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# Eternal Recurrence and the Limits of Critical Analysis

**Abstract:** Nietzsche's concept of overcoming and his analysis of traditional disembodied thinking patterns and values stand in an uneasy tension. How can anything be overcome, if it is analysed? Nietzsche himself not only seems sceptical about this possibility, but outright pessimistic. His concept of the eternal recurrence undercuts the possibility of overcoming our habituated ways of thinking, behaving and acting. Therefore, the overhuman as a concept itself needs to be overcome, as Zarathustra sees clearly in his most silent hour. This paper strives to show that feminist and phenomenological approaches are able to pick up where Nietzsche's thinking stopped and went no further. These approaches involve a shift from an analytical to a transformational mode of thinking. This means that one not only thinks *about*, but is *with* the body. In order to explain what this method involves I turn to Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, Claire Petitmengin, and Eugene Gendlin.

**Keywords:** Overcoming, eternal recurrence, analysis, body, binary structures, transformation, closeness, distance, micro-phenomenology, responsiveness, embodied thinking.

**Zusammenfassung:** Nietzsches Motiv der Überwindung und seine Analysen prägender entkörperlichter Denk- und Wertungsmuster stehen in einem gewissen Spannungsverhältnis zueinander. Wie kann nämlich Analyse dazu beitragen, das Analyzierte zu überwinden, vor allem wenn erkannt wird, wie tief die analysierten Denkgewohnheiten gehen? In dieser Hinsicht scheint Nietzsches Begriff der ewigen Wiederkehr sehr konsistent: Analyse allein kann nichts an den analysierten Verhältnissen verändern. Nietzsches Lehre von der ewigen Wiederkehr untergräbt zugleich die erhoffte Möglichkeit der radikalen Überwindung tradiertter Formen des Denkens, Wertens und Handelns, die Nietzsche vorschwebt. Folglich muss der Übermensch als Motiv selbst überwunden werden, wie Zarathustra in seiner stillsten Stunde merkt. In diesem Artikel wird gezeigt, dass feministische und phänomenologische Herangehensweisen fähig sind, dort anzuknüpfen, wo Nietzsche im Verhältnis von Analyse und Überwindung nicht weiterkam. In den Ansätzen, um die es im zweiten Teil dieses Artikels gehen wird, zeichnet sich ein Übergang von analytischem zu transformativem Denken ab. Dieser Übergang besteht in einer Veränderung, die darin besteht, nicht nur *über* den Körper, sondern *mit* dem Körper zu denken. Was diese Veränderung methodisch impliziert, wird an Ansätzen von Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, Claire Petitmengin und Eugene Gendlin verdeutlicht.

**Schlagwörter:** Überwindung, ewige Wiederkehr, Analyse, Leib, binäre Strukturen, Transformation, Nähe, Distanz, Micro-Phänomenologie, Responsivität, leibliches Denken.

# 1 Analysis and Recurrence

A deep sense of ignorance toward oneself is the target of a Nietzschean critique that questions the narratives and values which imprint our philosophical, cultural as well as individual self-understanding. Nietzsche's critique of philosophical thinking is peculiar in this way: it does not criticize the inconsistencies of positions. It attacks a blindness in regards to the motivations and driving forces behind metaphysical and logical positions. Nietzsche criticizes philosophical concepts, for instance, for chronically neglecting a physiological reality behind metaphysical as well as logical claims, for being unaware of the formative factors of health, for ignoring the experience of illness, for disregarding the functions of instinct and of feeling in thinking.

Nietzsche thus confronts philosophers with what they do not see while exposing the investments within the positions which they hold: the part that is played by their own tacit self-understanding. He detects an investment into content while being oblivious to questions concerning the self-driven source of these contents. No matter how elaborate epistemological concepts may be, in their lack of a radically honest self-reflective turn, they are for Nietzsche no more than "superstitions" about thinking. He writes for instance: "I will not stop emphasizing a tiny little fact that these superstitious men are loathe to admit: that a thought comes when it wants, and not when "I want." (BGE 17)<sup>1</sup>

This kind of critique is unusual for the intellectual discourse of his time and ours, as it does not serve as an epistemological argument, nor as a phenomenological analysis. Rather, it is a call for a different awareness of the process of thinking; in Nietzsche's own words, a call for more truthfulness in the quest for truth.

This requires moves which are philosophically unpractised, to say the least, especially when Nietzsche demands to become more conscious of the "instincts" and "needs" behind the so called "objective" and "ideal." In this way he demands a kind of contextualisation of different philosophical positions that goes beyond a framework of what contemporary philosophers call the "the space of reason," a space in which reasons are to be the only decisive factors for truth-claims. Nietzsche instead ask for a radical self-reflection in philosophy that also takes into account the requirements for a "particular type of life" implicit in philosophical claims and positions (cp. GS, Preface 5).<sup>2</sup> Becoming reflective in this way is something that is not learned in philosophical seminars and institutes, not in Nietzsche's time and not today. Philosophers are not trained to reflect in this manner, first and foremost because it seems

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil. Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, transl. by Judith Norman, Cambridge 2002, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. BGE 3 and 5. Cp. also Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. by Bernard Williams, transl. by Josefine Nackhoff, Cambridge 2001, p. 5.

questionable if this kind of reflection is philosophical at all.<sup>3</sup> Do we not trespass a limit in reflecting the bodily, instinctual and life-requirements behind what and how we think, leading us away from philosophy into psychology? Nietzsche does not seem to think so. Rather, his critique seems to envision a philosophy different not only in content, but also in method. This is what Nietzsche suggests by titling his book *Beyond Good and Evil* as a “philosophy of the future.”

Of course we know that Western philosophy has embraced the Nietzschean oeuvre, his critique of culture, of Christianity, his revaluation of values, his Zarathustra etc. Contemporary philosophy would be unthinkable without the deep going reception and influence of the content of Nietzschean philosophy, with libraries full of secondary literature by generations of scholars. But has it thereby become a philosophy of the future in the way Nietzsche envisioned? The challenge of a new kind of philosophy, as indicated by Nietzsche, lies not just in a change of conceptual content. It has to do with the way we think. “Overcoming,” this characteristic term of Nietzschean thinking, points in that direction. It is meant only as a concept, but also as a practice. For the most part, in Western philosophy, feeling, along with the body, needed to be overcome in order to establish philosophical concepts, including the concept of the will. Nietzsche’s philosophy of the future seems to require the overcoming of this habituated overcoming. Overcoming in the Nietzschean sense means facing the crux involved in trying to think truthfully while running up against a paradigmatic understanding of what truth is supposed to be.

At this point we must ask: how would it be possible to think “truthfully” about ourselves, our embodied experience, feelings, motivations, driving forces behind or in our concepts, with concepts that are laden with misunderstandings concerning experience, body, feeling, and will? Nietzsche himself suggests we have nothing but “superstitions” handed over to us and hardened from generation to generation.

How does Nietzsche deal with this problem? Obviously, he uncompromisingly analyses traditional patterns of thinking and spells out the implications involved in manifold, rhetorical, aphoristical, theatrical, and angry ways, in order to free himself and his readers from what governed philosophical approaches for centuries. A large part of Nietzsche’s efforts are engaged in this work, namely rigorously working with his hammer to demonstrate basic structures of thinking. Nietzsche aims to reveal the kind of valuation that so deeply imprints philosophical, ethical, and religious approaches.

Is analysis enough to be able to overcome the historically ingrained patterns and approaches? Why should something change in our approach if we recognize the patterns? Why should analysis help us to overcome traditional concepts that shape who we are and how we think? This touches on a radical philosophical problem: how

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<sup>3</sup> Cp. this same limitation is also critically questioned today, cp. for example Matthew Ratcliffe, *The Feeling of Being*. Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality, Oxford 2008.

can something new arise from analysis? The philosopher and psychotherapist Eugen Gendlin asks this critical question not with regard to Nietzsche, but with regard to Freudian analysis: why should anything change if we bring to light what was hidden before, in the unconscious? What kind of change occurs if a content, an experience, an anxiety, a motive, an event, that was sub- or unconscious has become conscious?<sup>4</sup> In therapy people obviously begin to change their way of thinking, acting and experiencing. But how can this change be understood?

In light of this question, Nietzsche's eternal recurrence seems bitterly consistent in understanding the problematic relation of analysis and transformation: If analysis implies bringing to light structures that are now recognizable, the content that is analysed does not change. Analysis is no transformation. It is analysis. When we analyse water it does not change, or else the method would be scientifically unviable. The phenomenon that we get to understand does not change by being understood. Or if it does, analysis as such does not provide understanding for this change. If it would, it would need to go along with a constructive understanding of the very act of analysing. But this is a pragmatist and not a Nietzschean turn. In everyday language one might say that after something is analysed one can stand back and take a different stance and do things differently. But philosophically we must ask who is it that can stand back? Which I can take another stance? Which body? From what? Pursuing these kinds of questions means indulging in ancient and aporetic questions of mediacy and immediacy, of conceptual construction, of how we can differentiate between concept and something that is not concept, of body and mind etc. We do not want to go down this route. Neither does Nietzsche.

From this vantage point, his doctrine of eternal recurrence seems to be a very sober conclusion of a very strict understanding of what analysis is, what it can do and what it can change: nothing. It is not supposed to. Nietzsche's understanding of his concept of overcoming seems to be utterly consistent in this respect. In Zarathustra's most silent hour, being able to overcome coincides with embracing the eternal recurrence. Zarathustra, consequently has to overcome his own "Lehre:" the coming of the superhuman.<sup>5</sup> Humans will not change. They will not become strong enough to become radically truthful thinkers. A basic pessimism about the capacity for a transformation from the habituated focus on truth to a thinking that proceeds truthfully can be found throughout his writings. Most prominently we find it in the first paragraph of *On the Genealogy of Morals*:

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<sup>4</sup> Eugene Gendlin, A theory of personality change, in: Philip Worchel / Donn Byrne (eds.), Personality change, New York 1964, pp. 100–148.

<sup>5</sup> Cp. Donata Schoeller-Reisch, Die Demut Zarathustras. Ein Versuch zu Nietzsche mit Meister Eckhart, in: Nietzsche-Studien 27 (1998), pp. 420–439.

We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers: and with good reason. We have never looked for ourselves, - so how are we ever supposed to *find* ourselves? How right is the saying: 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'; our treasure is where the hives of our knowledge are. As born winged-insects and intellectual honey-gatherers we are constantly making for them, concerned at heart with only one thing - to 'bring something home,' As far as the rest of life is concerned, the so-called 'experiences', - who of us ever has enough seriousness for them? Or enough time? I fear we have never really been 'with it' in such matters: our heart is simply not in it - and not even our ear! On the contrary, like somebody divinely absent-minded and sunk in his own thoughts, who, the twelve strokes of midday having just boomed into his ears, wakes with a start and wonders 'What hour struck?', sometimes we, too, *afterwards* rub our ears and ask, astonished, taken aback, 'What did we actually experience then?' or even, 'Who *are* we, in fact?' and afterwards, as I said, we count all twelve reverberating strokes of our experience, of our life, of our *being* - *oh!* And lose count ... We remain strange to ourselves out of necessity, we do not understand ourselves, we *must* confusedly mistake who we are, the motto 'everyone is furthest from himself' applies to us for ever, - we are not 'knowers' when it comes to ourselves. (GM, Preface 1)<sup>6</sup>

The transformational process of a new kind of thinking which overcomes the "superstitions", i. e. the misconceptions woven into the fabric of human knowledge-systems, seems bound to fail. Thinking truthfully means being able to acknowledge and include the particular experience in the thinking of the intentional content we are otherwise absent-mindedly engaged in. This means becoming aware of *how* we experience something instead of holding on to a philosophical concept of what experience is supposed to be, forcing us to lose track of what actually happens and has happened. No matter how much Nietzsche tries to wake his readers up and bring them closer to themselves, his project is bound to fail, because, once again, his readers will remain focused on the intellectual treasure before their eyes, in this case: Nietzsche's own critical and analytical concepts.

To step out of this vicious circle entails a radical methodological shift from a critical analytical to a transformational reflective practice. This move can be detected in some cutting edge feminist and phenomenological thinking today. In the following, I will sketch some basic features of this move with the support of contemporary feminist and phenomenological philosophy.

## 2 Thinking about the Body

The difference between analysis and transformation is crucially relevant for the feminist critical project. Feminist philosophy has produced amazingly differentiated tools

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<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson, transl. by Carol Diethe, Cambridge 2007, p. 3.

to scrutinize the ways in which women have been left out in the history of thinking and in philosophical orders claiming to be neutral. It has offered a thorough understanding of the construction of gender difference further more exposing the female body and female sexuality as the blind spot upon which binary constructions proceed in defining what females and males are, and what human experience is supposed to be. In all this, the pressing questions remains: how can these constructive mechanisms be transformed insofar they are repressive and limiting for gender identities? Is deconstruction the only way forward?

The difference between the possibilities of analysis and of transformation is so profound that there is no easy way from one to the other. The difference has to do with changes in disembodied habits and norms of thinking which Nietzsche so clearly saw. I would like to summarize them as three shifts: a) from detachment to the focus on the embodied here and now, b) from analytical distance to articulated closeness, c) from analysis to expressive shifting.

These movements are implied in the difference of critically thinking *about* the body to what it means to think *with* the body.

I want to begin to sketch the difficulties of this transition and its implications with some approaches of Butler, Irigaray, Petitmengin, and Gendlin and then to finally return to Nietzsche again.

In close reference to Foucault, Butler makes us aware of how construction is a process in time, with constant recurring norms constituting and at the same time destabilizing not just gender, but also sex.<sup>7</sup> With Foucault and Butler, we strongly encounter the motive of recurrence again. The power of discourse is not something individual. It is enacted in the constant reiterations of normative practices. Butler argues that it is impossible to refer to the pre-discursive materiality of sex because every act of reference is already a discursive forming of what this materiality is supposed to be. Trying to refer to what is not constructed presupposes demarcations and exclusions which are hidden in the very significations that are thus always performative. These exclusions remain pre-theoretical conditions of every description with an enormous normative power because they can only construct by excluding or extinguishing. There seems to be no way out of these conundrums.

Butler writes:

If gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this “sex“ except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that “sex“ becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is not direct access.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble and the Subversion of Identity*, New York 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, New York 1993, p. 5.

With this convincing analytical setting no direct access to the body and embodied experience seems possible anymore. The only ways left are the destabilizing factors in the recurrence process of ritualized practices materializing what bodies are conceived as and supposed to be. This, in short, is deconstruction.

Thinking about the body in this way makes bodies convincingly disappear in the discursive practices of human beings. Bodies seem to have no agency other than resisting imposed exclusions in this powerful game of recurrent constructing or philosophical deconstructing. They have no say in what we as bodies say or write *about* bodies. With Butler's critique, the mechanisms of being silenced become so systematic there is no gap for bodies to *respond*.

This concern finds a strong echo in Barad's philosophy of physics, elaborating the "productive nature of natural forces" in the "materialization of nonhuman as well as human bodies."<sup>9</sup> She demonstrates how in the Butlerian emphasis of the agency of language and culture, Butler fails to "recognize matter's dynamism." (p. 64) Barad writes: "Questions about the material nature of discursive practices seem to hang in the air like the persistent smile of the Cheshire cat."<sup>10</sup>

After having undergone a persistent analytical schooling, how can we refer to a productive material nature of discursive practices? We must fall into the trap Butler's analysis makes us aware of: is not every description of this material nature in itself a discursive practice, with implicit exclusions and extinctions? How can we access, refer to "matter's dynamism" without always already coming too late? Thinking about what bodies are seems to be caught in a vicious circle that chronically fails the topic that one is thinking about.

In the very beginning of her book *Bodies that Matter* Butler notices:

I began writing this book by trying to consider the materiality of the body only to find that the thought of materiality invariably moved me into other domains. I tried to discipline myself to stay on the subject, but found that I could not fix bodies as simple objects of thought. Not only did bodies tend to indicate a world beyond themselves, but this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, appeared to be quite central to what bodies "are."<sup>11</sup>

When focusing on bodies as fixed and simple objects of thought, thought is immediately moved beyond these objects. How would it be possible to reflect, as Barad proposes, a 'bodily dynamism', a 'productive nature' that might *interact* with this discursive moving? Butler's analysis and the dynamics of this analysis methodologically suspend the dynamic living and experiential responsiveness of bodies: what is moving is conceptual analysis, not body. This is in accordance with the dynamic of thinking

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<sup>9</sup> Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantumphysics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Durham 2007, p. 34.

<sup>10</sup> Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, New York 1993, p. ix.

to which Hegel points to: concepts are the prime mover of experience, not vice versa. Hegel masterly shows how experiential richness, the here and now of embodied and sensuous experience, must be handed over to the analytical or dialectical grasp with no chance of finding a language apart from conceptual generalization. What is experienced seems to be bound to remain in the conceptual structures that manifest power relations and thinking-structures handed down recursively from generation to generation. So how can analysis change and transform the experience of women and also of men trapped in these conceptual structures? This intellectual operation cannot, as Nietzsche has clearly seen, achieve the transformation of human experience.

Circumstances too close to notice become strikingly helpful for this dilemma when taken seriously. For instance, the fact that we do not only have bodies as objects we reflect upon or as something we think about, but, as Nietzsche stresses, embodied experience that inspires, hinders us or responds to the way we think. The little understood possibility of being able to take a new stance because of something that has been understood is but one example of this. But how can we think about this without repeating the old questions about what bodies are etc.? In other words, how is it possible to access the embodied experience in thinking without operating within traditional and binary conceptualizations once more, a trap which we have become all too aware off?

### 3 Embodied Thinking

Irigaray offers careful and subtle steps at this neuralgic place of reflective practice. By pointing to the exclusion of the feminine in the traditional formulation of matter, she raises awareness of an inarticulate matter as the inscriptional place, as a materiality that is not *a category* of matter, but which enables and conditions it.<sup>12</sup>

Of course we must ask again, what does it mean to think this condition? Here, I suggest, one can detect the turning point from an analytical to a transformational method. The latter has the potential to radically step out of a style of thinking that while being critical of a paternal economy of binary categories also remains in style highly loyal to the way the fathers did it: by replacing the living events by conceptual dynamics, by shifting into an analytical space and taking that to be the only reality we can think of and think in, by settling in this space in order to do what philosophers have always done: scrutinize, construct and criticize concepts, fight (for) positions, analyse, and deconstruct.

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<sup>12</sup> Cp. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Ithaca 1985, also Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Ithaca 1993, and Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, New York 1993.



By conceiving embodied materiality as a condition that is not a category, but what we *think with and into*, we can learn to deal with a ground that is not another concept.

Is this negation not again yet another concept? It would be, if we only stick to the formulation, and if there is nothing else than this negative description. But we have more.

We have an experience, for example right now, of what it is like to read what we read and to think what we think. At this present moment, we have the experience to be here, in this room, me, trying to say what I say, and you trying to follow what is said, each of us having different experiences of what it is like to do so, each of us at this moment connected to experiential backgrounds of vastly more contexts and connections, thus each of us bodily experiencing different situations of making sense of/ in this text. How these situations are different becomes apparent only if we give voice to what we think and experience now. There is no concept that could substitute this articulated kind of situated experiential diversity and richness.

The *embodied context*<sup>13</sup> is the continuous singular, personal life we embody here and now, with a collective past *effecting* in very *specific* ways, and differently, the ongoing living each and all of us are. When we speak out after a lecture or after reading a text with a question, a critique, an argument, we get slight glimpses of these backgrounds which depend on the ways we have thought and lived until now. To be able to think with this embodied and experiential richness is not impossible. We do it, knowingly or not, all the time. But to think its possibility is not a matter of theoretical arguments alone. It is a matter of a practice to unfold what we think, and also a matter of practice to stay aware of the unfolding. We realize quickly that this unfolding is not identical with logical patterns and rules we were trained to think with at school. It is an opening up of the richness of particular and real-life contexts that need to be lived through and learned in order to be thought and to become articulate. When we follow the threads of what inspires our thoughts, we touch a truthfulness, which Nietzsche proposes. Making these articulate adds another level of transparency into philosophical discourse, as well as a real-life intricacy that often breaks the patterns we learned to think in, and which can be far more complex than philosophical systems.<sup>14</sup> Yet to be able do this, we must practice in a twofold way. In a first step, in a Nietzschean sense, we need to overcome certain superstitions about body and soul,

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**13** I coined this term in an extended study on the development of meaning from situational backgrounds, cp. Donata Schoeller, *Close Talking. Von Hintergründen Sprechen. Eine Theorie der Entwicklung von Bedeutung aus situativen Hintergründen auf der Basis von hermeneutischen, pragmatistischen und phänomenologischen Ansätzen*. To appear autumn 2017.

**14** The notion “implicit intricacy” is a key notion in Eugene Gendlin’s philosophy. Gendlin must be considered a pioneer in demonstrating how to reflect experiential complexity without reducing it to pre-existing categories. Cp. Eugene Gendlin, *Saying What We Mean. Implicit Precision and The Responsive Order*, ed. by Ed Casey and Donata Schoeller, with an introduction by Donata Schoeller, Chicago 2017.

feeling and will, and about beliefs pertaining to these concepts, beliefs of objectivity and subjectivity that constrict our thinking according to certain accepted methodologies controlling what philosophy is supposed to be. Secondly, and more importantly (because this will enable the first step), we must practice to overcome an intentional single-mindedness that Nietzsche clearly saw, to look forward and look backwards so to say, to stay aware of *how* we could think what we could think. This reflective realisation is supported by the embodied experience of thinking. It needs certain conditions that are very different from the conditions of analytical thinking.

## 4 From Detachment to the Focus on the Embodied Here and Now

To allow ourselves to widen our reflective processes by engaging embodied experience beyond learned argumentative and analytical strategies is unpractised and thus may seem difficult on different levels. We need encouragement. Let us turn to Luce Irigaray for this.

She writes:

Come back. It's not so hard. Stay right here, and you won't be absorbed into the old scenarios, the redundant phrases, the familiar gestures, bodies already encoded in a system. Try to be attentive to yourself, to me. Don't be distracted by norms or habits.<sup>15</sup>

Thinking not about the body, but in an embodied way requires us to ,come back', again and again, to the freshness of what happens now, always a little different. This requires being attentive to yourself, to the person(s) with you, to the situation. What makes this hard at first is an intentionality chronically and quickly directed to the experienced "what," instead of the experiential "now" and "how." It needs coming back again and again. The micro phenomenologist Claire Petitmengin writes after conducting hundreds of interviews in which she guides her interviewees to the *experience of having an idea*, an intention and a perception: "the absorption into the object, and more generally in the 'what' of experience, seems to *mask* what is closer to us, the experience itself and 'how' it unfolds."<sup>16</sup>

Getting "closer" is not a conceptual affair. Obviously, you do not get closer by analytically distancing yourself from the experience. You also do not get closer by interpreting what you experience. Getting closer, as Petitmengin demonstrates, needs

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<sup>15</sup> Luce Irigaray, *When Our Lips Speak Together*, in: *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 6.1 (1980), pp. 69–79, p. 69.

<sup>16</sup> Claire Petitmengin, *Describing the Experience of Describing. The blindspot of introspection*, in: *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 18.1 (2011), pp. 44–62, p. 48.

to be learned as much as one needs to learn methodologies of detachment. Interestingly, it needs a certain climate of external and internal friendliness that also needs to be learned at times, as a climate for coming close to an experiential process that begins to unfold the more carefully you attend to it. In this case, critical questioning does not carry the process forward. Supportive and open questions are needed, inviting you to come back to the how of the now, again and again. This opens the realization to an experiential dynamic that is more specific and precise than interpretations or explanations easily applied to it at first. Obviously, these methodological steps and these kinds of questions do not conform with philosophical norms and habits. One philosophical habit which these steps do not conform to is the habit of not minding our own body and embodied experience when we think about experience and the body. Implied in this habit is the duality of the so called subjective and objective, assuming, as Nietzsche already spelled out, that it is of no scientific or philosophical relevance to be attentive to the embodied experience of myself and yourself, of a situation, besides being attentive to the propositional contents we produce. Implied in this norm, moreover, is the duality of body and mind, and a debate that keeps both at a distance by externalizing and objectifying each. This entanglement of thinking-habits and norms, come in the way of cultivating and learning to think not only about the body, but in an embodied way.<sup>17</sup>

But at this point again, we do not need more critical analysis, but transformational practice. Then we can find that embodied experience becomes a steady resource to overcome these norms and practices, shifting basic categories and modalities implied by the concepts of the body, like internal, external, identity, difference, separation etc. Turning from interpretation and analysis of an experience to *how* we experience it, one enters a dynamic that, as Butler suggests, leads away from “bodies as fixed objects“, yet not beyond the body, but deeper and deeper into the embodied experience of whatever one chooses. Sensations will not stay simple sensations, and objects no simple objects. They will become inseparable from subtle feelings and felt senses, images, memories, a somatic-semantic continuum, which is very specific and challenges easy descriptions. The deepening of receptivity, Petitmengin describes, goes together with blurring clear distinctions of me and not me, requiring new distinctions and much more differentiated languages. She also writes: “the more attention becomes detached from its absorption in outward objects to enter into contact with the so called “inner” experience, the smaller becomes the distinction between “interior” and “exterior.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche illustrates this quite frankly when he describes how Wagner’s music affects his body, his breathing, his heartbeat and so forth. The physical discomfort becomes an “argument” for his critical judgement about the whole philosophy behind Wagner’s art. See NW, *Wo ich Einwände mache*.

<sup>18</sup> Claire Petitmengin, *Is the “Core Self” a Construct? Review of “Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First-Person Perspective” by Dan Zahavi*, in: *Constructivist Foundations* 6.2 (2011), pp. 270–274, p. 271.

## 5 From Analytical Distance to articulate Closeness

The kind of awareness I am pointing to is misunderstood as introspection; it is more accurately described by the participants of Pettitmengin's interviews as 'being in touch'. Realizing the subtle and dynamic intricacy involved in every kind of daily, or creative or social experience, even in abstract thinking, opens new experiential depths. It provides new ways of closely interacting with this experiential dynamic instead of submitting it too quickly to some interpretation and analysis. Receptivity to the embodied dynamic has the potential to forge new languages of experience that facilitate the highly specific and individual experiential response to some interpretation and analysis. This enacts what Barad points to as *accounting for* the agency of the dynamic forces of embodiment. Making space in discourse for experiential embodied responses to discourse (which needs all the conditions mentioned above) enables a reshaping of the latter. This can only happen if we do not analytically hand all agency over to language and culture.

This responsive dynamic, which is never the same, helps our language to become more specific, imaginatively differentiated, and certain in relevant ways. Again Irigaray's thinking is an inspirational source:

Your body is not the same today as yesterday [...]. Your body reveals yesterday in what it wants today [...]. Right here and now, our body gives us a very different certainty. Truth is necessary for those who are so distanced from their body that they have forgotten it. But their "truth" makes us immobile, like statues, if we can't divest ourselves of it. If we don't annul its power by trying to say, here, now, right away, how we are moved.<sup>19</sup>

Embodied thinking, instead of thinking about the body, requires one to go along with the movement. Again, it is not a thinking only about a movement. It can be, but as embodied it is thinking about its movement *in* the movement. In Irigaray's words: not forgetting the moving lips, when we articulate "so that words do not become mute by being uttered once and for all".<sup>20</sup>

For embodied thinking, there is no once and for all because embodied thinking does not detach itself from its own transformational dynamic here and now. It voices what matters in this changing continuity of life instead of determining truths that do not change in the perspectives of a supposedly lifeless nowhere.

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<sup>19</sup> Irigaray, Lips, p. 75.

<sup>20</sup> Irigaray, Lips, p. 72.

## 6 From Determination to expressive Shifting Touch

Irigaray writes:

What do you want to say? Nothing. Everything. Yes. Be patient. You will say it all. Begin with what you feel, here, right away. The female “all“ will come. But you can’t anticipate it, predict or fit it into a program. This all can’t be schematized or mastered. It’s the total movement of your body.<sup>21</sup>

Gendlin, whom I mentioned in the beginning, is a thinker whose work is still to be discovered in its relevance for feminist philosophy, and in its relevance for thinking further Nietzsche’s philosophy of the body. Gendlin’s whole life work reflects and meditates the great possibilities and challenges of saying “what you feel, here, right away“. It is not always easy. Not because of what is oppressed, not because it is not possible to reference, but because there is so much to say, so much intricacy, so much relevance that is already crossed with so much else. We do not easily get it right, we often fail. Therefore, we are prone to say “never mind,” and leave it at that. But from facing the challenge of articulating experiential intricacy, Gendlin shows that a philosophical practice emerges which provides an utterly innovative embodied understanding of meaning as well as a thoroughly interactive understanding of body. Being able to say what we mean is at the same time an act of closely listening to the embodied responses to what we say. We sense when the word is not right. We feel when we are losing our point. We notice when the relevance shrivels even if the formulation sounds good. Articulating in this way becomes an interactive process with embodied experience instead of a one-way determination of concepts applied to experience. We must let go of the supposition of a one-way determination of concepts to be able notice that the meaning of the words change and open to more, when they work in and with an embodied context.<sup>22</sup> Articulating becomes a transformative movement itself, in which experience and meaning shift together, thus generating relevance. Meaning *becomes the happening* in the touching of words and experience, now. In this shifting, we can say more, and sometimes we can say all we need to say. Yet, we need to take the embodied experience of what we mean along. Embodied thinking and speaking require touching experience by words we use.

This is why Gendlin calls this kind of articulation “naked saying:”

One can say more in many further ways [...], but only by what I call “naked saying,” without covering it with a theoretical version which then claims to be what we *really* said. Such a substitutional explanation is the only saying that is made impossible [...].<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Irigaray, Lips, p. 76.

<sup>22</sup> Cp. Schoeller, Close Talking.

<sup>23</sup> Eugene Gendlin, What happens when Wittgenstein asks “What happens when ...?”, in: The Philosophical Forum 28.3 (1997), pp. 268–281, p. 281.

If the divinely absent minded knower, which Nietzsche depicts at the beginning of his Genealogy, is shown with open questions how to attend to the 'how' of his experience, he will regain the intricate richness of his experiential process. A vivid, sensitive, naked and yet precise language will arise from this. She will not lose count, when thinking about the twelve strokes just heard, but notice with surprise, as Petitmengin proves in every single interview, that she will have heard and experienced much more than she thought she has. Thoughts and questions arising from there will implicitly acknowledge embodied experience as a resource that in surprisingly precise ways leads beyond the binary and traditional categories we absent-mindedly and all too easily apply to bodies and things we experience.