

The Silence of the Sexless *Dasein*: Jacques Derrida and the Sex “To Come”

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Abstract:

The neutralization of sexual difference in *Being and Time* (1927) represents not a denial of the *Dasein*'s sexual existence but a re-inscription that frees *Dasein* from the metaphysical determinations of the binary given in traditional sexual difference. For Jacques Derrida, the neutralization occasioned by Martin Heidegger's thinking of the *Dasein* points us to the necessity of going beyond the duality of sexual difference towards an understanding of sexuality no longer captured within binary reason. But this does not mean that *Dasein* itself is without sex (understood as sexuality prior to and beyond the sexual differentiation into man and woman). Instead, *Dasein* as sexual beyond differentiation points to a more originary power that can be the source of a richness peculiar only to *Dasein*.

To speak therefore of a sexless *Dasein* is to understand human existence in terms of a more originary sexuality that should lead us to the open appreciation of sexualities beyond traditional physical dualism. Such deconstructive understanding of sex leads us beyond the dualistic understanding of sexual difference towards the justice of that ironic joyful anxiety over waiting for the coming multiplicity of sexual differences and the beauty of a future sex “to come.”

Key terms: Jacques Derrida, Martin Heidegger, *Dasein*, originary sexuality, multiple sexualities

The Sexless *Dasein*

One of the most interesting but seldom discussed aspects of Martin Heidegger’s existential analytic of the *Dasein* in his monumental *Being and Time* (1927) was the issue of sexual difference. If mentioned at all, the question of sexual difference was only passed as an incidental remark upon those things which do not belong essentially to the existential structure of *Dasein*. Such silence on a topic which has become a commonplace currency for “philosophic and scientific “knowledge”” within the last two centuries strikes us as odd considering that all the philosophers in the western tradition, from Plato to Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, were pressed to speak on the subject. Even Kant, Hegel, and Husserl reserved a space for sexuality within their immensely complicated philosophical architectonics.¹

In this paper then, I will be speaking about the manifest silence Martin Heidegger has on the question of sexual difference. In particular, I will be taking over Jacques Derrida’s deconstructive position in drawing out the philosophical implications of such silence. Hence I ask: **what is the significance of Heidegger’s silencing of sex and the corresponding neutralization of *Dasein* as sexless?** The privilege given to *Dasein* as the exemplary being to whom Being [*Sein*] itself is an issue, i.e., the *Dasein* as the questioner of Being,² demands that its general structures such as “*In-der-Welt-sein als Mit und Selbst-sein* (being-in-the-world; being-with), *Räumlichkeit* (spatiality), *Rede* (Talk), *Sprache* (Language), *Geworfenheit* (Thrownness),

¹ See Jacques Derrida, “Geschlecht: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference” in *Research in Phenomenology* 13 (1983): 65-83; 66. Also reprinted in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, translated by Ruben Berezdivin and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 7-26.

² The word “*Dasein*” which literally means “being-there” is a technical term which has a very precise meaning for Heidegger at least in this first *magnum opus*:

“This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being [*dies Seinsmöglichkeit des Fragens*] we shall denote by the ‘*Dasein*’ (being-there) [*fassen wir terminologisch als Dasein*].” (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson [New York: Harper and Row, 1966], 27).

Sorge (Care), *Zeitlichkeit* (temporality), *Sein zum Tode* (being-towards-death),³ keep this relation of openness to the question of being [*Seinsfrage*]. Anything that is not worthy of questioning [*fragwürdig*] inasmuch as it does not reach to the height of the ontological difference must be relegated as secondary, i.e., negligible, and thus a mere “determinate distinction or ontic predicate.”⁴ Within Derrida’s view, such relegation or repression of sexuality into an ontic determination renders *Dasein* as *asexual* or *sexless*. Sexuality does not have anything to do directly with *Dasein*’s openness to the question of being and for this reason, cannot be part of the fundamental ontology envisioned for the elaboration of the *Dasein*’s existential analytic. Sexuality is not an essential trait of *Dasein*. “*Dasein* therefore would not be sexed.”⁵ “[b]eing-there, being *there*, the *there* of being as such, bears no sexual mark.”⁶ Any discourse about it can simply “be abandoned to the sciences or philosophies of life, to anthropology, sociology, biology, or perhaps even to religion or morality.”⁷

Where does this apparent Heideggerian silence lead us in the understanding of sexual difference? Heidegger remained silent about sex but this silence reveals itself as a moment of interruption: an interruption which, if we will have the patience and the acumen to hear Heidegger’s silence, will work to announce a certain “non-said” that takes on many forms and determinable contours – a non-said that has been omitted, repressed, denied, foreclosed and even unthought.⁸ In this vein, Derrida’s

³ Derrida, *Geschlecht*, 66. Translations supplied in brackets.

⁴ Ibid. Throughout *Being and Time*, Heidegger distinguishes between the “ontic” and the “ontological.” The adjective “ontological” is used to refer to anything that has a direct connection to the Being of beings [*Das Sein des Seiendes*] or that which directly raises the question of Being [*Seinsfrage*]. Anything that does not directly raise the ontological question or does not have anything to do directly with the question of Being is termed “ontic.” (See Editor’s footnote in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 53-4.

⁵ Derrida, *Geschlecht*, 66.

⁶ Ibid., 67.

⁷ Ibid., 66.

⁸ Ibid., 67.

reading takes a “modern” psychoanalytic form⁹ that follows a skeptical detour through the many traces of this silence towards the articulation of a de-constructive understanding of sexuality, one that is no longer captured within binary reason,¹⁰ but one that opens itself to the emergence of multiple sexualities and the possibility of a future “sex to come.” In what follows therefore, I will labor to present: 1) Heidegger’s neutralization of sexual difference; 2) Derrida’s positing of originary as a primordial potency of *Dasein*; and lastly, 3) the meaning of a future “sex to come.”

Heidegger’s Neutralization of Sexual Difference

The terminological choice of *Dasein* to designate that exemplary “being which we ourselves are” in so far as it “includes [the] questioning [of Being or *das Sein*] as one of its possibilities of Being” finds its justification in the need to find that determination “which (nearly) no other pre-determination should be able to command.”¹¹ Heidegger himself explains, in his Marburg Course, that the declaration of this name or title [i.e., *Dasein*] is “patiently qualified, explained, (and) evaluated”¹² in order to be able to underline *Dasein*’s neutrality.¹³

Neutrality in this case is intended to delineate those ontic determinations (whether anthropological, ethical or metaphysical) away from the essential definition of the *Dasein* so as to keep nothing but its bare

⁹ Derrida concedes that his reading be a “so-called a “modern” reading, an investigation armed with psychoanalysis, an enquiry authorized by complete anthropological culture” (ibid.).

¹⁰ See Peggy Kamuf, “Derrida and Gender: The Other Sexual Difference” in *Derrida and the Humanities*, edited by Tom Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 82-107; 91.

¹¹ Derrida, *Geschlecht*, 68.

¹² Ibid., 69.

¹³ Written in Summer Semester of 1928, Heidegger explains: “For the being which constitutes the theme of this analytic, the title ‘man’ (*Mensch*) has not been chosen, but the neutral title ‘*Das Dasein*.’” (Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, translated by Michael Heim [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984], 136). The German original is entitled *Metaphysische Anfangsgänge der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz* in *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 26 (Frankfurt a/M: Klostermann, 1978).

relation to itself, i.e., to the Being of its being as questioning. It is therefore, “first of all the *neutralization* of everything not bearing the naked trait of this relation to itself, of this interest for its own Being (. . .).”¹⁴ The unfolding of this neutrality however, can only be accomplished by a surprising “leap” from *Dasein*’s essential characteristic as the questioner of Being [*das Sein*] towards its sexual neutrality. The leap is surprising because Heidegger does not make a clear and logical transition from the ontological to the ontic, from what is essential and fundamental to what is secondary, derivative, and even negligible. Straightly, he commences with sexuality as an example of a determination which can be left out of the analytic of the *Dasein*. And yet, strangely, he “keeps himself limited to sexuality, more precisely to sexual difference.” For Derrida, such silencing-neutralizing gesture ironically reveals Heidegger’s privileging of sexual difference and its logical primacy as the first example of “that “factual concretion” which the analytic of the *Dasein* should begin by neutralizing.”¹⁵ Belonging to one of the two sexes is the *first* example of a “factual concretion” which *Dasein* takes or undergoes after its own proper essence has been clarified.

Taking into account the initial meaning of neutrality given above, Derrida notes that while neutrality has manifold meanings, Heidegger has failed to mention any other meanings other than the neutralization of sexual difference. It is, in effect, “the only meaning which up till then he has excluded or neutralized.”¹⁶ For Derrida, this implies that the first (and only!) ontic determination worth mentioning and neutralizing that Heidegger thinks is the fact of sexuality. But this strategic singling out of sexuality cannot only be intent to arrive at mere terminological precision: it was also precisely meant to designate neutrality itself “as an existential structure of *Dasein*.”¹⁷ But why does Heidegger privilege the exclusion of asexuality or sexlessness [*Geschlechtslosigkeit*] in this elaboration of *Dasein*’s neutrality?

Accordingly, Derrida opines that Heidegger’s *asexualization* of *Dasein* constitutes an attempt to elide the anthropological perspective within which the question of sexuality is broached. For this reason,

¹⁴ Derrida, *Geschlecht*, 69. Italics supplied.

¹⁵ Ibid. See also Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 136.

¹⁶ Ibid., 70.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Heidegger’s neutralization of *Dasein*’s sexuality was a pre-emptive strike that situates the question of sexuality as a problem for man [*anthropos*, *Mensch*] and not for his *Dasein* whose only fundamental concern is the question of Being [*Sein*]. The question of sexual difference belongs to the ontic domain and as such “did not have a chance of measuring up to the question of the sense of being or of the ontological difference, [such] that even its very riddance wouldn’t deserve privileged treatment.”¹⁸ This neutralization of the *Dasein* as sexless, we see here clearly, is a silent and repressive castration that aims at the total catharsis of all traces of sexual life in the *Dasein*. Ironically, however, it is at the point when Heidegger thinks he has secured the *freedom* of *Dasein* from this sexual slavery that he has to clarify the meaning of “neutrality *also* as to sexual difference.”¹⁹ Heidegger must elaborate further on the notion of *Dasein*’s sexless neutrality in relation to the marks of sexual difference or to the fact of *sexual duality*.²⁰

Towards a More Originary Sexuality.

Here, however, what is denied when Heidegger asserts the neutrality or sexlessness of *Dasein* is not the fact that *Dasein*, as such, is without sex. Instead, for Derrida, when one speaks of neutrality or sexlessness, the negativity runs counter to what Heidegger was trying to mark. In typical deconstructive fashion, Derrida claims that what the “sexless neutrality” of *Dasein* means is a negativity *only* with respect to the marks of difference, or more precisely to the fact that someone is “factually conditioned” as belonging to one of the two sexes within sexual duality. The “neutralization” or the “silencing” of the *Dasein* therefore does not *desexualize*: it does not deny sexuality itself. Instead, what is affirmed when Heidegger speaks of the sexlessness of *Dasein* is a liberation of the *Dasein* from the limitations set by the binary thinking of the sexual division. For Derrida therefore, the denial of the *Dasein*’s sexuality with respect to the “two” effects a freedom or a liberation of sexuality towards a more “originary power” that is itself freed from the limits of traditional sexual duality. In this vein, the neutrality of *Dasein* thus points to “what Heidegger

¹⁸ Ibid., 71.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

does not hesitate to call a “positivity [*Positivität*],” a richness, and even, in a heavily charged code, a “potency [*Mächtigkeit*]”.²¹ As Heidegger says:

In its neutrality, *Dasein* is not just anyone no matter who, but the originary positivity [*ursprüngliche Positivität*] and power of the essence [*Mächtigkeit des Wesens*].²²

Derrida explains that the meaning of this originary positivity is not really a denial of the *Dasein*'s sexual existence. Rather, it is the case that we “must think of a pre-differential, or rather a pre-dual, sexuality—(...) more originary than the dyad.” This originary sexuality is not a “unitary, homogenous, and undifferentiated” source from which traditional sexual division comes. Instead, we can think it as a kind of source, a “positivity” and a “potency” which is not “sexual” but a source, both positive and powerful, “of every possible “sexuality.”²³

The Living Body as Sexed

The positing of such originary source from which every possible sexuality might arise leads us to the understanding a primordial potency which, for Heidegger, we must be careful not to call “sexual.” Derrida explains the reason for this: Heidegger was careful not to fall back into the problems situated within anthropology and from every metaphysics. As it is, what the *theme* of *Dasein*'s neutrality reveals us back into is “the “power of the origin” which bears within itself the internal possibility of humanity in its concrete facticity.”²⁴ The discourse about this origin must never be confused with the ontic disciplines that aim to provide us with different order perspectives about sexuality which all fall short “of every requirement of an analytic of *Dasein* in its very neutrality.”²⁵ Instead what the origin reveals to us, as the possible source of every sexuality, is the *Dasein*'s primordial potency which is never a single, unitary or simple but

²¹ Ibid.

²² Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 136-7. Cited in Derrida, *Geschlecht*, 72.

²³ Derrida, *Geschlecht*, 72.

²⁴ Ibid., 73.

²⁵ Ibid.

one characterized already by division, dispersion, or dissemination.²⁶ Within this originary power of *Dasein*, we find “in itself the intrinsic possibility of a factual dispersion or dissemination [*faktische Zerstreung*] in its own body [*Lieblichkeit*] and “thereby in sexuality [*und damit in die Geschlechtlichkeit*].”²⁷ In this connection, we see that *Dasein*’s entrance into sexual duality is concomitant with his *being* and *having* a body. “Every proper body of one’s own [*corps propre*] is sexed, and there is no *Dasein* without its own body.” It seems clear that for Heidegger, what is more fundamental is not sexuality as the source of the *Dasein*’s factual dispersion but “its own body itself, the flesh, the *Leiblichkeit*, that draws *Dasein* originally into dispersion and *in due course* [*par suite*] into sexual difference.”²⁸ In this case, sexuality becomes something that *happens* to the body as if sexual division is *not* a mere accidental modification of the body.

Dasein’s factual dispersion, i.e., its dissemination or factual concretion into bodiliness and consequently into sexuality belongs to its own originary structure. This makes clear to us the meaning of the *Dasein*’s sexless neutrality: it is neutral, i.e., without sex, in relation to the marks of sexual difference, or, to sexual duality; but insofar as it is embodied, i.e., *it has* a body or *it is* its own body, it is sexed (or *happens* to be sexed). Seen from the perspective of its pre-dual, originary sexuality, *Dasein*’s originary structure is revealed to be always and already, at its origins, characterized by internal division, dispersion and hence, “originary dissemination [*ursprüngliche Streuung*].”²⁹ The body or *Dasein*’s own embodiment, in this

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 137. Cited in Derrida, *Geschlecht*, 73.

²⁸ Ibid., 75.

²⁹ It is necessary at this point to mention Derrida’s clarification about this important problem of translation:

“This primordial dissemination (*bestrewal*, *Streuung*) becomes, from an altogether determined point of view, *dispersion* (*Zerstreung*): here a difficulty of translation forces me to distinguish somewhat arbitrarily between dissemination and dispersion, in order to mark out by a convention the subtle trait that distinguishes *Streuung* from *Zerstreung*. The latter is the intensive determination of the former. It

case, stands to be the “organizing factor”³⁰ that brings *Dasein*, ultimately to its meaningful dissemination into sexual difference. Derrida explains:

Assigned to a body, *Dasein* is separated in its facticity, subjected to dispersion and division (*zersplittert*), and thereby [concomitantly] (*in eins damit*) always disjunct, in disaccord, split up, divided (*zweispältig*) by sexuality towards a determinate sex (*in eine bestimmte Geschlechtlichkeit*).³¹

The Body as the Source of Dissemination

If *Dasein*'s originary structure is essentially “disseminal” and this “originary dissemination” becomes possible only inasmuch as it is intrinsically tied up with the body, then, it is the body itself that becomes the source—along with dispersion—of the dissemination of meaning. This is possible because the body, as organizing factor for *Dasein*'s “intrinsic possibility for multiplication,” grounds *Dasein*'s structure of historicity as “originary extension [*Erstreckung*]” which must be understood differently from the Cartesian concept of “*extensio*.”³² Through the body, the *Dasein* itself becomes “primordially extended” so as to be able into its own history or its own historicity. Derrida explains that this *Erstreckung*, or “primordial extension”

names a *spacing* that, “before” the determination of space as *extension*, comes to extend or stretch out being-there, the *there* of being, *between* birth and death. [As an] essential dimension of *Dasein*, the *Erstreckung* opens the *between* that binds it at once to its birth and to its death, the movement of suspense by which it itself is *tended* and extended of itself *between* birth and death, these two

determines a structure of intrinsic possibility, dissemination (bestrewal, *Streuung*), according to all the meaning of *Zerstreuung* (dissemination, dispersion, scattering, diffusion, dissipation, distraction)” (ibid., 76).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 77. See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §18.

receiving their meaning³³ only from their intervallic movement.³⁴

This *between* birth and death is a *relation* that “belongs to the very Being of *Dasein*, “before” any biological determination.”³⁵ As such, what lies at the heart of *Dasein* is the openness to its own birth and death insofar as these “two” are made possible or underlined by dispersion, dissociation, unbinding (*Zerstreuung*, *Unzusammenhang*, etc.). By this same movement of dispersion however, we are brought further still into another essential possibility of *Dasein*, i.e., its “originary spatiality [*Räumlichkeit*]” that is evidently manifested in language. Since “[e]very language is first determined by spatial meanings [*Raumbedeutungen*],” and this spatiality is tied up with *Dasein*’s embodiment, it becomes easy to see that *Dasein*’s entrance into meaning is first made possible through the body. It is the body itself—along with dispersion, historicity and spatiality—which becomes the source of dissemination of meaning while serving, at the same time, as its own repository.

Sex and the Originary Power of *Dasein*

Having outlined the crucial role of the body, we can now return back to theme of sexual difference. The positing of an “originary power” in the *Dasein* which becomes the source of every possible dispersion—and eventually of all factual concretions—reveals to us that essential division within *Dasein* itself. This internal division, as Heidegger repeatedly emphasizes, must not be understood *metaphysically* as an ontic negativity.³⁶

³³ Emphasis supplied.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ We recall here Heidegger’s characterization of metaphysics as “onto-theology” which has always determined Being [*Sein*] in terms of particular beings or entities [*Seiendes*] such as the Platonic *Logos*, Aristotelian *Ousia*, Scholastic *ipsum esse subsistens*, Cartesian *Cogito*, Hegelian *Absolute Spirit*, etc. These ideas were elaborated out by Heidegger in different ways throughout his manifold writings. See for instance Martin Heidegger, “Metaphysics as History of Being” in *The End of Philosophy*, translated by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 1-54.

It must be also noted here that these different articulations of Being has always relied on “presence” as the sustaining source of power, authority and

Instead, it must be interpreted as a kind of richness, power, or positivity that can be a rich source for the dissemination of meaning and concomitantly, of multiple meaningful sexualities. Recalling that “[t]he “transcendental dispersion” which belongs to the essence of *Dasein* in its neutrality (. . .) is the possibility of every dissociation and parceling out [*Zersplitterung, Zerspaltung*] into factual existence,”³⁷ Derrida claims that the entrance into “sexual difference, or belonging to a genre,” must be elucidated from the fact that *Dasein* is always and already from the start, a being-with [*Mitsein*],³⁸ i.e., a being-divided prior to a “before” (in temporality) even appears. This means that sexual difference must by necessity, refer back to, and thus be *differed* and *deferred*, to that “union of genres”³⁹ which can only be grounded on a certain “dissemination of *Dasein* as such, and *thereby Mitsein*.”⁴⁰ By such maneuver, it becomes possible to inscribe sexuality “within an ontological questioning and an existential analytic”⁴¹ and thus be *thought* beyond the binary limitations by traditional metaphysical thinking. Having freed sexual difference from the limits of the

possible violence, or in a word a *metaphysics of presence*—the central object against which Derrida carries out his deconstruction, a form of which is carried out in the present work on sexual difference. (See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976], xvff; 18-26; see also Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, translated by David Allison [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973], 139ff).

³⁷ Derrida, *Geschlecht*, 78.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁹ “Genre” comes from the German “*Geschlecht*” which Derrida opts to remain untranslated in the texts of this series on account of the polysemic richness such a word implies such as “sex, race, family, generation, lineage, species, genus/genre” (see *ibid.*, 65). See also Jacques Derrida, “Heidegger’s Hand (*Geschlecht* II)” in *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida*, edited by John Sallis, translated by John P. Leavey Jr. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987) and “Heidegger’s Ear: Philopolemology (*Geschlecht* IV)” in *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, edited by John Sallis, translated by John P. Leavey Jr. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), 1987; 163-218. According to Kamuf, there is also a missing number in the *Geschlecht* series-III (see footnote no. 9 in Kamuf, “Derrida and Gender: The Other Sexual Difference,” 105).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

“two” or traditional sexual dualism, we are brought into a space or position where we can rethink sexuality in relation to life which is founded on, and only accessible through, an ontology of being-there [*Dasein*].⁴² To think from the possibility of multiple sexualities however, does not mean that all these dispersions, acquire the same ontological significance from the perspective of the ontology of life. Heidegger also cautions us that there are dispersions or concretions which are not proper [*eigentlich*] to *Dasein*. To wit:

In certain contexts, dispersion marks the most general structure of *Dasein*. (. . .) Yet elsewhere, dispersion and distraction (*Zerstreuung* in both senses) characterize the inauthentic ipseity of *Dasein*, that of *Man-selbst*, of that *One* which has been distinguished from ipseity (*Selbst*) as authentic and proper (*eigentlich*).⁴³

This means that not every dispersion at least should be desirable or proper from the perspective of an ontology of life. But how do we determine which of these possible factual modes (at least in terms of sexuality) are authentic and proper for *Dasein*? This is a difficult question to answer. At the least however, Heidegger in this case is leading us to the understanding of an *order of implications* that he tends to preserve, an order that may render an account of how we make use of all the predicates in discourses on sexuality. Derrida explains that for Heidegger:

There is no properly sexual predicate; there is none at least that does not refer, for its sense, to the *general* structures of *Dasein*. So that to know what one speaks of, and how, when one names sexuality, one must indeed rely upon the very thing described in the analytic of *Dasein*.⁴⁴

In this case, the *Dasein* and its fundamental structures (being-with, being-in-the-world, temporality, etc.) would be presupposed as ground or foundation for any discourse on sexuality because

. . . sexual connotations can only mark discourse, to the point of immersing it in them, to the extent that they are

⁴² Ibid., 80

⁴³ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 82.

homogenous to what every discourse implies, for example the topology of those “spatial meanings” [Raumbedeutungen] which are *irreducible*. . .⁴⁵

Within this order of implications, we are opened up to a “thinking of sexual difference that would not yet be sexual duality, difference as dual.”⁴⁶ This is a thinking of sexuality that questions the priority of the dyad, of sexual difference as deposited in the two sexes (i.e., male and female). By being led back to dispersion, in which *Dasein's* essential being is articulated, may we “not begin to think a sexual difference (without negativity, let us clarify) not sealed by the two? Not two yet or no longer?”⁴⁷ Indeed, of future sex “to come?”

Derrida and the Sex “To Come”

What, then, is the meaning of this future sex “to come?” The neutralization of the *Dasein's* ontic sexual powers in favor a pre-dual, more originary sexuality enables us to re-inscribe sexual difference from its traditional metaphysical determination that limits it to the two sexes as determined by *physis* or by the physical body to its source in the primordial potency of *Dasein* in *dispersion* and insofar as it has a body (embodiment). This liberation from the limits of metaphysical determination (at least for Heidegger the way Derrida sees it) is a gesture that opens up sexual difference towards the possibility of multiple sexualities and a future sex(es) to come. Within the openness of this possibility of multiple sexualities, sexual difference is considered no longer as an ontic predicate but the “not yet” of a determination beyond all factual concretions of the *Dasein*. This sex which is “not yet” and therefore a sex “to come” can never be the object of the ontic sciences such as biology or anthropology. Instead, it is the anticipation of a sexual difference that is other than the traditional physical sexual difference, or another *Geschlecht*, an *other* sexual difference, an other *than* sexual difference⁴⁸ that must precisely explode our

⁴⁵ Ibid. Italics supplied.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁸ Here, a question suspended seems to be Derrida's central point about the whole discussion of *Geschlecht* comes to focus:

"imagination to the possibility of alternative sexes and sexualities."⁴⁹ Having moved beyond the limits of metaphysical thinking (in the Heideggerian sense), we are brought into that space where the positing of infinite differences promise us the acceptance of what is "to come" beyond the judgment of positivity or negativity, morality or immorality, beyond good and evil.

This sex "to come" is given to us a gift by that *other* sexual difference, by what is an other *to* sexual difference, indeed of a certain "(sexual) *différence*."⁵⁰ *Dasein* is therefore *given* sex—which is the same as birth—and this also means it is given life and all those possible for it to be a self.⁵¹ This act of giving puts *Dasein's* sexuality in its proper [*eigentlich*] place: it cannot belong to *Dasein's* ipseity *only* by an act of force, repression, or resistance. Conversely, sexuality is what is inmost, authentic and proper to its ipseity. By this assertion of the essential belonging of sexuality to ipseity, we are faced with the structure of an already contaminated ontologico-sexual difference. Within this contamination, the question of an *other* sexual difference ultimately reveals itself as "that [which] gives itself in the guise of all other differences."⁵² Such sexual *différance* cannot therefore be a result of a performance⁵³ or a cultural bias; neither can it be reduced to

"Perhaps another "sex," or rather another "*Geschlecht*," will come to be inscribed within ipseity, or will come to derange the order of all derivations, for example that of a more originary *Selbstheit* making possible the emergence of the *ego* and of you" (*ibid.*, 74).

See also Kamuf, "Derrida and Gender," 88.

⁴⁹ This is Kelly Oliver's suggestion in her excellent article, "Sexual Difference, Animal Difference: Derrida and Difference "Worthy of Its Name" in *Hypatia* 24, no. 2 (Spring, 2009): 54-75; 72

⁵⁰ Kamuf, "Derrida and Gender," 99.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵³ Peggy Kamuf undertakes a strategic questioning of Judith Butler's idea of gender as performance by calling into the relation between discursive production of gendered identities and its inscription within language. A return back to the priority of sexual binarity is inevitable. She writes:

"Whether in Heidegger's discourse or, very differently, in a discourse like Judith Butler's, that gesture has to remain implicated

the *Dasein's* biological impulses. Instead, as the source of *Dasein's* originary positivity, this other sexual *différance* is what brings us back to the experience of the body, which, as having always already been sexed, brings us to the possibility of relation, of being-with, within the “here” and “now.”

For Derrida, strangely, this amounts to a re-inscription of sexual binarity, not to its totalizing plane, but to a more original relation between ipseity and sexuality as the responsibility of the subject. By displacing sexual division itself towards a certain negativity, this *other* sexual difference is also what allows, at the same time, “an original positivity to become manifest.” He writes:

Far from constituting a positivity that the asexual neutrality of *Dasein* would annul, sexual binarity itself would be responsible, or rather would belong to a determination that is itself responsible, for this negativation.⁵⁴

If there is any sense to the expectation of a “sex-to-come,” then, it would be this advent of a responsibility whose originary power or positivity is returned back to the *sexed* experience of the body and the justice that the subject gives to its life and to its very own body. Any effacement of the thought of sexual binarity, i.e., as “the discriminative belonging to one or another sex,”⁵⁵ into a mere discursive production, must perforce, also deny this originary positivity and thus, fall victim to the irresponsibility of an exclusivist sexual liberationist discourse that refuses to inscribe “whatever [that] can still come to be”⁵⁶ as gifts of that other

without neutrality in *this* sexual difference, which thereby also reinscribes its binary trait” (ibid., 102).

⁵⁴ Derrida, *Geschlecht*, 72.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Kamuf, “Derrida and Gender,” 102. “But we have also seen that, as the condition of its identifying a source of production that is not yet an inscription, such a discourse attempts to hide in plain sight its own articulations, there where it must draw on the binary trait and re-inscribe it. Such an attempt, if it could ever succeed, would dissimulate the text *as* text, that is, as both more and less than the vehicle of a discourse’s conceptual generalizations. It would thereby also spell the end of whatever can still come to be inscribed of the other sexual difference, beyond, before, or within the binary, and thus the end of any transformation of the relations held in place by sex-duality” (ibid.).

sexual *différance*. Such gifts—of the self and the other—in responsibility, are the blissful orgasms we can enjoy in the future of that beautiful sex-to-come.

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