from disembodiment" refers to the Cartesian argument in favor of substance dualism according to which one's self is not identical to one's body. I use the term to refer to both the Cartesian legacy and in order to maintain an argument from disembodiment transgressing the limitations of dualism.

¹³⁷ As already mentioned in the Introduction, p. 18 n7, in the present Chapter 5, I have relied partially on some of my published work. Section 5.A.1, pp. 190-195 features substantially updated version of a published dictionary entry on realism (Panayotov 2016c), which here extends also to cover the juxtaposition between realism and anti-realism in continental philosophies; Section 5.A.3, pp. 207-8, includes reworked passages from Panayotov (2018a, 194, 200-1), and pp. 209-10 is revised from Panayotov (2017b, 135-6).

and the Laruellian inversion of the Neoplatonist One to develop my original contribution in the form of a continental feminist-realist¹³⁸ approach to disembodiment. I claim that such an approach is needed and defend it because the feminist-realist positions I outline do not entail the theorization of disembodiment, but rather the defence of embodiment from such positions.

So far the trajectory leading to a continental feminist-realist interpretation of disembodiment required the following steps: (1) to debunk the idea that the disembodied One cannot be interpreted from within a realist position; (2) to critique the anti-realist phenomenological tendency of continental thought in general (the problem of ineffability); (3) to import the non-philosophical critique of decisionism and new realism's anti-correlationism into the larger phenomenological consensus of continental philosophy and feminism; (4) to subsequently critique the continental feminist doctrinal position that the subject is arbitrary and her reality is both non-sensical because constructed and irreducible to rationality; (5) to then explain why the notion of embodiment is predominantly anti-realist and to critique it non-philosophically as the principled focus of continental feminism. This last step is especially needed in order to develop a feminist-realist understanding of disembodiment, without ruling out the critical importance of embodiment as a central category of rethinking the philosophical and metaphysical canon of Western logocentrism. In Chapter 4 I have already followed steps 1-4, and what remains to be done in this chapter is to develop the critique of embodiment, which I will do with the aid of both Laruelle's and Kolozova's work. By following these steps and building on their work, I can arrive at an original non-philosophical continental feminist-realist interpretation of disembodiment, which is my original contribution.

¹³⁸ I use the term "continental feminist-realist approach" intentionally and do not further qualify it as "new realist" in order to void the false assumption that continental feminist philosophy has been *entirely* correlationist and anti-realist throughout. This has been demonstrated by Kolozova and Joy (2016) and is discussed at length in various text by Kolozova and also by Åsberg, Thiele and van der Tuin (2015). This is less true for Behar (2016). See below 5.A.3.

My interpretation defends a continental feminist-*realist* approach to the notion of disembodiment as it is rooted in the theorization of female boundlessness and the notion of *chōra* and Dyad, correlative to the One, and traditionally read by feminists as somatophobic, disembodied and falsely universalistic. While Kolozova's critique I operationalize below is neither against embodiment nor is a defence of disembodiment, the argument offered by my interpretation is one favoring and from disembodiment, because the non-philosophical and anti-correlationist thesis allows a disembodied non-anthropogenic epistemological position stemming from the One's immanence. Additionally, this position should not be anti-realist. I seek to develop such interpretation in order to show that the realist position could be preserved from a continental feminist point of view.

The interpretation is based on the earlier presentation of the notions of the Real, One and *chōra* in non-philosophy and new realism. The anti-correlationist critique of new realism and the critique of decisionism by the non-philosophical framework allow for (a) an engagement with and inversion of the ancient notion of the One and (b) a feminist-realist engagement with the non-philosophical One as already radicalized by Laruelle. The feminist-realist approach is offered through the intersection of the non-philosophical theories of the Real and One with new realism's anti-correlationism and through the intersection of anti-correlationism with continental feminist philosophy. The overarching framework is realism: the assumption that the knowing subject is able to think the reality of an object independently without correlation of thought and being (because of the unilateral duality of the Real), which is the anti-correlationist position that requires thinking from the One as disembodiment.

5.A. Dis/Embodiment and Anti/Realism

5.A.1. (New) Realism, Anti-Realism and (New) Materialism in Continental and Feminist Philosophy

As mentioned in the introductory section of this chapter, this entire section 5.A.1 is a substantially updated version of a published dictionary entry on realism (Panayotov 2016c), which here extends also to cover the juxtaposition between realism and anti-realism.

In continental philosophy, realism is a category that serves to capture the relation or the correlation between thought and being, or between consciousness and the external “world.” It variously connects with competing notions of the “Real” and/or “reality.” However, realism is rarely seen to “reflect reality” and is more often treated as a generic platform for insights into the “Real.” Realism is generally used to describe thought’s mechanisms of knowing rather than being entangled with the Real and is thus mostly an epistemological rather than ontological platform.

From an anti-realist and phenomenological perspective, realism is often charged with sustaining the boundaries of logocentrism and positing an artificial Outside (see Sikora 2014 and his summary of various “no-outside” theses), and this Outside is charged to be the pseudo-neutral container of disembodied truth. Poststructuralism with its nominalism reacted to realism’s misrecognition of its false, male-centric universalism but as a result has often *absolutized* the relativization of the Outside and the role of science. Thus, over time realism was gradually divorced from its primary epistemological status. From a feminist perspective realism is almost universally regarded as a master discourse for narrating a male-centric fable of what the Real is and how we know it, and it has been proved in various ways (e.g., Lloyd 2004) that this fable is presented under the garb of disembodiedness. Notable exceptions are the work of Harding (1986, 22-23) and Haraway (1988, 590; 1989, 4), but their allegiance to a

feminist type of scientific realism reduces the knowing subject to partial sight and situated knowledge thereby rejecting not the Real, but the disembodied access to it.¹³⁹

Realism is implicated in a network of -isms and constitutes complex intersections with materialism, naturalism, idealism and rationalism. It is a grid through which theorists tend to also offer insights into matter. As Christoph Cox, Jenny Jaskey and Suhail Malik state: “materialists (who hold that all that exists is matter, material forces, and physical processes) tend to be realists (who hold that reality is fully mind-independent), but the reverse need not hold (since what is real need not be materially manifest, symbolic meaning being a leading example)” (Cox, Jaskey, and Malik 2015, 25). As a result of this asymmetry between the real and matter, the first is often regarded as hierarchically higher than the latter. And because realism does not necessarily provide theories of matter and its generation, this hierarchy has often been seen as a modern-day extension of soul-body dualism, thereby leading anti-realists to identify with various types of materialisms and a subsequent notion of (gendered) embodiment. This has resulted, along with new realism, in the concomitant development of so-called new materialism (Coole and Frost 2010; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012).

Contemporary realisms tend to agree that the Real precedes thought (this is especially true after the so-called speculative turn, Bryant, Srnicek and Harman 2011). There is a widespread tendency, including in new materialism,¹⁴⁰ to both bundle terms such as real/matter/nature and insist on their irreducibility to “reason.” Thus, in continental philosophy the competing dominant theories are realist essentialism and social constructivism. New materialist writers such as Manuel DeLanda admit that these two often lead to a false third-

¹³⁹ Additionally, some examples can be located in the field of analytic feminist philosophy (e.g., the work of Charlotte Witt and Ann Cudd).

¹⁴⁰ When new materialists lament the neglected status of any scientific datum, they often compromise a newly found techno-feminist materialism with a mystical panpsychism (the view that all things are ensouled): panpsychism then becomes a feminist trope which conditions the reality of any materiality. For a good summary of how panpsychism and animism are applied in object-oriented ontology and philosophy and new materialism, see Konior (2017a, 112 n1).

way theory, a “social essentialism”: “by coupling the idea that perception is intrinsically linguistic with the ontological assumption that only the contents of experience really exists, this position leads directly to a form of social essentialism” (DeLanda cited by Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, 98). An opposition between realism and constructivism follows both the logic of non-contradiction and the principle of organization in canonic modern philosophies. With the advent of figures like Gilles Deleuze, Michel Henry, François Laruelle and Donna Haraway the very principle of organization is subverted through their respective multiplying and diverging theories of the Real.

In late 20th century variations, realism is increasingly hailed as a political trope capable of both “doing justice to matter” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, 16) and as an invariant within or transcending the “democratic materialism” that Alain Badiou (2005) attacks. The increased conceptual power lent to the “real” of realism leads to different consequences when compared to poststructuralist and postmodernist reductions of realism to social construction and arbitrariness. The implicit social quietism is diminished because, for example, new materialists’ theorizing of the Real includes scientific approaches to reality and entangles these with some relativist varieties of realism. An important tendency within new materialism is to regard realism as administering “flat ontologies” which are able to horizontalize anthropic onto-epistemological capacities. For example, Haraway claims that great divides (such as nature/culture) over time flatten to become “mundane differences” (Haraway 2007, 4). Åsberg, Thiele and van der Tuin (2015, 148, 164) ask if the “flat” became the new Absolute and *who* benefits from it, emphasizing that the implied immanent democracy of the flat is subjectively ordered. “Flat ontology” is a term from the critical realism of Roy Bhaskar used in a pejorative sense (Brassier 2015, 65) to describe empiricist philosophies. It was appropriated by DeLanda (2002, 47ff.), Bryant (2011b, 245ff.) and Harman (2011a) to articulate a democratization within

both realisms and materialisms from the perspective of an a-subjective, pre-human, pre-discursive Real.

How is the material-discursive entanglement accommodated by advancements in contemporary (continental) realism? A perceived divide is the focal point of both the subject and the question of *who* is entangled in onto-epistemologies. Historically, the generic answer accounting for the *who/the* subject entangled is generated by “philosophies of immanence.” According to Deleuze the Real is no longer a duplication of the Real’s idea or its deficient copy (Cheah 2010, 86). In different ways philosophies of immanence rule out resemblance and identity as ruling principles; the actuality (of the Real) does not contain singularities. As a result, real entities are not “freed” from a pre-existing container of the possible. In the tradition of philosophies of immanence, the Real has a predominantly transcendental status, while matter is regarded as immanent and non-transcendent. In William Connolly’s interpretation, immanence accommodates the emergent causality and self-organization of matter (Connolly 2010, 179). There is, however, one major exception in the tradition of philosophies of immanence: Laruelle’s theory of the Real (or the One, Laruelle 2013c, 135-53, 208-10). As I explained in Chapter 4, he rejects the residual elements of mediation from philosophies of difference, where difference is treated as immanent, because for him we always already start from the Real, so the knowing subject is already in a position according to it. As a result, to pursue the knowability of the Real is tautological (but demonstrable), and to reject its knowability is at best scientific agnosticism.

Different versions of philosophies of immanence reveal differing strategies for engaging with the question of the knowing subject. Earlier responses to continental anti-realism can be found in Bhaskar’s critical realism and Braver’s critique of anti-realism (Bhaskar 1975; Braver 2007). In new materialism, realism is predominantly revisited through the perspective of “situated knowledges” (Haraway) and feminist science studies, while in speculative and new

realisms it is generally agreed that the subject is irrelevant to the workings of the Real. Quentin Meillassoux's "speculative materialism" proposes to think of the Real with a minimal form of representation in the mind, which he calls the "arche-fossil" - a sort of imprint of the Real that stands for "ancestral reality" (Meillassoux 2008, 22). Most philosophies (of difference and immanence), including poststructuralism, can operate through some form of (reified) representation and mediation. As I will show below, new realism tries to do away with all major representationalist philosophies and partly the tradition of poststructuralism, while new materialism retains the subjectivist concern on who connects to the Real.¹⁴¹ Meillassoux's argument is that we have no means to check if "the reality that is given to us corresponds to reality taken in itself" (Meillassoux interviewed by Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, 72), a statement that can be read as poststructuralist epistemology only if operated from his anti-correlationism. However, this a-/anti-theological immanent line¹⁴² does not warrant the legitimation of an a-subjective point of view. New materialist and associated writers have responded to this issue by rejecting the idea that immanentism can leak into a-subjectivism. A meaningful response is provided by Barad (2007, 132-188; 2011), while an example in new realism would be the work of Kolozova (2014). In line with new realism's shared anti-correlationist thesis, dualisms are pushed to an extreme where they begin to break down and extirpate the vision of the subject. From a feminist perspective the key problem relating to anti-correlationism and its renewed interest in speaking from (not of) the Real is that of autonomy and the agency of both the Real and the subject. Theorists who refuse to donate such autonomy are then often associated with continental anti-realism and find the residual meaning of epistemological mediation between the knower and the object of knowledge in the embodied and gendered subjectivity, on account of the thesis that we cannot know what lies outside the

¹⁴¹ As a result, the former can accommodate, and the latter cannot, arguments from disembodiment.

¹⁴² Immanent philosophies are historically based on atomist materialism and godless cosmology, which is why immanentism is typically interpreted as scientism. See the historical account of Spencer (2014), specifically with respect to immanence and atomism in French post-War continental philosophy.

Real, because it is always already mediated (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, 108). As a result, the position that refuses the donational status of the Real's autonomy generates a subjectivist and gendered epistemological pessimism which is easily absolutized in the same manner in which, according to Meillassoux, strong correlationism (Hegel) absolutizes the thought and the subject (Meillassoux 2008, 65-6).

In Barad's agential realism, "[a]gency, on an agential realist account, does not require a clash of apparatuses (as Butler once suggested) such as the contradictory norms of femininity" (Barad interviewed by Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, 54). Åsberg, Thiele and van der Tuin claim that "[w]here speculative realists strive for an unmediated, wholly a-subjective real, feminist immanence ontology (in the singular plural) insists on the co-constitutive role of the embedded observer, the perspective and the rich agentiality (multi-subjectivity) of context itself" (Åsberg, Thiele and van der Tuin 2015, 151; see also Kolozova 2016, 12-13). According to DeLanda, "new materialism is neither realist nor social constructivist. It is precisely the commonalities of realism and social constructivism that are being recognized, though shifted" (DeLanda interviewed by Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, 98).¹⁴³ Dolphijn and van der Tuin have spearheaded the attempt to bridge the subjective and the a-subjective in new materialism and speculative/new realism by offering to read both of them diffractively (*ibid.*, 163-4); in a lateral way so have done Kolozova (2014) and Shaviro (2009).

In this section I presented in broad strokes how both realism and anti-realism function within contemporary continental philosophy and put a focus on how embodiment relates to those streams of thought, in order to be able to then meaningfully present in detail Kolozova's non-philosophical realism. In the next section I engage with Kolozova's attempt to bridge the

¹⁴³ Such commonalities concern an interface between the discursive and the material. Examples of those commonalities are Barad's notions of entanglement and intra-action (Barad 2007, ix, 29-30).

subjective/embodied and the a-subjective/disembodied dimension of realisms via her engagement with Laruelle's non-philosophy of the radicality of immanence.

5.A.2. The Non-Philosophical Realism of Kolozova

In this section I present the critical argument of Kolozova (2014) against what she considers to be the doctrinal and consensual understanding of “feminist poststructuralist theory” and its rendition of the category of the Real. I present and discuss her argument in detail in order to account for how continental anti-realism and feminist philosophy are limited by a pessimistic epistemological understanding of the Real, which then leads to an anti-realist category of embodiment. Her argument is crucial for the development of my own interpretation of a continental feminist-realist notion of disembodiment because the notion of embodiment is derivative of continental anti-realism which is correlationist. After presenting her work, I move on to showcase how currently some feminist (non-)philosophers (Kolozova and Joy, Behar, Schmid) try to offer a feminist-realist research program. This discussion includes considering the relation of gender to new realism and object-oriented philosophy and ontology/feminism, and how these fields relate to a realist notion of gender and embodiment. The section aims to problematize feminist poststructuralism's opposition to a reinterpretation of the notion of the One as either entirely disembodied and therefore anti-feminist, or as irrelevant.

5.A.2.a. Non-Philosophical and New Realist Critique of Feminist Poststructuralist Theory¹⁴⁴

Kolozova's work is central for developing my original interpretation of feminist disembodiment not because she offers an argument from disembodiment.¹⁴⁵ There are three achievements in her work on which I build and which serve as the reasons to build on her argumentation: (1) she introduces non-philosophical and new realism in continental feminism, despite the often indifferent attitude towards feminist theory in new realism (see Peña-Guzmán 2016, 4); (2) she engages with a non-philosophical reading of the notions *chōra* and One,¹⁴⁶ notions that are subject of “radicalization”/“impoverishment” (Kolozova 2010, 39-40) and “unilateralization” (Laruelle et al. 2013, 39, 52) from feminist-realist perspective; (3) she demonstrates that it is possible to extract a unitary non-philosophical and gendered subject, grounded on a reconsideration of the One, via gender theory (Woodard 2008). It is through these inter-related achievements of her work that I will demonstrate that a continental feminist realism can operate on an argument from disembodiment.

Kolozova (2006; 2014¹⁴⁷) develops a critique of what she terms poststructuralist feminist theory and its doctrinal orientation toward embodiment, based on her year-long

¹⁴⁴ I use Kolozova's term “feminist poststructuralist theory”; to a large extent it is synonymous here with “continental feminist philosophy” with the proviso that not all feminist theorization is philosophical.

¹⁴⁵ Recently she has dealt with the problem of disembodiment by thematizing the self as devoid of physicality (Kolozova 2019) and as the “vanishing body” (Kolozova 2018). In those works, Kolozova does not use the term disembodiment, but addresses the immaterialization of the self as a problem for post-humanism by developing a non-humanism based on Laruelle: she does not offer a defense of such immaterialization.

¹⁴⁶ There is no shortage of feminist considerations of *chōra* (Panayotov 2011, 104-20), but this is not true of the One, to which Kolozova devotes her entire Chapter 1 (Kolozova 2014, 13-51). While in the case of a feminist-realist understanding of *chōra* I have built on her work, in the case of the One I proceed basing on her work because she simply does not mean to provide a feminist account of disembodiment.

¹⁴⁷ *Cut of the Real* needs to be read in part as a sequel to Kolozova's 2010 book *The Lived Revolution: Solidarity with the Body in Pain as the New Political Universal*, where she already develops a politico-theoretical application of her theory of subjectivity and resistance outside the identitarian impasse which is *already* transcended in both *The Real and “I”* - as early as 2006 - and *Cut of the Real* (see Dimitrov 2011). As stated by O'Rourke (2011) and Kennel (2015), her work and novelty were earlier recognized only by Woodard (2008). Benjamin Norris's article on the gendered subject in non-philosophy mentions her only in passing, reducing her to the singular merit of juxtaposing Lacan to Laruelle (Norris 2013, 37).

involvement in the non-philosophical movement,¹⁴⁸ which led her to developing a realist and non-philosophical feminist thought. Why does she critique feminist poststructuralism to begin with? (1) Because she identifies intrinsic limitations in it posed by its neglect of any positive rendition of the Outside.¹⁴⁹ This Outside is a type of transcendental minimum which she too accepts is unavoidable. What Kolozova terms the Outside is what continental anti-realism refuses to think on account of its arbitrariness and constructedness irreducible to the experience of subjective reality. Accepting the unknowability and ineffability of such a minimum also affects the way we approach gendered subjectivity which is then devoid of relation to the Real. (2) Because she shows that feminist poststructuralism can be read as a dogmatic rather than critical system of philosophical thought via the non-philosophical critique of the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy (the belief that everything is philosophizable; Kolozova 2014, 29) which construct what it sees as an already constructed and inaccessible transcendently minimal Outside. Kolozova recognizes the authority in/of the Real and asks: “how can we theorize by way of drawing legitimacy in the last instance for our insights not from the doctrinal compounds made of transcendental material but from the authority of the real?” (ibid., 131).

In *Cut of the Real* Kolozova focuses on the relationality between Real and gender, and embodiment by extension, in order to conceptualize a realist and non-philosophical gendered subject not because the aim is to depoliticize gendered subjectivity. On the contrary, her argument is meant to show that it can be conceptualized politically from a realist-universalist position based on an exegesis of the One (ibid., 13-50) ruled out by feminist poststructuralism and relegated also to the status of an unthinkable Outside as a form of false universality. The reasons why *Cut of the Real*'s critique is a relevant critical work for feminist philosophers are that (a) it provides a theory of subjectivity and (b) it poses two problems for feminist anti-

¹⁴⁸ See Galloway (2015) and Aksayam (2018) for a historical account of Laruelle's reception within and without non-philosophy.

¹⁴⁹ This tendency has been disturbed by the ongoing feminist new materialism, see Barad (2003) and Coole and Frost (2010).

realist theories of subjectivity: (b.1) the problem of the Real and (b.2) the problem of embodied subjectivity.

What Kolozova tries to achieve is to transform the legacy of feminist poststructuralism by impregnating its canon with the non-philosophical Real-One. This is a double engagement which takes into account fears of renaturalization of gendered subjectivities. She claims that there is a generalized continental consensus of the Real being *reduced to fiction* (ibid., 35-37) especially in gender theories, which then leads to fictionalizing gender. She illustrates this point with an analysis of the language around the subject/the self in works by Butler and Foucault. The first challenge to accept the critique of this consensus is to stomach the Laruelleian Real and its indifference stemming from its unilateral duality. The second challenge is to accept the claim that feminist poststructuralism is decisional and that as such it too culminates in an extension of metaphysical stasis in what is otherwise seen as anti-metaphysics.¹⁵⁰ If the continental feminist anti-realism does exist and can be generalized as such a form of decisionism, and if it then accepts this critique, it means accepting that this canon has developed its own axiomatic and orthodoxy based on its decisionism, remaining blind to ruling out and under-conceptualizing certain terms, such as the Real and the One.¹⁵¹ “Philosophy” and poststructuralism are qualified as philosophies of Access and offer two versions of securitizing

¹⁵⁰ Past the condition of non-decisionism, Kolozova is not alone in this project of gendered realism. Diana Fuss’ *Essentially Speaking* (1989) is especially relevant. A reevaluation of essentialism and constructivism in continental feminist philosophy is here partially presented only through the problem of disembodiment, but the process has already started: within non-philosophy, consider the work of Anne-Françoise Schmid with and without Laruelle on feminism (see Laruelle and Schmid [2003] 2014, and Schmid 2016 in Kolozova and Joy 2016), as well as Laruelle’s own engagement with Kolozova’s work and gender (see Laruelle 2014); on the side of any thought considered decisional philosophy, consider the somewhat dispersed literature that includes the names of Fuss, Grosz (2017), Lam (2015), to some extent Colebrook (Colebrook 2014a and 2014b; see especially Bray and Colebrook 1998), and more explicitly O’Rourke (2011; 2013a; 2013b), and Sheldon (2015; 2016).

¹⁵¹ Woodard notes that “they [representatives of poststructuralism and theorists such as Butler and Braidotti - S. P.] unknowingly perpetuate dualism by opposing deconstruction to traditional metaphysics” (Woodard 2008). Kolozova steps out of a metaphysical criticism of this dualism in gender theory because she pollutes the poststructuralist critique of the metaphysics of presence with and via Laruelle’s One, which makes possible a theory of subjectivity to begin with. As Dimitrov claims, “she deconstructs these hegemonic discourses [of poststructuralism - S. P.] by haunting them with the instances of the One, the Real” (Dimitrov 2011, 225). The criticism prevents a metaphysical restoration of undertheorized identity politics under the guise of naïve universalism while constructing itself as a positionality of a non-philosophical gendered subject.

the access to the Real: either through authority or its deconstruction. The results, however, are similar. Through a gender theory that disengages the reduction to fiction, Kolozova reconfirms Laruelle's attack on the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, showing that philosophy as hierarchical metaphysics and poststructuralism and the deconstruction of that metaphysics have together assumed the posture of the *absolute* orthodoxy of (the Real's) fiction, of fictionalizing reality, instead of *radicalizing* it. Finally, additional theoretical alienation is produced by Laruelle's treatment of subjectivity, which refuses to give examples (e.g., books such as *Theory of Identities* and *General Theory of Victims*).

Thus, the overall challenge for feminist anti-realists would be to accept along with Kolozova interiorizing Laruelle's notions of the Real or the Real-One. Embracing it allows to re-organize any philosophical theoretization as a re-purposed empirical "material," but this material is driven by the unilateral duality of the authority of the Real which is outside the subject, not by some immanent arbitrariness of the subject. One has to unilaterally subjugate oneself to the unilaterality of the Real-One in order to survey it. Under these conditions, *questions of multiplicity, differences, subjectivity and embodiment are not excluded, but they are deducible from the Real's unilaterality*. Thus, accepting Kolozova's critique is reliant on accepting Laruelle's Real-One in order to conceptualize a (non-philosophical) gendered subject, who is subject to "radicalization." This subject too is modeled after the unilateral authority of the Real, and its purpose is still to be political and liberatory, but it seeks to liberate the subject and her embodiment from the ascription of philosophical sufficiency - qualifications such as non-sensicality, arbitrariness, and constructedness are all philosophical and circular. On account of the non-philosophical gendered subject, the unconceptualizable and unexplicable Real is subjectively experiential and this is why it is not ruled out, which thereby allows to subjectively relate to it. However, this requires to reject the anti-realist notion of the subject (see 4.C.2) and with it the splicing of embodiment with anti-realism. In short, the aim

is to bridge the unilateral Real with embodied subjectivity. This she does in two ways: by critiquing what she terms the unitary subject in feminist poststructuralism, and by a gendered investigation into the Laruelian Real-One.

5.A.2.b. Critique of the Unitary Subject behind Feminist Poststructuralist Theory

To critique what she terms the unitary subject and to operationalize the Laruelian One requires that Kolozova interiorizes methodologically two elements of non-philosophy. One, to approach the so-called “thetic thought” (ibid., 6; Kolozova 2010, 30; Laruelle et al. 2013, 113-5) of philosophical thinking which replaces the Real with thought. By way of attacking thetic thought, the status of embodiment as fiction can be questioned. But rendering a philosophical material such as feminist poststructuralist theory does not suffice in itself, which is why she has to prove that the dyad real-thought could function with something more than the immanence of subjective nominalism. She claims that there is an irreducible, transcendental minimalism of the philosophical material to be scrutinized and radicalized (Kolozova 2014, 13), which she calls *chōra* (of feminist poststructuralism) (ibid., 3, 7). By using the term, Kolozova transforms the notion of *chōra* by re-purposing it to describe the “philosophical universe” of feminist poststructuralism and turns it against its potential to explain the identification of boundlessness, embodiment and femininity in order to expose the feminist philosophical canon as doctrinal and dogmatic. Two, against the thetic thought behind the *chōra* of feminist poststructuralism, she appropriates the founding act of non-philosophy - the unilateral posture of thought (ibid., 3) - and applies non-philosophy to the doctrinal material of poststructuralism as “a form of thought that is void of any pretension to (re)claiming the real” (ibid., 110), by assuming the non-thetic posture of thought,¹⁵² which “is emptied from

¹⁵² Laruelle’s “non-thetic posture of thought,” as well as other ideas from Laruelle’s oeuvre, are historically prior to Meillassoux’s anti-correlationism (there are multiple references in Laruelle 2013c, e.g., 65, 85), which is why Galloway could claim Laruelle as predecessor of anti-correlationism and new realism.

philosophical discipline and equipped with theoretical rigor” (ibid., 11). The radicalization of *chōra* is the radicalization of the concepts contained in it: these concepts are to be reduced to their transcendental minimum or what Laruelle calls “transcendental impoverishment.”

Weaponizing herself with transcendental impoverishment, Kolozova states that thus

we should be able to conceive of a radically universal solidarity. It will be a solidarity that unilaterally correlates with the real of women’s subjugation and gendered violence. Thus, we will be able to speak of a universal that is not the product of a generalization or “unity of differences.” (ibid., 8-9)

Now, what is the problem with the sanctified status of “unity of differences”? The “unity of differences” - Kolozova’s phrase - is used in the sense of summarizing feminist poststructuralist philosophies’ attempt to divert any opportunity of arriving at a totalizing (and thus presumably always totalitarian) universalism, but through Laruelle’s work she claims universalism should not be automatically rendered totalizing. The unity produces a generative pluralism: the endless and ineffable production and reflection of differences on a plane where only the registering of difference is possible, while the Real is indifferent to all produced and embodied differences. Accepting the generative pluralism of the “unity of differences” only sustains the production and exteriorization of a universe of identitarian nominalism. The latter then allows poststructuralism’s extraneous privilege of rendering the subject as empty of reality and as a phenomenological surface for the registering of irreducible and discrete sense data all driven by the noumenon of transcendental idealism. The generative pluralism of unity of differences requires a *non-unitary subject* who registers the differences but never ascribes them to the (non-sensical) Real. Identifying the non-unitary subject allows Kolozova to generalize that there exists in this *chōra* a non-critical type of feminist poststructuralist self-sufficiency organized around such nonunitary subject, characteristic of continental anti-realism. Its secret is that it is deduced from “unity of differences,” and the subtending, cloaked category of the One.

By identifying thusly the problem of the non-unitary subject, Kolozova is able to claim that its constitutive binaries (such as One/multiple) become axiom and substance (ibid., 14). She claims that the multiplicity of identities is made possible by interdicting the reality of the One (ibid., 16). Behind those differences lies non-unity that stabilizes dualistic thinking, which emanates towards a kind of *axiomatic dismissal of any unitary subject*. The dismissal then results in a doctrinal poststructuralist dualism of “inflexible rigidity,” according to which we “continue to assume that the multiple is the truth of the [O]ne while refusing to acknowledge the converse” (ibid., 19) (i.e., that the One is the truth of the multiple). In short, the non-convertibility of an (immanent) multiple and a (potentially transcendent) One is derived from the axiomatically posited non-unity of the subject which postulates the inflexible unity of differences. But since the One is radically immanent it does not then follow that the poststructuralist canon cannot engage with mobilizing the category of the One and introduce a convertibility of the One and the Multiple. By attacking the so-called unitary subject behind feminist poststructuralism and by demonstrating that there can be a convertibility between the One and the Multiple, Kolozova thus takes a new realist position. However, this position is not an argument from disembodiment, but her argument allows to build on such convertibility to then develop a continental feminist and realist notion of disembodiment.

5.A.3. Gender and Embodiment as Problems for Continental Feminist-Realist Philosophy

In the aftermath of anti-correlationism, the potential feminist objection to a feminist realism is that treating human subjectivity and the gendered and embodied one specifically as ontologically equal to any other object (or instance of the Real) - something easily discernible in Laruelle’s notion of democracy in thought (2013c, 48-52, 213), Bryant’s democracy of objects (2011b), and Ó Maoilearca’s “all thoughts are equal” (2015) - might mean that the

return to the subject via non-philosophy is a cloaked philosophical re-objectification of women (a defense against this argument is provided by Morton 2013). The principled worry would be that not only Laruelle's One might turn out to be grounding anew an anthropic principle of gender blindness (spearheaded by the "indifference" of the Real-One), but it could also re-introduce the differential treatment of the human subject through gender on the grounds of a democratic (flat) ontology where radical equality of objects (all genders treated as objects) is itself the re-objectification of women (for this argument, see Bromberg 2013).

Because of such objection, it is true that to have defended a new realist and non-philosophical approach to the real/ity of gender necessarily requires that there should be also a parallel engagement with embodiment as a problem from a continental feminist *and* realist perspective. Kolozova is not alone in addressing these concerns (see above n150) and the last ten years have witnessed several accounts relating embodiment, gender and sexuality to anti-correlationist thought. Authors pursuing this problematic however come from a plethora of fields: non-philosophy, new realism, new materialism, object-oriented ontology/feminism, and in this section, I will present those accounts.

As noted elsewhere, Kolozova "both positions herself at one and the same time as (a) a realist critic of poststructuralist feminism and (b) a feminist critic of speculative realism and object-oriented ontology" (Peña-Guzmán 2016, 4), which is why it should not be assumed that she is either uncritical of new realism or that she is offering an argument from disembodiment. There are two collections of texts that have addressed the problem of embodiment and theories of subjectivity and have questioned continental anti-realism from feminist perspectives: Kolozova and Joy (2016) and Behar (2016). In the first case, the intersection of feminist poststructuralism and continental realism positions Kolozova and Joy somewhere between speculative/new realism and new materialism, and the intersection particularizes and complexifies new realisms, but not necessarily as a "legacy." The relevance of the intersection

and its concomitant feminist realism comes from the oft held accusations to new realism in misogyny and anti-feminism because of its alleged *indifference* to gender. References to such accusations are usually the fact that a) the Goldsmiths panel that founded speculative realism was all-male and that b) the founding anthology *The Speculative Turn* featured only one female contributor (Isabelle Stengers). These concerns were first raised by Christopher Vitale's (2010) and Michael O'Rourke's (2011) interventions, both of whom claimed that there are ways to bridge the movement with matters of interest for poststructuralist philosophy in general.¹⁵³ Thus c) the fact that Vitale and O'Rourke's interventions were contemporary to the 2011 anthology and were *not* featured, despite the fact that these authors knew of each other's work, also intensified feminist skepticism.

As I have already claimed, "Kolozova and Joy's *After the 'Speculative Turn'* is thus not merely a cultural revisionist critique but an infrastructural expansion of speculative realism in the wake of its intrinsic contradictions, produced by its *self-aware* (educated) indifference to 'cultural specificity'" (Panayotov 2017b, 132) Representatives of the movement are all philosophers trained in poststructuralism, postmodernism *and* feminist poststructuralism in particular. The "indifference" supposedly gives way to realism, which in turn is not gender blindness. Indifference does not constitute an active ignorance or covert arrogance. The question of indifference to gender does not come from the question of "representation." It derives from (a) a critique of representation formulated outside the post-Kantian canon of continental anti-realism that always replaces the Real with our correlation to it; (b) it can be theoretically accounted for via the Laruillian claim for the indifference of the Real-One, which

¹⁵³ "Kolozova and Joy (2016) have included O'Rourke's 2011 essay 'Girls Welcome!!!' Speculative Realism, Object-Oriented Ontology, and Queer Theory" as an appendix to their volume. The text testifies that the time lapse between speculative realism and how it relates to feminism is rather negligible: from 2007's conference through 2011's founding anthology *The Speculative Turn* by Bryant, Srnicek, and Harman to 2010/2011's queer-gender interventions by Vitale and O'Rourke and all the way down to Kolozova and Joy's volume, it took less than ten academic years for speculative realism to become functional for its skeptics. These accelerated interventions should thus be read as parallel rather than consequential." Panayotov (2017b, 138 n1).

in turn is derivative of its unilateral duality. The active avoidance of concerns over gender and representation of identities is therefore the by-product of (a) new realism's anti-Kantianism and (b) its critique of cultural determinism.

Kolozova and Joy problematize new realism by claiming that a segment of continental/poststructuralist feminism has already taken a refuge from the postmodern anti-realism and found an outlet for “the much-needed critique of culturalism in gender theory” (as the book's blurb announces). I have also tried to partly demonstrate that in 5.A.1 above. This “critique” is the resulting need of new realism's anti-correlationist strand of materialism that rejects in various ways the cultural turn's performativity of embodiment: “The provocations of ‘speculative turn’ philosophers (generally, all men) to post-Kantianism were already preceded by feminist philosophy” (Kolozova 2016, 13). A refuge from anti-realism is already partially present but it does not entail being simultaneously anti-poststructuralist and/or anti-correlationist, because there can be a realist notion of cultural specificity. Kolozova thinks that the works of Irigaray, Haraway, and Firestone bring closer new/speculative realism and feminist philosophy, since (a) the first is “defined by a radical break with any form of philosophical spontaneity” (ibid., 12¹⁵⁴), while (b) feminist philosophy was already moving away from it. There was never speculative realist feminism, and speculative realism does not capture speculations concerning gender-as/beyond-culture. One need not be anti-correlationist to be a speculative feminist to begin with. This is why most of the texts in the volume are nominated as “a critical theory *sui generis* that invokes the necessity of foregrounding new forms of realism for a ‘feminism beyond gender as culture’” (ibid., 13). What has changed since 2007's speculative realism in both feminist theory and continental realism should be read

¹⁵⁴ “Philosophical spontaneity” is a term derived from the work of both Althusser and Laruelle (see Laruelle 2013b, 22, 118-23). Macherey (2009, 16) explains that initially Althusser used the term to critique the way according to which scientists spontaneously, but unconsciously, do philosophy. Mackay (2011) explains that there is a needed rupture into this spontaneity because such scientific self-representation does not account for its own hidden theorization; and philosophers in their turn engage in a similar spontaneity by deciding to forget and jettison their own theoretical idealism.

in the light of what had changed before 2007: for the editors this is feminist philosophy's application "without the burden of maintaining fidelity to the linguistic turn" (ibid., 14). If speculative realism was anti-correlationism on speed, then a "speculative realist feminism" would be the slowing down of anti-correlationism's decisionism.

Behar's *Object-Oriented Feminism* (2016) is a feminist philosophy response to object-oriented ontology and philosophy (hereafter OOO/OOP) as one of the fields operating on the anti-correlationist thesis. As I have discussed elsewhere (Panayotov 2018a, 194), object-oriented feminism (hereafter OOF) was instigated in and around the theoretical phenomenon of OOP (Bogost 2010). OOP was one of the several splinters that came out of the 2007 Goldsmiths panel that then led to Bryant et al.'s 2011 anthology. It was a result of the specific Heideggerian appropriation of Bruno Latour's work by Graham Harman (2002; 2009). OOO is generally associated with Harman (2002) and Bogost (2012), and OOP and particularly "onticology" with Bryant (2010).

This one and the next section are substantially revised from Panayotov (2018a, 200-1). As with new realism, similar accusations of anti-feminism were held against OOO/P. Behar's volume is contemporaneous to the debates triggered by Vitale and O'Rourke, originating from conference panels in 2010-12. The volume attempts to show that to ignore a feminist perspective of object orientation (speaking from the perspective of the object's reality) would amount to self-induced oblivion into dogmatized categories of feminist concern (embodiment, the body, gender). On the editor's account, this concern has exhausted its principled social constructivist focus. One of the key questions in Behar's work is whether "object orientation" has always been a feminist concern, as with Kolozova and Joy's question if there was pre-speculative realist feminism. In and of itself, the volume alone does not provide evidence that object orientation has been a feminist matter from the get-go. It does not appear that Behar intended to prove this point, although she herself has addressed it partially (Behar 2016, 29-30

n1), but overall the volume does not manifest the tendency to historicize such a thesis, unlike Kolozova and Joy's volume.¹⁵⁵ While their volume revealed that it would be futile to embrace a "new" feminist-realist and scientifically rigorous objectivity and universality in speculative realism, both Kolozova and Joy's and Behar's volumes do not aim at a wholesale rejection of the cultural turn and epistemic pessimism as the "view from somewhere," as a "disinterested" position, but the realist position does not exclude the idea of maintaining a "view from nowhere."¹⁵⁶ While Kolozova and Joy and their collaborators correct the flawed idea that there is now a "new stage of feminist objectivity," Behar and her collaborators demonstrate that objectivity is both a feminist *and* cultural concern, specifically because OOO/P and OOF contribute particularly vigorously to problems of art, aesthetics and representation. This compromised position indicates a specific *turn within* the epistemology of the cultural turn, not outside it. In Behar's work there is an infrastructural argument that does not try to break away from feminist origins of poststructuralism per se.

Both volumes, and particularly Behar's OOF project, defy the expectation and the theoretical presupposition that a speculative realist feminism/feminist speculative realism or OOF are contradictory feminist projects against embodiment. Speaking from within the Real or the object should not be treated as anti-feminist just because it implies a disembodied and disinterested epistemology of "the view from nowhere" (see the classical book on the topic by Nagel 1986). "Theoretical presupposition" means that there is a presupposed contradiction with one's feminist identity (see Panayotov 2017b, 132-3, where I have already reviewed this problem). On this account, a critique of anti-realism and culturalism specifically in gender theory is already forced to prove the primacy and relevance of their work to experimental variations of anti-correlationism within "pre-speculative realist feminism." Disembodiment

¹⁵⁵ See Panayotov (2017b) and Konior (2017b). The editors of both volumes knew of each other's work, see specifically Behar (2016, 32 n25). Behar, Lunning and Gržinić are all contributors in the two volumes.

¹⁵⁶ A disagreement with this parallel regime is best articulated in Zahavi (2016).

becomes a problem for continental feminist philosophy because from an anti-realist feminist perspective anti-correlationism involves a type of intellection which is sexist and falsely universalistic, much like the supposedly neutral Plotinian One.

These theoretical fears should be located in the genealogy of anti-correlationism out of non-philosophy. What is the feminist concern with the non-philosophical theory of the Real-One? Since non-philosophy comes from the One, that is, the Real “itself,” this theory poses that the return to “oneness” (often perceived to be a synonym of “unity” and “identity” in an unreconstructed, metaphysical sense) risks compromising theories of subjectivity and agency that are politically important for feminism. However, the non-philosophical One provides grounds for theories of subjectivity, and thus “identity,” as demonstrated by Kolozova and Joy (2016) and Behar (2016). As explored in my work elsewhere (Panayotov 2017b, 135-6), Schmid (2016) is specifically addressing identitarian theoretical problems from the positionality of “generic humanity,” promoting a “feminism without opposition.” Her core claim is that “we can build a philosophical science compatible with a certain idea of women without compromising scientific objectivity” (ibid., 40; translation mine - S. P.). The central problem in formalizing non-oppositional scientist feminism is that women determine science by being used as “mediums.” Ever since the metaphysical notion of *chōra*, femininity is discursively described as medium for becoming. For Schmid, this role needs to be suspended, and to do so she proposes “non-standard heterogeneity” (ibid., 47): a pool of differences not reducible to and not distributing “disciplines” and “genders.” She summarizes this under the formulation “underdetermination of overdetermination” (ibid., 41). Non-standard heterogeneity is a way to remain faithful to reality, given that the Real is unilateral. In turn, reality moves forth by expressing fidelity to the human prior to gender and outside any philosophical canon: that is, reality is underdetermined by a pre-philosophically decisionist human and this is why it is faithful to the human as underdetermined without gender. Schmid

claims that, when we deal with issues of identity, and when we are doing this from a philosophico-decisional meta-positionality, *we confuse the human with the subject* and, as a result, gender with the human. Thus, if science is not to be overdetermined by gender, the overdetermination should be underdetermined via a notion of non-gendered generic human. This reading of gender reduces it to a void: but gender can become a void that is “also fully positive qua identity of universal law” (Laruelle et al. 2013, 47). The question of subjectivity and, with it, gender as a void, is a matter of recognizing its potential of the non-philosophical One - as either weakness or strength. That the subjectivity is “without example” or that gender is a gaping void does not mean that they are themselves examples of “empty signifiers,” but that they are acting *from* the indifferential unilateral Real.

To sum up, when problems with disembodiment and fears of re-objectification of women on theoretical grounds arise, they do so on account of identifying anti-realism with embodiment, and on account of subsuming this identification under the banner of feminist poststructuralist theory. When this identification is questioned on anti-correlationist ground (see Laboria Cuboniks 2015; Hester 2018; Power 2016), the aim is to reclaim/retreat the legacy of universalism from an anti-correlationist and non-philosophical posture of thought (see Ruti 2015; Meillassoux 2008; Laruelle 2013a; Laruelle 2013b). The critiques against anti-correlationist and feminist-realist positions usually concerns genealogy and theoretical production and seek to solidify the anti-realism of continental feminist philosophy. Consider, for example, the now common prank about the “four horsemen of speculative realism” (Meillassoux, Brassier, Harman and Hamilton Grant of the Goldsmiths conference panel), who have been subsequently called by feminist scholars also the “sausage fest”: a term of theoretical exasperation calling for the demonstration of (if not engagement with) what speculative realism entails for gendered knowledge. Such dismissal takes as unproblematic the origins of much of feminist theory in the abovementioned identification of embodiment with anti-realism. This is

true even of feminists coming from science studies background: for example, Haraway, with her work on scientific objectivity, has expressed similar feelings in the late 1980s, saying that “[t]he boys in the human sciences have called this doubt about self-presence the ‘death of the subject’ defined as a single ordering point of will and consciousness” (Haraway 1988, 585-6). In the very Introduction to her *Primate Visions*, the arch-example of the “boys in the human sciences” is Linnaeus, who “referred to himself as a second Adam, the ‘eye’ of God ... to purify the eye of the word” (Haraway 1989, 9). Critiques by Braidotti (Vermeulen 2014) objectify the origins of anti-correlationism as a similar theistic misnomer. Braidotti’s concern is the lack of citational continuity and bypassing achievements of feminist theory in speculative/new realism. But paradoxically her concern is already addressed in Kolozova’s *Cut of the Real* (2014, 24-7, 117-20), who has already proved that Braidotti and feminist poststructuralism can be synthesized with a feminist realist account.¹⁵⁷ She also dismisses the work of Bryant (2011a) who has integrated queer theory into onticology. Rosenberg (2014) provides a more informed critique,¹⁵⁸ delving into the literature concerning the autonomy and agency of matter/the Real. They subsume all areas operating under anti-correlationism as a contemporary turn to ontology, inclusive of new/speculative realism, OOO, and new materialism, calling this turn “onto-primitivism”:

Contemporary ontological work has, we might say, leapt upon the “subjectless turn,” and hastened to deterritorialize sexuality from the realm of the subject. This move has the tendency to turn both to ancestralness and apocalypse at once. ... All the variables of a so-called primitive accumulation are here. And all the variables of an onto-primitivism too. They are here, but crucially, vitally upended. ... This is the science-fictional imagination at full swerve from the disaster-porn apocalyptic aphrodisiacs of new materialisms and object-ontologies. (Rosenberg 2014)

The account is focused on sexuality, but the argument is applicable to the general idea of a subjectless/a-subjective turn (Brassier’s transcendental naturalism) and the autonomy of matter and the Real. Braidotti and her followers of feminist posthumanism, who are in effect

¹⁵⁷ I have addressed these very problematic omissions in Panayotov (2015).

¹⁵⁸ Rosenberg’s critique, despite its vitriolic and often off-putting language, deserves at least an elaborate mention, which is not the case in either Kolozova and Joy (2016) or Behar (2016), which is generally unfortunate.

representatives of new materialism (see again Åsberg, Thiele and van der Tuin 2015 for an argument similar to Kolozova 2016), have devised the field to precisely counter the fears of “renaturalization” of gender via a return narrative to Cartesian philosophies (see Sheldon 2015). If feminist-oriented speculative philosophers do circumvent the centrality of embodiment with realism this triggers a feminist concern for a new theoretical apology of repression of women. Yet a realism of continental feminist type treats the minimal feminist universal of embodiment in a way that is often seen as a rejection of embodiment, which is not the case, and Kolozova’s work is the crucial example. The critique bypasses the already articulated common point of convergence between the poststructuralist non-unitary subject and the new realist focus on scientific objectivity revolving around anti-correlationism and culminating in transcendental idealism as the disembodied view from nowhere (Nagel 1986; Brassier 2011). These critiques do not discuss *the level of engagement* with embodiment from a continental feminist realism, *outside* the immediate circles of anti-realism, but implicitly reject the lack of engagement with the problem of disembodiment. What is problematic for feminist anti-realists is that even when accounts of the primacy of difference are present (e.g., the work of Morton and Bryant), continental feminist philosophy *is being imported*, e.g., it is treated as an additional theory tool. This is why the critiques of articulating a continental feminist-realist position are based on non-committal to the existing literature and lack of citationality which proves the point they try to object to, i.e., performing the mistake continental realism is allegedly doing against the anti-realism of continental feminist philosophy.

These concerns have no account that the anti-correlationist rendition of subjectivity and gender already starts with the human (subject), which implies an inherent and partial correlationism. Because new realism is often seen as anti-anthropocentric, the interest in gender analyses and re-purposing of non-philosophy via feminism could diminish (Reid-Bowen 2011,

58). This is a very legitimate challenge to the argument in favor of gender as a void (Schmid), which entails the development of a feminist account of disembodiment. However, it is exactly due to the engagement with the (already) gendered subject organized around the non-philosophical *chōra* and One that this objection has no ground, in as much as the Real-One is always already on the side of the human, on *that side of the world*.

In this section I have reviewed the relevant accusations against continental feminist realism and the niched literature that responds to feminist concerns over the theoretical re-subjugation of embodiment and thereby women on account of the disembodiment and the alleged false disinterestedness of any continental type of anti-correlationism. I showed that the responses do not try to reject the relevance of gendered embodiment from a continental feminist-realist point of view but try to account for such embodiment from a realist perspective. The critiques against a continental feminism that can be deemed anti-correlationist exemplify Kolozova's concern over the theoretical inertia of feminist poststructuralist theory: in this case, that embodiment can be sensically theorized only from the anti-realist perspective of the Real's non-sensicality and irreducibility to the embodied human subject. It is for this reason that this small literature cannot be qualified as propounding a feminist theory of or argument from disembodiment.

5.B. A Continental Feminist-Realist Philosophical Approach to Disembodiment

Having presented above Kolozova's non-philosophical and new realist critique of feminist poststructuralist theory, as well as additional arguments and literature that can be deemed continental feminist realism, what remains to be done in this section is to develop my own original account of a feminist-realist approach to disembodiment. My interpretation is based on the integration of the Laruellian One within contemporary speculative and realist

philosophy and its integration into continental feminist philosophy by Kolozova as presented above. What I am setting to do here is build-on this double integration in order to defend a feminist argument from disembodiment. I do this because the literature I followed above only *reacts* to accusations against alleged propounding of a feminist disembodiment. But those authors, their provenance (new realism, new materialism, OOO) notwithstanding, do not in fact offer such an argument. Therefore, an original continental feminist-realist account of disembodiment is needed because the disidentification of embodiment with anti-realism does not automatically lead to a feminist theorization of disembodiment. Such an argument or a theory is simply not included in Kolozova's work or any of the other writers discussed above.

The fact that so much concern is directed against a possible “return” (which is really a turn) to disembodiment in feminist circles signals that this is an undesired move. However, the problem of the general objection is that there cannot be a “return” to disembodiment in this particular case because there has not been developed a feminist theory of disembodiment in continental feminist philosophy (as opposed to multiple critiques of disembodiment in it in general and in feminist science studies in particular) *which is both non-decisional and realist*.¹⁵⁹ As I pointed out in the above section, the critiques do not discuss *the level of engagement* with embodiment from a continental feminist realism, *outside* the immediate circles of anti-realism, but reject the lack of engagement with the problem of disembodiment. While it can truly be objected that there is a lack of engagement with the ramifications of a possible argument from disembodiment in anti-correlationist thought, this in no way entails an engagement with the notion and the problem of disembodiment. Therefore, the argument that

¹⁵⁹ The only two writers I have been able to identify which can be considered to come close to a similar project are Lisa Blackman (2008) and Carla Lam (2015). While Blackman shows awareness of undertheorizing disembodiment by listing it as one among several “important areas that have been omitted or only covered very briefly” (Blackman 2008, 10), Lam goes further to try and show that in “theorizing the body’s agency as only possible through resistance to social inscription, and the body as ‘materialized’ through discourse, the result is a new intellectualized body, abstracted from its materiality” (Lam 2015, 11). Lam’s approach and theory of disembodiment is thus the only philosophically decisional theory so far.

I develop here in favor of an approach to disembodiment (it is an *approach*, an interpretative one, and not a full-scale theory) is in no way a “return” to a non-existing feminist consideration of the problem, but an intervention that proposes that disembodiment should be approached non-decisionally to begin with. The approach is based on anti-correlationism as well as treating non-philosophy’s theory of the Real-One as precursor of anti-correlationism and new realism (see 4.A.1), which is then integrated into continental feminist philosophy. Because, as demonstrated above, this theory and approach to the Real-One can indeed be operationalized in the fields discussed, the problem of disembodiment is a relevant one for continental feminist philosophy to begin with.

I qualify my approach to the problem of disembodiment as continental feminist-realist approach because I synthesize (a) the feminist critique of philosophical pseudo-neutrality (an account of this problem was presented in 3.B.4), (b) the non-philosophical critique of philosophical decisionism (which includes the feminist notions of embodiment), and (c) new realist anti-correlationism. Presenting such an approach builds on Kolozova’s work on the *chōra* of feminist poststructuralism and offers a way out of its stronghold against the Real. Unlike Kolozova, I explicitly try to elaborate an affirmative feminist notion of disembodiment.

I have already discussed the attack on so-called unitary subject behind feminist poststructuralism and that there can be a convertibility between the One and the Multiple. Strictly, this convertibility is, again, a pseudo-convertibility as it is unilateral from the side of the Real. Because such convertibility entails accepting the unidirectional access of the Real to us, and because the Real’s unidirectionality forecloses a reciprocal relation, this does not in turn entail interdiction from the Real, because it was demonstrated by Laruelle that it is itself manifested as both the One as its name and as the radicality of immanence. It is exactly the unilaterality that, when and if integrated and accepted in continental feminism, requires an account of disembodiment, notwithstanding the highly gendered history of the problem

throughout ancient and late antique philosophy that I have dealt with in Chapters 1-3. The history of the problem and its vacillating somatophobia is not repudiated: rather, a new chapter of that history is written the moment the non-philosophical and new realist perspective is accepted within the workings of speculation.

I will now present in more detail an engagement with the Laruellian Real-One to account for the problem of disembodiment. In Chapter 4 I have already explained that the One is parallel to and one of the first names of the Real. It is unilateral to us as subjects and it is constituent of an ontology of subjectivity and its presence (its manifestation, its givennes in the world). How would such a unilateral-realist account of embodied subjectivity defy the metaphysics of presence in the history of philosophy? (Laruelle clearly differentiates himself from this history, see Laruelle 1979; 2013a). These are serious feminist concerns to which continental feminists have tried to respond, leaving aside the theorization of disembodiment as a problem. The critique of poststructuralism's convertibility to philosophy is a plea for its ultimate non-convertibility to the Principle of Sufficient Philosophy, via a quasi-convertibility between the One and the Multiple. This transformative critique tries *to impersonate the indifference of the Real-One* against the philosophical authorial opposition. It assumes and embraces the indifference of the Real as indifferent to what it determines, which cannot be translated in the world, and which entails that our access to it would always be either embodied or minimally transcendently mediated. Such realization should not be treated pessimistically on account of the alleged unknowability, inaccessibility and indifference of the Real. Its inaccessibility does manifest it to us as disembodied, however, because we are always already immersed in the Real, due to its immanence, we are thus always already sharing in its disembodiedness. In short, the Real-One's disembodiment is partly embodied in us: we become its counter-*chōra*.

By “us” I mean specifically the non-philosophical gendered subject as prior to and undetermined initially by gendering. It can be thought and operate from within the limitations of disembodiment and the Real, and can instrumentalize the indifference of the Real-One as precisely empowerment for the Multiple and the unity of differences, which are part of the world as determined first by *chōra* (as Laruelle has stated). Under the conditions of convertibility laid out above, the Multiple is positively relatable to a mobility with the One in the name of and from a *unitary subject*. This mobility is required because of the rigorous condition of unilaterality; the mobility does not, however, stipulate that the embodied unity of differences is separated from the indifferent Real. The differences’ mobility to and with the One rather require that they emanate from the unilaterally and allegedly disembodied immanent Real, springing out of it. They cannot be reduced to and be deducible from the world of embodiment since the unilateral duality is relatively immanent and as such is the unknowingly unobjectifiable disembodied source of embodiments. The mobility of differences, in short, between the One (as a name of the Real) and the Multiple, between the disembodiedness of the Real and the embodiedness of the phenomenological plane of existence, is licensed by the givenness-without-given of the Real. The fact embodiments experience their unilaterality as unknowability does not mean that embodied subjects do not participate in a disembodied experience. It is for this reason that the non-philosophical gendered subject can be treated as disembodied and springing out of unilaterality: the gendered subject of embodiment is too undergoing through the lived experience of the One and its disembodiment.

The One can thus no longer be simply taken for granted as a hidden term in any type of (decisional) philosophy. The One “is not a transcendental interpretation of the Real but an effect of its immanence” (Koložova 2014, 155). It is thus not any more allotted an (or the) empty place (*ibid.*, 22) that subtends an anti-realist interpretation. The production of the feminist poststructuralist non-unity is being interrupted by the infinite effability of the One. If

the unitary subject springs out of the disembodied Real-One, it shrinks the boundary between poststructuralism and non-philosophy by certifying a minimally mediated contact of the (gendered) subject with the Real. The instance of this mediation is not language itself, but a unilateral privileging of the Real which has the power to both fictionalize and expose the orthodoxly ineffable fictionalizing of the Real precisely because of its unilaterality.

The non-philosophical restitution of the One does not lead to an *absolute* detachment *from*, but to its radicalized re-attaching to a disembodied position. This is the reason why we can discuss a non-philosophical gendered subject to begin with. Just as continental realism does not mean the restoring of the metaphysics of presence, so it does not mean the destruction of subjectivity either. However, there is a *radical* detachment *of* the subject *from* the Real, just as there is radicalization of concepts or the “*chōra* of feminist poststructuralism” in particular. The critique performed onto this *chōra* affords an *existential argument about subjectivity*, which provides its (non-)politics on the basis of an onto-epistemological argument about the Real: that it is radically indifferent to the world. This indifference operates in the name of no-one. The indifferentiality of the Real is experienced by the subject in the body and it is in this subjective interlocking of immanent corporeality of the subject and the indifferential passivity of the Real that the status of language and fictionalizing the Real in poststructuralism gives way to a unity of the body as a political universal deducible from the unilaterally disembodied and immanent Real.

Because the One is a name of the Real and because of its radical immanence, the primacy of the One over the Real as a transcendental is an impossible metaphysical hierarchy. Unlike the Plotinian neutrality of the One, the Laruellian One cannot be posited above what is posited from it. The fact that there remains a transcendentially minimal mediation does not necessitate the refusal of immanence. The Real remains unilateral to us in the sense that only it does avail the opportunity to be *with* us, and not the other way around. Its instance of

communion with the human and her embodiment is ultimately disembodied, noematic, unilateral, but it does not even need to avail or donate itself to us because it is auto-positionally donational and immanent in its unilaterally foreclosed disembodiedness. Again, In Laruelle's terms, the One is the effect of being, it is immanent to it.

By following this Laruillian interpretation of the One and Kolozova's critique of the non-unitary subject, a differentiation with the Plotinian conception of the One as beyond Being can be discerned, rendering the One the hidden term of both pre- and post-Cartesian anthropic notion of subjectivity. This notion of the One move non-philosophy away from the temptation to read it as a covert form of Neoplatonism and deepens the non-philosophical Neoplatonist inversion by identifying the One as the hidden term of postmodern dualism toward an argument from continental realism.

The Real and the One have common denominators the opposition to which allows their non-philosophical restitution. These are ineffability and embodiment. It is through a *non-fictionalizable notion of the body and embodiment* that the non-philosophical gendered subject proceeds from the disembodied Real-One. The non-philosophical continuity with the category of the One only appears impossible to integrate with the poststructuralist notion of the subject. While Plotinus was the first to call God the One, and while the Nietzschean God was pronounced dead, the One did not disappear just because of God's dead. The Laruillian One is thus not religious, but a-religiously gnostic. The gnosis of the One, in light of the critique of decisionism, allows us to turn to the noematic sphere as the realm of disembodiment without the stipulation of an ineffably authorized and absolutized transcendence, but with the immanent Vision-in-One of the on-looker. The subject and the self behind this Vision-in-One is an excretion of that very same One. As Kolozova says,

the instance of continuity in its immanence functions as a unifying force for the self or the subjective processuality. In other words, continuity is the perseverance of a certain numeric one ... The silence imposed over the "Name of the One" is in inherent, inextricable relation with the "prohibition" of the use of language regarding the questions of continuity. (ibid., 47, 49).

The continuity between the One and the Subject can be a legitimate tool for the description and enactment of the Real, but this cannot be done without restituting the very legitimacy of (a language of) the One that is no longer the name of God but the name of the Real. When the One is the name of the Real, its continuity with embodiments is not ruled out, but deducible from its radical immanence. Thus, the One is malleable to a language that is not the one of Neoplatonism's transcendently ineffable One, but of an infinitely effable One which is not beyond Being, as in Plotinus but is *of* the Real: the (disembodied) One as the source of the (embodied) human.

The continuity between an embodied subject of the unity of differences and a non-philosophical One allows the restitution of the interdicted One as one half of the dyad Real-One which makes possible the very mobility of the One and the Multiple (of the unity of differences), and allows a non-philosophical theory of subjectivity and therefore a gendered subject from within the perspective of a continental feminist-realist approach. Without such a continuity, there cannot be a feminist consideration of disembodiment. At the heart of this continuity is the radicality of immanence and delinking the One from both God and ineffability and the transcendence which rules out the sensicality of unity of differences. The continuity between the two terms is what is, strictly speaking, transformative and licensing a continental feminist-realist approach to the non-philosophical One, making possible the restitution of the One as both experientially subjective and disembodied. The disembodiedness of the non-philosophical One is ultimately in the domain of the lived experience of the subject. But it happens in the name of no-one, as a nemo-centric articulation of subjectivity.

Since the postulation of Koložova's critique towards feminist poststructuralism and its residual understanding of the Real is modeled after the Laruellian understanding of the One as indifferent to Being, then, to the extent to which there is also a residual and untheorizable gap which somehow *donates* the Real, feminist poststructuralism can be used as the model to

become the exemplary vehicle for restructuring the philosophical and quasi-metaphysical prejudice that the Real equals difference. It is possible to say that Real equals difference, but only in as much as the One is indifferent to the beings of differences, because it is indifferent to (and not beyond) Being. There is no postulation that the equation between the Real-One and indifference blocks the politicalness of the Real. It is precisely the non-philosophical *chōra* as the first determination of the subsequently embodied world that manifests the indifferently donational character of the Real: once as immanently given to no-one, then as transcendently ungiven to any-one. Given that from a continental realist perspective disembodiment is formally excluded from the theorization of the lived experience of the gendered subject, and given that the non-philosophical disembodied One, as I described it above, can be seen as experientially lived by that subject (in as much as nemo-centric subject), there is therefore no reason to disallow disembodiment to be a heuristic concept for feminist continental philosophy.

5.C. Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to present a continental feminist-realist approach to disembodiment. I was able to formulate it by initially showing how continental realism and anti-realism conjugate with embodiment as a problem. Basing the presentation on the previously presented anti-correlationist and non-philosophical re-readings of the old concepts of *chōra* and the One, I presented the notion of embodiment as problematic in feminist poststructuralism via the non-philosophical realism of Kolozova. I have showed additionally that various feminist arguments which can be subsumed under the banner of anti-correlationism and continental feminist realism do not necessarily require a theorization of disembodiment as a correlatively necessary term of embodiment. My examples were taken from a niched literature intersecting new realisms, object-oriented philosophies and the anti-correlationist thesis. I defended the argument that the non-philosophical One as the hidden term of grounding

a poststructuralist subjectivity cannot be regarded as a somatophobic continuation of the Plotinian notion of the One, which led me to develop my own approach to the problem of disembodiment. I developed it through demonstrating theoretically that, ultimately, even while the non-philosophical Real-One is (immanently) disembodied, it is experientially lived and thus embodied in the non-philosophical gendered subject. I highlighted the role of indifference of the Real-One in order to retreat from the perspective of the non-philosophical gendered subject disembodiment as an affirmative (which is not the same as “optimistic”) project for a continental feminist realism.

My argument in defense of a feminist-realist notion of disembodiment sought to relate the problem with the ancient notion of *apeiron*/the boundless and the history of the Plotinian One in order to render a renewed attitude to disembodiment in both non-philosophy and new realism, highlighting that especially in new realism/anti-correlationism there are legitimate feminist philosophical concerns about treating disembodiment as unreconstructed Neoplatonist restoration of somatophobic disembodiedness. I curbed this concern by offering the said approach to disembodiment.

The transformation of the problem of boundlessness into the metaphysical notion of *chōra* and its radicalization as the Plotinian and allegedly neutral One via the Indefinite Dyad is not bound to cosmic pessimism of a Plotinian kind, which nominates disembodiment as the only salvific project of the human. I showed that the convertibility of the One and the Multiple is a needed interface for the development of a feminist-realist approach influenced by non-philosophy, but the unilaterality of the One does not preclude a non-philosophical gendered and embodied subject of unity of differences. It only retains the disembodied position of unilaterality of the Real.

There is no intrinsic theoretical value in reversing non-philosophically the primacy of the categories One and Multiple and nominating the One as originary and cloaked. The point

of the critique of poststructuralism's philosophical sufficiency is the transformability of the radical immanence that the One hosts in itself. This transformability is what the One's convertibility to the Multiple means. It entails a political mobility and physics of the One that allows a rigorous flexibility of the unitary subject rather than the inflexible rigidity of the unity of differences. This is why I dealt in such detail with Kolozova's non-philosophical engagement with the One and *chōra*, but also because the political mobility of the non-philosophical One does not require a dyadic structure of the One and the *chōra* in the Plotinian sense: the Laruellian *chōra* is already the radicalization of the boundlessness of the disorganized materials in the philosophical universe. The gendered non-philosophical subject of thinking, of non-thetic thought, transitions to a non-pessimistic vision of disembodiment only under the conditions that universalism (a) does not denegate embodiment and that it (b) does not require disembodiment to be itself the one and only condition for the ascension to the One. This ascension is, strictly speaking, futile from the perspective of the non-philosophical One.

The ancient problem of disembodiment that emerged out of concerns over the boundlessness identifiable with femininity has escalated to the absolute transcendentalization of the One and its alleged neutrality. Feminist critiques of somatophobia that emerged out of identifying boundlessness and women have rightfully debunked the gendered determinations of the boundless and theories of matter, whose correlative unknowable One was sent off to the skies by Plotinus where it could forever contemplate - with a pretentious inconsequentiality - the forsaken status of embodiment as femininity. But once the problem of boundlessness as a covered over neutrality is identified, conceding theoretically transcendence to the One deepened the problem of disembodiment to an extent where, as demonstrated by Laruelle and Kolozova, it was impossible to think of the One as non-transcendent. To therefore accept the Real-One's radical immanence is not in contradiction with continental feminist philosophy's

critical canon of debunking the metaphysical wrongdoings of hylomorphism, in as much as hylomorphism is excised from *chōra*. Yet interiorizing this notion of the Real-One does require, as I have shown in chapter 3, correcting certain misinterpretations such as *chōra*-matter (Irigaray), which open the space for a feminist reading of the One to begin with.

But this is clearly not enough. Behind the wrongdoings of hylomorphism stands a misinterpreted and interpolated hylomorphism within feminist philosophy of antiquity itself. No wonder, then, that disembodiment is hardly theorizable. Once the ancient problem of disembodiment from Plato to Plotinus can be elucidated with the aid of feminist history of philosophy, and once feminist philosophy's Aristotelian prejudice is corrected, the door was opened to approach disembodiment as a genuine concern from a continental feminist-realist position. In this chapter I have demonstrated that through the meaningful pollution of feminist philosophy with the non-philosophical Real-One and anti-correlationism we can thus sensically approach disembodiment.

Conclusion

This dissertation began as an engagement with what I initially saw as a tendency to reduce the significance of the human body in ancient and late antique philosophy. As a feminist writer, I have rarely objectified my own critical attention to such tendency. This project led to the opposite of its origin: I imagined I would write a critical history of disembodiment specifically within Neoplatonism. The intellectual trajectory that ensued and was presented here accounted for a mere fraction of the original intention and led me to an examination of two seemingly opposing tendencies I eventually came to synthesize: a feminist critique of disembodiment and a feminist defense of disembodiment. However, while the first is philosophical, the latter is strictly non-philosophical.

The body is historically the most important term of inquiry for any post-Enlightenment critical insight into the history and intellectual legacy of Western modes of reasoning and rationality. It is an entity of inquiry that has been abstracted into the consensual term “embodiment,” a term that has been engaged with by few major names in history of philosophy (Spinoza and Nietzsche, to mention the most significant ones) as a term of importance for rationality and epistemology, but which has been denigrated for want of transcending it. In this dissertation, I have tried to account for this want only in the work in Plato, Plotinus and to some extent in Greek myths. In the 20th century, the body become the conceptual stock-in-trade especially for feminist projects of re-reading and re-thinking the Western canon of metaphysics, and the development of feminist philosophy has rightly questioned it’s acquired obsolescence. In short, the body become a privileged scholarly trope particularly for feminist thinkers (regardless of their gender), because this same canon conjoined the body and women and spliced them into a metaphysical posteriority dependent on the body’s other.

But what was/is that other? In this dissertation, I initially asked: Is disembodiment gendered? Can it be assumed that embodiment became a philosophical symbol of femininity and, with it, that disembodiment become largely a male and metaphysical idealization? I proposed that this is the case - that disembodiment was a flight from embodiment - by investigating the Platonic philosophical tradition (Plato and Plotinus). More concretely, that disembodiment is a male-gendered ideal; correlatively, embodiment became a female-gendered one. In the course of research, I also proposed that whatever that other might be, it should be subsumed under the term “disembodiment.” Embodiment has historically collapsed into disembodiment and, with it, the problem of boundlessness. I have showed that Plato’s cosmology is largely in collision with his political egalitarianism, and that he continuously weaved an implicit philosophy of disembodiment despite all contradictions stemming from the evolution or devolution (depending on the reading) of his thought. I have also argued that Plotinus’ theory of the One - the new God of the post-Platonic age - gained its identity by a subtle hierarchy with its dimly inferior and implicit other, the Indefinite Dyad, by way of expunging the One from its originary maleness. Behind the continuity I saw from *chōra* to the One was all along the ancient discovery of *to apeiron*: what initially appeared as a deliberately empty term of speculation after which all speculation and scientific rationalization was possible. And it paid off in the circuits of abstraction by culminating in the Platonic *chōra*.

The search and the operationalizing of a portmanteau term (disembodiment) allowed me to make the case for a rather selective intellectual history of the problem of disembodiment, whose teleology was not to merely pinpoint a historical primer of rejecting embodiment. Were this the case, I would have focused on a plethora of related writers of the same tradition and would not have dared to propose a comparative approach to the problem and, to a large extent, a counter-intuitive feminist defense of disembodiment, a concept which in Part I of this project

looms large as the transhistorical burden responsible for a philosophical extrapolation of metaphysical sexist tendencies.

The case I made was different. If my selective history of disembodiment raises a series of historical and methodological issues, especially with regard to trans-historical and comparative historical analysis, this is because it served an unexpected purpose: a comparison with the contemporary moment of the “speculative turn” whose might I largely minimized by claiming its roots, aided by Galloway’s argument, in the non-philosophy of Laruelle. While in Part I my impetus was to prove from the methodological positions and investigations of feminist philosophers and historians of philosophy that the Platonic and Neoplatonic schools of thought do indeed bear the historical onus of somatophobic tendencies, in Part II, by embracing the deplatonized lexis of the non-philosophical One and *chōra*, I turned to a surprising discontinuation of gazing at the said historical onus. Not because its history can be wiped out, reversed, and proven short of responsibility in splicing precisely gender and metaphysics (and then forgetting about it), but because the onus, as I proposed in Chapters 4 and 5, can be used for something else, namely, a continental feminist-realist approach to the problem of disembodiment. Thus, while in Part I I pointed fingers at the figures whose legacy can be held accountable for a certain intellectual inertia in disparaging the human body and women-as-the-body, in Part II I in turn disparaged the abstractive inertia within the methodological inspiration behind Part I, namely, feminist philosophy and history of ancient and late antique philosophy.

What allowed me to engage in these two counter-intuitive moves - the first is still debated (and I say this with exasperation) in mainstream/malestream philosophy, the latter is yet to be debated (and I say this with no exoneration) in mainstream feminist philosophy - was the conviction that non-philosophy’s re-engagement with the ancient One offers an original approach to a notion whose originality and might have been consensually disparaged and long

banned from especially the queendom of feminist thought. What particularly helped me make the case for a feminist defense of disembodiment as a revision of the problem of boundlessness was Kolozova's creative admixture of continental feminist philosophy (or what she terms "poststructuralist feminist theory") with non-philosophy and new realism, offering a solitary voice in defense of seeing the One in an unseen way: as it seeing us. Kolozova would not be able to offer this admixture without Laruelle's re-engagement with the One, but her engagement with theoretical feminism and its alleged inertia and axiomatic orthodoxy is a merit of her own that allowed me to develop my own original argument. Namely, stepping on her work, by embracing the theory of the Real-One, whose immanence is in part an empirical experience according to non-philosophy, and by embracing the speculative claim that we always already operate from within the immanence of the Real-One, I saw a path forward that erstwhile Platonic historical onus which would turn into a future tunnel of light - especially for feminist thought. There was a whole series of scalable moves that led me to this path. Let me narrate the path taken in brief:

- articulating the problem of boundlessness and/as femininity as a space of initial ambivalence where women did not have to fight the later philosophical abstractions, immersed as they were in immortality and non-reproductivity;
- trying to inspect if the Platonic and Neoplatonic schools were inherently and contradictorily somatophobic;
- demonstrating that in Plato the mythic ambivalent relation of women and boundlessness and immortality was replaced by a feminized metaphysical space called *chōra*, an abstraction that turned boundlessness into a hierarchical space of breeding the world with no participation;
- claiming that the notion of *chōra* transformed an earlier motif of boundlessness into a metaphysical notion which bid adieu to female immortality and

bounded it to (metaphysical) reproductivity - and becoming, via the very problem of becoming, resulting in *chōra* as the first *philosophical* manifestation of the problem of disembodiment;

- further claiming that Plato kept the gendered association with boundlessness to allegedly both explain it as the source of noetic matter and transcend it, a move I called radicalization;

- claiming that Plotinus' One in turn radicalized Plato's radicalization by turning to an ultimate pseudo-de-gendering of metaphysics with his original notion of the One;

- questioning the mainstream feminist reading of Plotinus and depolluting the Platonic source from hylomorphism, a move that allowed to read the differences between Plato and Plotinus and thus to do justice to Plotinus' own progressive tendencies in theorizing matter;

- embracing Laruelle's deplatonized One as both immanent and partially embodied, as well as his theory of the Real;

- turning to new realism's anti-correlationism and non-philosophy's anti-decisionism to reinstate a theory of the Real against the continental consensus on the dyad being/thought;

- articulating the gendered position from which non-philosophy can operate and thus presenting the non-philosophical *chōra*;

- operationalizing Kolozova's non-philosophical and new realist critique of feminist theory (of embodiment and subjectivity) in order to accommodate Laruelle's One and to prove that it is a hidden operative term allowing the so-called unity of differences which enable subjectivity as arbitrary and limited by an alleged limitlessness and boundlessness.

With regards to the notions *chōra* and One, through which I tried to conceptualize the problem of boundlessness as femininity, my project took an unexpected turn once I started reading Plotinus and Laruelle together. I could not anticipate that there might be a position from which those terms can be functionalized for noematic gains suitable to feminist thinking. I was proven wrong by encountering and building on the work of Laruelle and Koložova. Additionally, given that the initial problematic of *apeiron* seemed properly immersed in a feminist apology of associating women, boundlessness and elementality, it seemed that there is a contemporary Pythagorean table of opposites which could hardly be disturbed. Over time, it seemed that the problem of boundlessness was engulfed and hidden in the problem of disembodiment, and a disjunction between the two led me to question the feminist trope of boundlessness and elementality as philosophical femininity to be defended in the collapsed term “embodiment.” Without the juxtaposition that ensued in my research, it seemed that theorizing boundlessness in ancient and late antique philosophies from within feminist concerns is the only profitable strategy, whose political telos was bound to be an infinite rejection of disembodied reason. On the one side, the initial research suggested that the table has led to a feminist fortification and defense of terms such as boundlessness, limitless, formless, matter, corporeal, embodiment, elementality, composite: an immersion into nature, matter, the body and reproductivity. On the other side, feminist analyses of the Western canon have robustly placed together boundedness, limit, form, immaterial, incorporeal, disembodiment, non-composite, self-sufficiency: and, last, but not least, independence from nature, matter, the body and reproduction.

I have not questioned the research that has now proven these polarities are to a large extent still sustained. Feminist philosophers have proven that the independence of mind and soul from body is a false defense of what is an interdependence between those terms. (What is more, some of those feminist analyses, as shown in Chapter 3, have already sought to defend

that interdependence.) In short, I have not argued against feminist historians of philosophy and I have not defended the thesis that disembodiment deserves some sexist metaphysical update. I was led by non-philosophers to question the source of the rejection of the One and with it of disembodiment, because the source lies precisely in the dichotomous reason acquired in order to research the canon's dichotomies. It seemed unconvincing to maintain these divisions, not because they are not historically veracious, but because they are a source to be worked with. And the work done is almost entirely immersed in theoretical exegeses of the political power of the woman's body, or, embodiment, whose boundlessness serves as the philosophical source of socio-political defense. That means there is very little work done with disembodiment. This is why the thesis I defended is a thesis in favor of a work to be yet done in continental feminist philosophy.

What the curved trajectory described above, and its subsequent telos, convinced me of is that there is no necessity in maintaining fidelity and continuity to a feminist scholarly inertia of rejecting disembodiment as a solution. But to what is disembodiment a solution? To an "anthropology" that speaks to our day's concerns with the so-called post-human. While my aim was not to defend contemporary post-humanism, and will not be, the non-philosophical and new realist approach to disembodiment I offered in this dissertation is in a hissing, disarticulated way a response to calls to revisit human nature. Those calls are almost entirely immersed in theories of embodiment. I do not think this project could accommodate those concerns, for lack of space and due to fundamental disagreements with post-humanism, yet I do believe my argument in defense of a continental feminist-realist approach to disembodiment itself accommodates them in at least implicit ways.

What does my argument in feminist defence of disembodiment entail politically is a subject of a debate to be yet developed. Surely, it does entail that the very category of embodiment in continental feminist philosophy should be revised and updated and, according

to my thesis, this is to be done via Laruelle's and Kolozova's reading of the non-philosophical *chōra* and One that excludes the *philosophical* apologetics of embodiment. I say "philosophical" because feminist philosophy is a philosophy ripe with the non-philosophical accusation of decision I described in Chapter 4. In this regard all philosophy is subject of disproof in the eyes of non-philosophers. Yet again, the critique which extends to feminist philosophy on account of theorizing and defending embodiment as boundlessness does not entail the obliteration of its analytical feats. As Kolozova asks:

could there be a poststructuralist, constructivist, and deconstructive critique of the (Cartesian) unitary subject that could also and simultaneously allow us to conceive of the subject as residing in some mode of immanent oneness and stability that would not be a constrictive and exclusive metaphysical formation? Is it possible to conceptualize a subject according to some paradigm of unity that is not totalitarian, a subject of auto-transformative oneness, of identitarian mobility, in short, multiple in one sense yet an instance of oneness in another? And could we conceive of both instances as immanent? (Kolozova 2014, 19-20)

By offering my contribution and argument, I have made the case that it is possible to maintain such critique and such a gendered subject against the mainstream of continental feminist philosophy of embodiment without having to disrupt a continuity with it. A feminist argument in defence of disembodiment does not necessitate rejecting and disembodimenting the feminist theories of embodiment. Theorizing disembodiment from the proposed non-philosophical and new realist positions is not a disruption of the continuity with so-called poststructuralist theory, but an attempt at continuity which offers a platform to develop a non-philosophical continental feminist *and* realist reading of the problem of disembodiment. From such a platform I explained how philosophical materials (such as *chōra*/One) can be used and radicalized in particular for/from continental feminist philosophy in order to consider a feminist restitution of the One and with it approaching an engagement with disembodiment. I was thus able to critique from a non-philosophical and feminist-realist position the notion of embodiment as anti-realist and phenomenological rejection of strong epistemological agency, without relapsing into an ineffable apologetics of embodiment. According to my thesis presently the only way to counter both renewed uninformed philosophical engagements with

the ideal of disembodiment and the uncritical apologetics of embodiment is via non-philosophy and new realism.

My argument also tried to implicitly show that there can be a re-modelling of thinking embodiment in feminist philosophy and that it does not mean a “return” to the “god trick” which Haraway and her followers have long fought against. On the contrary, the feminist non-philosophical and gendered subject, while claiming to be singular, offers a political mobility that can only be viable if the orthodoxy of feminist poststructuralism is acknowledged (banning notions and concepts) and that it can surpass idealizing embodiment as an intellectual habit against disembodiment. What is at stake in the non-philosophical indifference of the gendered subject to the world is neither a negative evaluation of embodiment, nor a return to differences or to transcendental identities, but a positive, optimistic - or, non-pessimistic - evaluation of disembodiment.

My engagement with the problem of disembodiment aimed to conceptualize a continental feminist-realist approach to the gendering inherent in the disembodiment tendencies of the Platonic tradition and to some extent in new realisms. It took into consideration feminist philosophical critiques of the philosophical canon without automatically accepting those critiques’ philosophical decisionism collapsed in “embodiment.” These critiques cannot be *ineffably grounded* on the philosophical sufficiency of the notion of “embodiment.” New realist anti-correlationism synthesized with feminist-realist philosophy accommodates theorizing disembodiment. The theorizing is necessarily a speculation about the Real grounded on Laruelle’s science of philosophy (non-philosophy) which resists continental anti-realism: a resistance against any philosophically sufficient grounds, including feminist ones.

The proposal for a continental feminist-realist approach to disembodiment reconsiders how to do feminist philosophy in a realist way that will not render it as the particularization of a self-styled universalism, nor will it be rendered as the repetition of a hierarchical metaphysics,

but will accommodate space for addressing the problem of disembodiment as the problem of anthropic finitude. Theories of embodiment presently cannot offer any exegesis of humanist perpetuation in the dark horizons of the impending sixth extinction. This is why theories of disembodiment - the proposed approach here is just an approach, and not a “theory” - are bound to flourish and propose noematic strategies for facing the realities of the embodied finitude of *noesis*, and not of the disembodied *poiesis* of soma.

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