

# Phenomenology of Pregnancy: A Cure for Philosophy?

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There is much more continuity between intra-uterine life and earliest infancy than the impressive caesura of the act of birth would have us believe.

Sigmund Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*

You are a bad bad Mrs.  
In them skin tight britches  
Runnin' folks in ditches  
Baby about to bust the stitches, yeah  
Ohio Players, 'Skin Tight' (1974)

Divided, torn, disadvantaged: for women the stakes are higher; there are more victories and more defeats for them than for men.

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Force of Circumstance*.

Existential phenomenology also is transformed by bringing pregnancy into view. Its male bias becomes apparent.

Iris M. Young, "Pregnant Subjectivity and the Limits of Existential Phenomenology"

We are all "born of woman," as Adrienne Rich says; we have all come into our first moments of existence inside the body of a woman—this is probably as close to a universal truth as we will ever come. At the same time this fact goes unnoticed in mainstream philosophical discourse: for philosophy it is as if pregnancy has never happened. This tension no doubt makes it an intriguing topic for further investigation, but in order to advance *thinking* pregnancy, rather than merely stacking new scientific data, the experiences primarily of pregnant women—but also of the foetus, the newborn infant, the father and other parents and caretakers—have to be taken into account to a much larger degree than has previously been the case. It is our hope and

conviction that such an experiential philosophy of pregnancy will not simply register as yet another marginal theme of feminist phenomenology, but instead unfold as a new, rich resource for philosophy in a far broader sense.

This introductory article is structured around the following themes: it begins with a brief overview of some central works that have paved the way for the present discussion (Simone de Beauvoir, Hannah Arendt, Adrienne Rich, and Iris Marion Young). This is followed by a critique of the concept of “experience” and the philosophies based on it (such as phenomenology) that was first presented by feminist thinkers such as Joan Scott and Judith Butler in the 1980s. The question this debate poses to the discussions in this book is whether focusing on experience is still, after the criticism, a philosophically viable option. After that, the views of Edmund Husserl—often said to be “the father of phenomenology”—on the particular themes of motherhood and pregnancy are presented, as it is often overlooked that he had anything original to say on the topic. Then follows a short outline of the structure of the experience of pregnancy, and also the modest suggestion that pregnancy should be seen not only as “split subjectivity” (Kristeva, Young, and others) but also as a specific mode of phenomenological “in-between.” Thereafter the question is taken up whether pregnancy as a philosophical topic might also affect the methodological core of phenomenology. The article ends with a speculative outlook towards certain themes that have developed as a consequence of thinking pregnancy philosophically.

Pregnancy in the Western world has in a couple of decades gone from being a medical condition best kept in the privacy of one’s home to being something that the icons of pop culture expose on the front pages of glossy magazines and that is featured in Hollywood movies.<sup>1</sup> “Pregnancy,” Kelly Oliver says in her recent book on pregnancy and Hollywood films, “is no longer in the shadows.”<sup>2</sup> Although far from receiving the kind of attention it does in media, there is clearly a growing interest in pregnancy in feminist philosophy over the past decades, and also in psychoanalysis, the natural sciences, and sociology amongst others. The analyses of pregnancy that have been developed in these traditions throw new light on important

<sup>1</sup> See Imogen Tyler, “Skin-Tight: Celebrity, Pregnancy and Subjectivity,” *Thinking Through the Skin*, eds. Sara Ahmed & Jackie Stacey (London: Routledge, 2001) where she analyses the “groundbreaking photograph” by Annie Leibovitz of a heavily pregnant, nude Demi Moore on the cover of *Vanity Fair*, August 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Kelly Oliver, *Knock Me Up, Knock Me Down: Images of Pregnancy in Hollywood Films* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 6.

philosophical themes such as subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and ethics. Still, from a bird's-eye view overlooking the history of philosophy, surprisingly little has been written on the subject. Birth is by conventional wisdom considered to be the real beginning of one's life in the world, whereas pregnancy itself is often considered to be a mere transit phase, waiting for delivery. The texts gathered here attempt to reverse this relation by focusing on the particularities pertaining to that very specific and different time and place where human life begins. Speaking of what pregnancy does to the experience of time, Silvia Stoller writes:

It is due to a woman's awareness of pregnancy that they hold another gender-specific time experience. The pregnant woman experiences carrying somebody in her body for nine months, *waiting* for the birth of her child, being *patient*, continually recognizing the *changes* in and of her body, the *growing* of her child, living an intense double life *for a certain time period*. [...] Women do indeed have a specific sense of temporality due to their female bodies.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, as recent scientific research into pre-natal life shows it is clear that already foetal life inside the uterus has most of the features that we associate with a newborn baby: the foetus is active, it communicates, it even plays with itself.<sup>4</sup> Research into the prenatal life of the foetus is a swiftly growing field which comes up with ever-new results on the capabilities and sensibilities of the infant. Although psychoanalysis was at first slow in presenting convincing accounts of the psychic meaning of pregnancy and motherhood, due to the androcentric beginnings of psychoanalytical theory with Freud, a shift occurred with Helen Deutsch's 1945 work *The Psychology of Women*.<sup>5</sup> Even though a number of works dealing with pregnancy from a psychoanalytical perspective have been published since then, Rosemary Balsam in an article from 2003 complained that the pregnant body is still something that is missing from psychoanalytical theory:

<sup>3</sup> Silvia Stoller, "Gender and Anonymous Temporality," Christina Schuëes, Dorothea Olkowski & Helen Fielding, eds., *Time in Feminist Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011), 80. Emphasis in original.

<sup>4</sup> See Serge Ciccotti, *Les bébés de Marseille ont-ils l'accent?* (Paris: Dunod, 2010) for a popular overview of scientific studies on the psychology of babies and foetuses.

<sup>5</sup> Helene Deutsch, *Motherhood*, vol. II of *The Psychology of Women: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation* (New York; Grune and Stratton, 1945).

Pregnancy per se has not captured a focus in original drive-based theory, in the object-oriented theories, or in the post-1970s self-psychological or intersubjective theories.<sup>6</sup>

Until this deficit is addressed and the pregnant bodies of women are given the same position that the phallus has enjoyed over the last hundred years, phallogentrism, according to Balsam, will continue to rule in the psychoanalytical theories about not only girls and women but equally boys and men. However, psychoanalysts working with pregnant mothers and their newborn infants have for decades now confirmed the view of the foetus as communicative and relational.<sup>7</sup> This goes squarely against the highly influential position held by Jean Piaget and his followers in developmental psychology, in which the infant was initially solipsistic and enclosed within her own world with basically no relations to people other than what was needed for biological survival.<sup>8</sup>

A book by Alessandra Piontelli, *From Fetus to Child: an Observational and Psychoanalytical Study*, provides a noteworthy example of the recent interest of psychoanalysis in foetal life. The work is based on transcripts of ultrasound videos documenting foetuses in the uterus, after which she observed them as newborn babies in their homes from birth until they reached two years, and in some cases also had psychoanalytic sessions with them as young children.<sup>9</sup> This enabled her to note patterns of behaviour and emotional responses that span over the first years of their lives, and which also span the birth gap. Of the many intriguing things Piontelli discusses, the accounts of four pairs of twins in the uterus as they play with the umbilical cords, and interact with each other in different ways are perhaps the most fascinating. The ultrasound filming of one pair of twins, Alice and Luca, show him caressing the cheek of his sister through the membrane separating them; they hug each other, cuddle up and so forth. Surprisingly, this type of behaviour is manifest also after birth: at six months, Luca is

<sup>6</sup> Rosemary Balsam, "The Vanished Pregnant Body in Psychoanalytic Female Developmental Theory," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 51 (2003): 1159.

<sup>7</sup> See the work that has evolved on the basis of works by Melanie Klein, Françoise Dolto, Esther Bick and Donald Winnicott, by for instance Johan Norman, Caroline Eliacheff, Joan Raphael-Leff, and others.

<sup>8</sup> See for instance Jean Piaget, *The Child's Conception of the World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 152.

<sup>9</sup> Alessandra Piontelli, *From Fetus to Child: an Observational and Psychoanalytical Study* (London: Routledge, 1992).

reported to gently stroke his sister to which she responds by smiling, and when they are one year old their favourite game is to hide on different sides of a curtain, stroking each other through it.<sup>10</sup>

According to journalist Annie Murphy Paul, writing about the science of prenatal influences on adult life in her recent book *Origins: How the Nine Months Before Birth Shape the Rest of Our Lives*, the scientific study of pregnancy is rapidly transforming from being a field of research slumbering in the backwaters into something new: it is becoming a “scientific frontier.”<sup>11</sup> In this frontier field of evolutionary biology, the development of the foetus in gestation is shown to be one of the most consequential periods of life, since the brain, the nervous system and all the organs in the body grow from next to nothing into the highly complex being that a newborn child is, all in a very short time span. And as the two biologists Peter Gluckman and Mark Hanson show in their 2004 book *The Fetal Matrix: Evolution, Development and Disease*, even many of the diseases we encounter as adults stem from our prenatal life, which amongst other things means that an increased focus on the care and welfare of women should be central to politics:

[...] the knowledge we have in this field is far from negligible. The phenomenon of so-called “fetal origins of adult disease” is now widely accepted, as a result of the plethora of experimental, epidemiological and clinical studies conducted around the world by many groups. [...] [This] changes our view of prenatal development and health. Logic would suggest that a greater emphasis on the well-being of women of reproductive age, even before pregnancy, must be made in medical research, in healthcare delivery, in economic policy and in the political process.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Piontelli, *From Fetus to Child*, 126, 137.

<sup>11</sup> Annie Murphy Paul, *Origins: How the Nine Months Before Birth Shape the Rest of Our Lives* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 5. For a general critique of scientific experiments with infants as being unethical, see Françoise Dolto, *För barnets skull* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1993) chap. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Gluckman and Mark Hanson, *The Fetal Matrix: Evolution, Development and Disease* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 209, 212f. The passage continues: “It is no longer possible to see the embryo or fetus as the larval stage of human development, not needing particular care or attention because it will be nourished, nurtured and defended from a hostile environment by its mother. Instead it is now apparent that by taking a developmental perspective, radical changes in priorities are demanded that will impact on many components of our lives. We believe that this has implications both for individuals, be they parents or politicians, and for society.”

## Contours of a field

The following, cursory overview has no ambitions to be exhaustive, nor does it claim to list what are the most important contributions to the burgeoning field of phenomenology of pregnancy. The aim is the more modest one of sketching the background provided by some of the works that have helped to shape a field that can loosely be described as *phenomenology of pregnancy*. A phenomenology of pregnancy aims in a first step to continue the phenomenological project as a philosophy of experience, as first started by Edmund Husserl. To this extent, it has built on the works of Simone de Beauvoir, who famously argued in her 1949 book, *The Second Sex*, that the experiential life of women—hitherto neglected—must be integrated more fully within the field of phenomenology.<sup>13</sup> Beauvoir described pregnancy from the point of view of a society that is hostile to women, where the pregnant woman is “ensnared by nature,” both “plant and animal”:

[She is] a storehouse of colloids, an incubator, an egg; she scares children who are proud of their young, straight bodies and makes young people titter contemptuously because she is a human being, a conscious and free individual, who has become life’s passive instrument.<sup>14</sup>

This meant that pregnant women were confined to what Beauvoir called “immanence,” in a certain sense prisoners of their biological bodies with little hope of escaping this alienation in order to reach “transcendence” or freedom.

The general ontological ambiguity that characterizes all human beings—the split between alienation and freedom, between immanence and transcendence—is increased for women, since patriarchal society forces them to become Other in relation to their One:

Now, what peculiarly defines the situation of woman is that she—a free and autonomous being like all human creatures—nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to turn her into an object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and for ever transcended by another consciousness which is essential and sovereign. The drama of woman lies in this conflict

<sup>13</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 477.

between the fundamental aspirations of every subject—which always regards itself as essential—and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential.<sup>15</sup>

Although not explicitly focused on the experiences of women, and thus not a feminist work in that sense, Hannah Arendt in her 1958 book *The Human Condition* presented ideas that have turned out to be of great importance for both later feminist philosophy and the project of a phenomenology of pregnancy. In the book, which has often been seen as in part a critical reversal of her former teacher Martin Heidegger's focus on *Dasein*'s 'being-towards-death,' Arendt promotes "natality" as a basic concept for understanding human life. Although all three "fundamental human activities"—labour, work, and action—that make up the basis of her analysis of life are "rooted in natality," Arendt singles out action as the most important. Labour is the kind of work that also animals perform in order to stay alive, whereas work creates a world of artificial objects by transforming nature into a world that is human-made, with buildings, public institutions, and so on. Action, by distinction, is the highest form of intervention in the world for Arendt, as it is the realization of freedom: 'since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought'.<sup>16</sup>

Arendt's emphasis on natality stands in some contrast to much of the history of philosophy, in which thinkers from Socrates to Cicero to Heidegger have argued that philosophy is, in different ways, a preparation for death. Focus on death is no doubt a means to better understand life for these thinkers, but Arendt shows that neglecting to take natality— i.e., the new beginnings that inhere in birth—into account means that not only political action but also freedom finds no place in the world. As she says in *Between Past and Future*, from 1961:

Man does not possess freedom so much as he, or better his coming into the world, is equated with the appearance of freedom in the universe [...]. In the birth of each man this initial beginning is reaffirmed, because in each instance something new comes into an already existing world which will continue to exist

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 27 (trans. mod.).

<sup>16</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 9.

after each individual's death. Because he is a beginning, man can begin; to be human and to be free are one and the same.<sup>17</sup>

Even though many feminist thinkers in the 1970s and 80s criticized Arendt for reinforcing gender differences through her sharp division between labour and action, her insistence on the importance of natality for understanding political life proved to be of great significance.<sup>18</sup>

One of the most influential works devoted specifically to the themes of motherhood and pregnancy was Adrienne Rich's book from 1976, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*.<sup>19</sup> Rich combines a descriptive analysis of the experience of pregnancy and motherhood with an investigation of the "institution" of male dominance over women's power of reproduction:

Throughout this book I try to distinguish between two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed on the other: the *potential* relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the *institution*, which aims at ensuring that the potential—and all women—shall remain under male control. This institution has been a keystone of the most diverse social and political systems. It has withheld over one-half the human species from the decisions affecting their lives; it exonerates men from fatherhood in any authentic sense [...].<sup>20</sup>

Here a purely descriptive account of experience is fruitfully paired with an analysis of the institution of misogyny as a political and historical reality. The point Rich makes is that under the present system of power, one cannot have the one without the other, and this holds for both men and women.

Rich discovers that her own experiences of pregnancy and motherhood—typical, she claims, of many American, white, middleclass women becoming pregnant after the Second World War—are so thoroughly imbued with the expectations and values of "patriarchy" that she finds herself at a loss to say what her own wishes were:

<sup>17</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking Press, 1961), 167.

<sup>18</sup> Needless to say, there are many other themes in Arendt's work that were indeed taken up by feminist thinkers.

<sup>19</sup> Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1995). See also Andrea O'Reilly (ed.), *From Motherhood to Mothering: The Legacy of Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born* (New York: SUNY Press, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 13.

I had no idea of what *I* wanted, what *I* could or could not choose. I only knew that to have a child was to assume adult womanhood to the full, to prove myself, to be “like other women.”<sup>21</sup>

On her analysis, motherhood is a system that in different ways, and throughout history, has “ghettoized and degraded female potentialities.”<sup>22</sup>

Accordingly, there is a creative tension in Rich’s analysis between a mother’s experience on the one hand, and the given socio-political situation in which these experiences take place on the other. This enables her to incorporate both personal reflections of her own pregnancy, as well as a critique of patriarchal ideology. Although patriarchy is an institution which spans across history, there is no universally stable meaning to the concept of motherhood according to Rich, since its particular configurations vary with time and culture:

the patriarchal institution of motherhood is not the “human condition” any more than rape, prostitution, and slavery are. [...] Motherhood—unmentioned in the histories of conquest and serfdom, wars and treaties, exploration and imperialism—has a history, it has an ideology [...].<sup>23</sup>

Continuing the legacy of North American feminism and Rich in particular, but infusing it with Kristeva’s psychoanalytic semiotics and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the body, Iris Marion Young in a seminal article from 1984 summed up much of the discussions concerning pregnancy and motherhood so far.<sup>24</sup> Due to the influx of these theoretical paradigms, she also opened up new perspectives that have contributed to a fruitful re-orientation of the phenomenology of pregnancy. Deepening the previous focus on experience and the body by means of Merleau-Ponty’s innovative and carefully worked out phenomenological analyses, Young also problematizes some of its most basic assumptions, mainly by drawing on Kristeva’s notion of a “split subject.”<sup>25</sup> Pregnancy becomes a privileged site

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>24</sup> Iris Marion Young, “Pregnant Embodiment: Subjectivity and Alienation,” *On Female Body Experience: Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Young refers to Julia Kristeva, “Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini,” *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Gora,

for experiencing a notion of subjectivity that does not fit into, and therefore challenges, classical philosophical conceptions of identity and of a unitary subject:

The pregnant subject, I suggest, is decentered, split, or doubled in several ways. She experiences her body as herself and not herself. Its inner movements belong to another being, yet they are not other, because her body boundaries shift and because her bodily self-location is focused on her trunk in addition to her head. [...] Pregnancy, I argue, reveals a paradigm of bodily experience in which the transparent unity of self dissolves.<sup>26</sup>

But rather than exploring further the philosophical consequences of this dissolving self, Young breaks off her analysis, and introduces another theme and the tension it creates in the experience of pregnancy. Here she revisits (and disentangles) the two major issues in Rich's analysis—motherhood as experience and as institution—which threatened to collapse the latter's account since the possibility of "experience" there seemed to be overtaken by the institution of patriarchy. On the one hand, the pregnant woman according to Young indeed does have a privileged relation to experiencing the foetus: "it is she and only she who lives this growing body," while other people only have access to this process in the intermediary way of communicating with her. On the other hand, this personal experience is transformed into something else, into objectified measurable data, by the techno-medical institutions in their present organization.<sup>27</sup> The former becomes insignificant in the eyes of the latter, which represents authority and "real" knowledge, and thus the privileged position of experience is devalued, whereby alienation sets in. Young suggests that part of the solution to overcome this alienation is to promote different norms of health, so that middle-aged (to which should be added: white) man is no longer the one measure supposed to fit all, but instead represents one option besides that of women, children, the aged and the physically impaired, and so on. Her second suggestion is that the institution of medicine, which has taken control of pregnancy and childbirth, must abandon its self image as being concerned foremost with curing—what pregnant women

*et al.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980). See also Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Jardine and Blake, *Signs* 1 (1981): 31.

<sup>26</sup> Young, "Pregnant Embodiment," 46f.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

need is often caring, not help to cure a medical “condition.”<sup>28</sup> Concluding this brief overview it can be said that a sustained, non-reductive phenomenology of motherhood and pregnancy has been in the making at least since Beauvoir’s work, but it is still very much work in progress.

### The critique of experience

In most of the works mentioned, a main point of consideration has been a tension between women’s first person experience on the one hand, and patriarchy or the techno-medical sciences and institutions on the other. However, as Elizabeth Grosz rightly pointed out, many thinkers in the early feminist movement relied on an overly naive understanding of experience, using it to settle debates and as a means of access to “truth” and a supposedly untouched womanliness, instead of seeing it as a problematic starting point in need of philosophical examination:

Experience cannot be understood as the unproblematic criterion for the assessment of knowledges, for it is clearly implicated in the dominant cultural and theoretical terms through which it is produced and by which it is framed. With the onslaught of anti-humanism, Marxism and poststructuralism in the late 1970s and 1980s, experience tended to become something of a dirty word, at least in some feminist circles.<sup>29</sup>

It may seem unfair, first having women’s experiences questioned by the male dominated techno-sciences of medicine only to shortly thereafter discover that they are also under attack from feminist thinkers. But the reason for the latter critique differs significantly from that of the former; in fact, they could be said to be at opposing ends. The feminist critique does not aim at discrediting women’s account of lived experience, but instead to uncover a hidden masculine bias in the concept itself.<sup>30</sup> So the point is to enable truer accounts of women’s experience, even if it means employing different concepts and other philosophical strategies. The core of the critique is that an uncritical reliance on experience “reproduces rather than

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 59f.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, “Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray in the Flesh,” *Thesis Eleven* 36 (1993): 40.

<sup>30</sup> This discussion takes place within a much wider, highly important debate on the relation between feminism and phenomenology that has been going on for a long time, and which cannot be accounted for in this limited space.

contests given ideological systems,” as Joan Scott put it in an influential article.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Judith Butler criticized Merleau-Ponty’s account of sexual experience as one that is meant to be universal and thus gender neutral, whereas it in fact expresses the particular point of view of a male subject.<sup>32</sup> Thus Joan Scott in one place goes so far as to consider the expulsion of the word (however that is to be achieved):

Experience is not a word we can do without, although it is tempting, given its usage to essentialize identity and reify the subject, to abandon it altogether. But experience is so much a part of everyday language, so imbricated in our narratives that it seems futile to argue for its expulsion.<sup>33</sup>

But it was only with an important article by Linda Martín Alcoff that this critique was extended so as to relate to phenomenology as a whole, something that was implicit already in Butler’s paper. One of Alcoff’s aims is to show that a properly reconstructed phenomenology—i.e. one that takes the feminist critique seriously—will be beneficial to feminist philosophy in general. More specifically, it will enable phenomenology to incorporate the ideology critique that feminists have engaged with for so long, while at the same time providing feminist philosophy with an expanded concept of reason that it urgently needs.<sup>34</sup>

What makes the feminist critique of experience particularly relevant for many of the discussions of pregnancy in this book is the fact that it is situated in the midst of a critical re-examination of classical phenomenology from the point of view of poststructuralism, a mode of theorizing that is ubiquitous in the texts assembled here, although in many different forms. However, an unfortunate side effect of this re-examination has been that

<sup>31</sup> Joan Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry*, 17.4 (1991): 778. For three recent rebuttals of Scott in relation to phenomenology, see Silvia Stoller, “Phenomenology and the Poststructural Critique of Experience,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17.5 (2009): 707–37; Linda Martín Alcoff, “Phenomenology, Post-Structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience,” *Feminist Phenomenology*, eds. Linda Fisher and Lester Embree (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000) 39–56; and Johanna Oksala, “In Defense of Experience,” *Hypatia* 29.2 (2014): 388–403.

<sup>32</sup> Judith Butler, “Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description: A Feminist Critique of Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*,” *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy*, eds. Jeffner Allen & Iris Marion Young (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1989).

<sup>33</sup> Joan Scott, “Experience,” *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. Judith Butler and Joan Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 37.

<sup>34</sup> Alcoff, “Phenomenology, Post-Structuralism, and Feminist Theory,” 39f, 51.

phenomenology has become “discredited” by much feminist philosophy.<sup>35</sup> Discussing the shift from the feminism of the 1970s (and its reliance on women’s experience) to the poststructuralist feminism that was initiated in the 1980s, Alcoff insists that:

However, this “turn” [to poststructuralism] has left unresolved the issue of experience and its role in cognition. Feminist theory has swung from the extreme of taking personal experience as the foundation for knowledge to discrediting experience as the product of phallogocentrism.<sup>36</sup>

Belief in experience as a true expression of a life that would be magically untouched by a troubling reality, according to Alcoff “precludes an analysis of the way in which ideological systems construct identities, experiences, and indeed, differences.”<sup>37</sup> But given the relevance and importance of this feminist critique, it is still however not clear how this notion of experience ties in with the technical concept of experience (*Erfahrung*) as it has been elaborated in transcendental phenomenology. Are they not so different from one another as to make a comparison between them vacuous? The former being a straightforward appeal to everyday life that at times betrays a philosophical naivety, whereas the latter is the result of scientific elaborations of the role of subjectivity in the constitution of an objective world—how would a critique of the one be pertinent to the other? Although it would clearly be a mistake to put them on the same level, the fact remains that they are still connected, both at a material and a discursive level—and for essential reasons. To give a thorough account of how everyday, philosophically naive experience can be clarified by the phenomenological concept is a central task for transcendental phenomenology. In fact, it is the main concern of Husserl’s so-called “psychological way” to the reduction.<sup>38</sup> It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss it in any detail, but the heart of the matter is that each and every lived experience in the everyday, natural

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> See Iso Kern’s classic account in “The Three Ways to the Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction,” *Husserl: Expositions and Appraisals*, eds. F. Elliston and P. McCormick (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1977).

world can be transformed into a transcendental given by means of the phenomenological reduction.<sup>39</sup>

The two approaches to experience (everyday and phenomenological) are also connected at the discursive level. We have already seen that one of the most important texts of the early feminist critique was Butler's "Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description," where she engages precisely with Merleau-Ponty's concept of sexual experience. At the very least, this indicates that phenomenology and the feminist critique of the concept of experience were read in conjunction at the beginning of this debate. Alcoff, again, locates the split between the two in the previously mentioned article from 1992 by Joan Scott:

Scott's essay and the view it presents is widely influential, and partly responsible for the eclipse of phenomenology within feminist theory. And it follows from a Derridean-inspired analysis which focuses exclusively on texts and discourses as sites of cultural representation and knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

What are we to make of this debate today? What are the repercussions for an overview of a phenomenology of pregnancy? Two things are clear. First, these critical voices show the need for phenomenologists to seriously reconsider both their reliance on a supposedly gender-neutral concept of experience, and the continuation of an unquestioned androcentrism in which phenomenology has undoubtedly participated in, partly because of that reliance. In that sense, classic phenomenology can truly be said to "reproduce an ideological system." On the other hand, and as many later feminist phenomenologists have shown, the resources that phenomenology offers in the fight against social and gender inequalities, provided that it is subjected to critique, by far outweigh the disadvantages, and this also applies to the project of a phenomenology of pregnancy discussed here.

<sup>39</sup> This is a central issue in my book Nicholas Smith, *Towards a Phenomenology of Repression. A Husserlian Reply to the Freudian Challenge* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2010), although I discuss psychoanalytical experience there in relation to phenomenology.

<sup>40</sup> Alcoff, "Phenomenology, Post-Structuralism, and Feminist Theory," 45.

## Husserl on birth, motherhood and pregnancy

In this historical overview it is also important to see what Husserl had to say on the topics of motherhood, birth and pregnancy, particularly since it is generally assumed that these are themes that were of no interest to him.<sup>41</sup> While Merleau-Ponty's analyses have often been invoked in feminist phenomenology, and have thus come to play a central role in the discussions of pregnancy, Husserl's own investigations of embodied subjectivity and intersubjectivity have often been overlooked, although they are now increasingly addressed by a new generation of feminist philosophers.<sup>42</sup> What they show is that Husserl's work clearly merits further investigation for the contributions it can bring to these fields. In fact, reading through the works discussed in this section, Husserl comes across as a thinker who has devoted an exceptional amount of writing to an understanding of sexuality, to womanhood, intrauterine life and birth—and to the philosophical problems it raises. It also becomes clear that these investigations have not been inconsequential sidesteps, but have gradually come to have a decisive effect on the very project of transcendental phenomenology.<sup>43</sup>

These themes are important not least because they so clearly revealed the insufficiency of a purely egological approach, and thus became directly con-

<sup>41</sup> As this is not an introduction to phenomenology but to that of pregnancy, the unfamiliar reader is referred to general introductory works such as *The Routledge Companion to Phenomenology*, eds. Sebastian Luft and Soren Overgaard (London: Routledge, 2012); or Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000); or Rudolf Bernet *et al.*, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern U.P., 1993).

<sup>42</sup> It would be impossible to list all or even most of the works done by feminist philosophers on what is somewhat inappropriately called the "new" Husserl (a figure that stems from combining the published works with the posthumous manuscripts), but some of the most influential include Silvia Stoller, Sara Heinämaa, Lanei Rodemeyer, and Christina Schües. For a recent assessment of the debate, see Alia Al-Saji, "Bodies and Sensings: On the Uses of Husserlian Phenomenology for Feminist Theory," *Continental Philosophy Review* 43/1 (2010). Already in 1976, Jeffner Allen wrote an article on one of the texts in Hua XV on the infant: "A Husserlian Phenomenology of the Child," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 6:2 (1976).

<sup>43</sup> For a completely different view, see Johanna Oksala, "What is Feminist Phenomenology? Thinking Birth Philosophically," *Radical Philosophy* 126 (2004): 16, where she states "If Husserl has problems accounting for the experiences of pregnancy and the birth of a child, his account of the sexual encounter does not fare much better. [...] Even if Husserl's view on sexuality could prove to be more nuanced [...], it is safe to say that his phenomenological analysis of it does not in any way challenge the findings of his previous phenomenological studies."

nected to the methodological intersubjective approach to transcendental phenomenology that was developed even prior to *Ideas I*.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the problems related to motherhood and birth motivated Husserl to push even further into intersubjectivity, so much so that they came to play a decisive part in what he in the 1930s called “generative phenomenology.” Here the intentional field is no longer restricted to that of a single individual, nor to a community of coexisting individuals, but is instead reconfigured so that it includes parents, older relatives, and the difficult intentional connection of generations.<sup>45</sup> Thus, when Husserl writes “Problem: generativity—birth and death as essential occurrences for the constitution of the world,” this shows an awareness of aspects of constitution that are neither accessible from within egology nor intersubjectivity, neither from static nor from genetic phenomenology, but that can only be reached from the new perspective of generative phenomenology.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, it is important to notice how these discussions imply a real transition from what is often conceived of as classical phenomenology. From the point of view of Husserl’s position in at least the first volume of *Ideas*, which is to say the classical exposition of mature, static phenomenology, a phenomenon such as birth would have to be conceived of as a limit that is ultimately out of reach and thus, strictly speaking, inconceivable. The first-person perspective, which is the methodological guide here, cannot make sense of its own birth, and thus has to rely on the information provided by others, notably the mother. Evidence thereby becomes mediated in an irrevocable sense, since there is nothing given in flesh in the retentive sequence of inner time consciousness that corresponds to my actual birth, let alone my being as a foetus in gestation. The only one who knows of this in the first-person perspective is the pregnant mother, who thereby, and in a paradox that phenomenology has yet to think through in all of its consequences, becomes the centre of transcendental phenomenology as such; still, her experience is not identical to that of the foetus inside her. Against all natural preconceptions that would have it predominantly male, phenomenology statically considered apparently cannot avoid being pri-

<sup>44</sup> See E. Husserl, *Collected Works, vol. XII: The Basic Problems of Phenomenology. From the Lectures, Winter Semester, 1910–1911*, trans. I. Farin & J. G. Hart (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006). This is discussed in Smith, *Towards a Phenomenology of Repression*.

<sup>45</sup> See Anthony Steinbock, *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995).

<sup>46</sup> Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* III, 171.

marily a doctrine of the pregnant woman: she is the undeniable source of origin (which cannot be thought) of the transcendental ego, which at the same time cannot be born nor die.<sup>47</sup> Looking at phenomenology through the lens of pregnancy then immediately opens up vistas that are not easily incorporated, and that call for reconsideration.<sup>48</sup>

Before we come back to these issues, let us start this discussion of Husserl's views on pregnancy and birth by taking a look at one of the most important criticisms that has been raised against the wider, theoretical framework that surrounds them. Luce Irigaray has in many books and articles discussed the themes of love, sexuality and gestation, often in a critical dialogue with the phenomenological tradition (Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty).<sup>49</sup> Irigaray's analysis of the pregnant woman can be seen to question one of the most fundamental assumptions underlying the phenomenological analysis of objectivity and truth. The constitution of objectivity according to Husserl requires an intersubjective foundation, and the core of this is the process whereby an I experiences another subject as both spatially and ontologically different from me, in a mutual but not reciprocal encounter.<sup>50</sup> As Sara Heinämaa summarized the debate in her

<sup>47</sup> See E. Husserl, *Collected Works vol. III, Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution* (The Hague: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 109f. The position outlined in that passage is heavily problematized in other parts of the book, which instead contribute to the more dynamic approach of what is to become genetic phenomenology.

<sup>48</sup> For an insightful discussion of this, see Sara Heinämaa, "An equivocal couple overwhelmed with life': A Phenomenological Analysis of Pregnancy," *philoSOPHIA* 4.1 (2014) 31–49: "I thus ultimately want to suggest that our birth is not merely, and perhaps not even primarily, an unattainable limit for us, parallel or opposite to death, nor our entry into discourse or logos. Rather, our birth is a specific type of lived bodily process that is evidenced to us by one single person—our mother—who serves paradoxically as its location, its witness, and its executor (agent)" (33).

<sup>49</sup> Central parts of Irigaray's argument concerning the bodily differences of men and women (there is a clear heteronormative bias in her whole approach) are presented in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* [1984] trans. C. Burke & G. C. Gill (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993). The analyses of prenatal life, of the mucous, of spatiality as stemming from intra-uterine life are elaborated in later works, notably *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History* [1992], trans. A. Martin (New York: Routledge, 1996), and *To Be Two* [1997] trans. M. Rhodes & M. F. Cocito-Monoc (London: Athlone Press, 2000).

<sup>50</sup> Sara Heinämaa discusses Irigaray's analysis of the pregnant woman in relation to phenomenology in "On Luce Irigaray's Inquiries into Intersubjectivity: Between the Feminine Body and its Other," Maria Cimitile and Elaine Miller eds., *Returning to Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy, Politics, and the Question of Unity* (New York: SUNY Press, 2006). She writes: "[...] this mode of experience lacks that particular form of

recent article, what the case of the pregnant woman does is to show that in her case there is no spatial difference between the two subjects, since the foetus is inside her:

The most challenging case that Irigaray presents against phenomenological discussions on intersubjectivity is the experience of a woman carrying an unborn child in her womb. The argument is that the phenomenological analyses prove prejudged when we try to extend them to cover women's experiences of their own bodies. If we take into consideration the fact that a woman is able to apprehend another living being in her own body, and to house or host this other, then we have to question the presupposition that self and other are necessarily separated by a spatial distance. The subject that feels a sensing and moving other inside her own living body is different from the subject that sees the other at a distance over there.<sup>51</sup>

What Irigaray's critique suggests, then, is that if the relation between mother and foetus as joined in the pregnant body is given the serious phenomenological attention it deserves, then the very intersubjective foundations of objectivity and truth will have to be reconsidered. Let us see whether a response to this can be framed from within a Husserlian perspective.

Even though Irigaray does not charge Husserl with solipsism, it is an integral part of her critique of phenomenology.<sup>52</sup> Although the critique raised by Levinas and others against Husserl for not fully avoiding solipsism has been made virtually irrelevant since the publication of the three volumes on intersubjectivity, it nevertheless keeps returning like a restless

reciprocity that is characteristic of the paradigmatic examples of phenomenology: two visible subjects gazing at each other at a distance. The symmetry of such perceptions was already described by Husserl in *Cartesianische Meditationen* [...]. Against this, Irigaray argues that women relate to their unborn children in a different way. Reciprocity—this particular mode of symmetrical reciprocity—is not (yet) established” (254f). But for Husserl it is not a symmetrical or reciprocal relation where an I constitutes another subject: it is a more complex process that hinges precisely on there being a difference on the two sides that make it strictly non-symmetrical and non-reciprocal; see Natalie Depraz, *Transcendance et incarnation. Le statut de l'intersubjectivité comme altérité à soi chez Husserl* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), 127ff. This suggests that Husserl and Irigaray are closer to each other than one might first suspect, but from a Husserlian point of view the introduction of reciprocity in the relation between the I and the other would always be a falsification.

<sup>51</sup> Sara Heinämaa, “On Luce Irigaray's inquiries into intersubjectivity: Between the feminine body and its other,” 252.

<sup>52</sup> See Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 157, 169f.

ghost.<sup>53</sup> The analyses of the mother-infant relation and sexuality, however, provide concrete examples of intersubjective relations that, given their foundational methodological role, should have the power to immunize against such misunderstandings for good. For how could a thinker who gives intersubjectivity a foundational status, and who exemplifies this with the split or dual subjective configuration of the mother-infant relation, be taken for a solipsist? At the very least, Husserl's analyses complicates these discussions in a most fruitful way, and have furthermore proven to be highly relevant also for contemporary discussions.

But although Husserl's position regarding the foundational role of intersubjectivity for all kinds of intentional analysis is fairly straightforward (which is not to say without tensions), other parts of his analysis are fraught with problems and even inconsistencies. In particular, his analysis of death has been criticized (for failing to provide an adequate response to our factual mortality) but also birth has been a problematic issue. In a huge number of the texts from the 1920s onwards, Husserl gives rich and highly evocative analyses of sexuality, of the mother-child relation and of infancy, even though they are all in the form of fragments or sketches, as in this text from 1932:

The child inside the womb, with its sensory fields in even transformation. The child inside the mother. Do we not here have to do with an intermingling of primordialities, that does not depend on empathy? Does the mother amongst her own, inner sensory fields [...] also have those of the child, its sensibility of movement, its kinaesthesia? But if that is not the case, then what kind of community is it? How does the mother suffer when the child feels unwell?<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Husserliana XIII–XV. Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität I–III. Texte aus dem Nachlass*, ed. Iso Kern (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1973). The materials on mother-infant and sexuality are to be found mainly in the latter two volumes. See also *Husserliana XXXIX. Die Lebenswelt. Auslegungen der vorgegebenen Welt und ihrer Konstitution. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1916–1937)*, ed. Rochus Sowa (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008); and *Husserliana Materialien, 8. Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution (1929–1934). Die C-Manuskripte*, ed. Dieter Lohmar (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006). On solipsism, see for instance Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), 38n19.

<sup>54</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Husserliana XLII. Grenzprobleme der Phänomenologie. Analysen des Unbewusstseins und der Instinkte. Metaphysik. Späte Ethik. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908–1937)*, eds. Rochus Sowa and Thomas Vongehr (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 27, my translation.

Paradoxically, Husserl at the same time argued that the transcendental ego cannot be born nor die, a position that is found also in earlier texts.<sup>55</sup> The analysis of the foetus and the child that will eventually be born would, according to this analysis, have nothing to do with the “transcendental” ego—which amounts to a schizoid approach to this whole field of investigation. That is all the more surprising also considering that he had already by 1915 clearly come to realize that every transcendental subject *must* be born in order to be able to participate in the constitution of the world.<sup>56</sup> To a large extent, this inconsistency stems from inner, methodological problems regarding how to understand the phenomenological reduction and, to put it briefly, it was only with a clearer grasp of the role of the so-called psychological way to the reduction that Husserl was able to resolve this. It is clearly a field of investigations that is fraught with tensions for Husserl, and he puts forward one conflictual hypothesis after another, and often leaves them in conflict, rather than trying to settle the matter beforehand.

What is important for the project of investigating birth and motherhood, however, is that arguing for the embodied, even “animal,” nature of subjectivity as a necessary condition for the givenness of the world opens the field in a way that would not have been possible given the more traditional interpretations which see in Husserl’s thinking only a cogito which has no body, no sexual partners, no ancestors or relatives, yet has lived forever and will never die. As Jean-Luc Petit has argued, Husserl in these texts outlines a whole “phenomenology of fetal experience,” indicating the importance of a “neonatal phenomenology of movement and kinesthesia for the constitutive process.”<sup>57</sup> In a text from 1935 Husserl writes precisely of these foetal kinaesthesia:

The originary child—in what sense is it like an “I,” directed towards its first sensory data like an early ego-pole, what does its “instinctive” habituality consist of? The child in the womb already has kinaesthesia and kinaesthetically moves

<sup>55</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Collected Works, vol. 9. Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, trans. Anthony Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001) 466–469. Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* III, 610.

<sup>56</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Husserliana XXXVI, Transzendentaler Idealismus. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1908–1921)*, eds. Robin D. Rollinger and Rochus Sowa (Dordrecht: Springer, 2003) 141f.

<sup>57</sup> Jean-Luc Petit, “Constitution by Movement: Husserl in Light of Recent Neurobiological Findings,” *Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, eds. Petitot et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 223.

its “things”—already a primordiality at an originary level developing itself. [...] The infant, the newly born. [...] It is already an experiencing I at a higher level, it already has its acquisition of experience from its existence in the mother’s womb, it already has its perceptions with perceptual horizons. Besides this there are also new kinds of data, saliences in the sensory fields, new acts, new acquisitions in the substratum, which is already pre-acquisition, it is already an I of higher habitualities, but without self reflection, without developed temporality, without recollections at its disposition, streaming presence with retention and protention.<sup>58</sup>

Husserl’s discussions of pregnancy, birth, and motherhood occur in relation to what he calls “marginal problems” (*Randprobleme*).<sup>59</sup> “Marginal” however, does not imply that they are phenomena of lesser interest, but instead points to a specific position within the method of transcendental phenomenology: marginal problems are those that point out the limits of static and genetic phenomenology. In this sense, birth, early infancy, and death are “marginal” since they indicate the beginning and end of a subjective constitution of the world. The problems that they pose suggest an insufficiency of a “static” or purely descriptive approach (which attempts to give a description of any given thing, as it were, “frozen in time,” torn out of its historical context). My birth, for example, simply cannot be approached from static phenomenology since it is not given to me in any direct way of presentation. Thus it also withdraws itself from what Husserl in a major work called the guiding “principle” of all phenomenology—that the only justifiable source of knowledge is what gives itself to us in intuition.<sup>60</sup> Unlike people, trees and buildings, however, my own birth and death cannot—as a matter of principle—be given intuitively to me. They cannot be fitted into an encompassing account of the constitution of the world (and in that sense they are connected to the constitutive problems of what Husserl calls the sick, the anomalous, and primitive peoples). In fact, birth and death indicate a break in two distinct modes with the concordance of world constitution.

Does that mean that they do not contribute to our knowledge of ourselves and of the world? That would indeed be a strange position to argue for, since birth and death mark out the very limits of our being in the world: our entrance into the world and our departure from it. Thereby they also suggest the necessity of complementing static description with a “genetic” or explanatory account of the constitutive history of the phenomenon at

<sup>58</sup> Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* III, 604f, my translation.

<sup>59</sup> See notably Husserl, *Husserliana XLII, Grenzprobleme der Phänomenologie*.

<sup>60</sup> Husserl, *Ideas I*, §24.

hand: every birth must be preceded by something which generates it, namely sexual intercourse (at least this was so prior to *in vitro* fertilization), and then intrauterine life in the pregnant body of the mother. With this move, we have already shifted from a strictly egological perspective to that of an intersubjective perspective: my birth cannot be understood by myself alone but necessarily includes my mother, and also mediated accounts from others (relatives, caretakers).<sup>61</sup> But a fuller account of my birth does not stop at this, as it also points to the birth of my mother, etc., and thus to a whole sequence of prior births in the generations before us. Here we have also moved out of the genetic perspective and into that of “generative phenomenology,” which here corresponds to an open, intercorporeal succession of subjectivities. The constitution of the world began long before me and us, and it continues long after I and we have died, in a succession of generations.<sup>62</sup>

The movement that the “marginal” problems inaugurate, from static-genetic into generative phenomenology can be seen by comparing two different texts from the 1930s: one where Husserl remains at the level of a genetic, intersubjective approach, and the other where the step into generativity is taken, so that what first appeared to be “enigmatic” is given its solution in the latter. Thus in manuscript A V 20/15a, he writes:

But the transcendental of the questioning backwards from the existing world does [...] not lead to the goal—it only leads to death and to birth as transcendental enigmas.<sup>63</sup>

In the second text however another approach is suggested, namely the generative, which leads the investigation out of the enigma:

Nevertheless the transcendental question of birth and death and generation accrues, since the transcendental, pure interpretation from the inside of intentional life and egoic being does not lead to any presentation of a beginning nor an end [...]. For this purpose one needs the transcendental clarification of

<sup>61</sup> Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* II, 218.

<sup>62</sup> Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* III, 199f.

<sup>63</sup> Husserl, Unpublished Manuscript, A V 20/15a [1934–35]: “Aber die Transzendentalität der Rückfrage von der seienden Welt führt [...] nicht zum Ziel—sie führt nur zum Tod und zur Geburt als transzendentes Rätsel.”, my translation.

generative heritage, not the biophysical but the psychic and thereby transcendental heritage.<sup>64</sup>

Here it also becomes clear that the generative heritage that is at stake in these analyses is not restricted to bloodlines, the patrilineal lineage, or race (the “biophysical”), but could instead be interpreted as being open for other caretakers than parents. This suggests that what matters is the psychic or emotional bond that is established in the generative connection between an older caretaker and an infant.

This interlude into Husserl’s analysis of birth and generativity will end with a short look at the only text (as far as the editors are aware) where he mentions pregnancy. One of Husserl’s most celebrated texts on sexuality is called “Universal Teleology” (1933) and consists of five pages of very dense reflections on method, but mainly it contains a discussion of intersubjective (sexual) drives, transcendently seen. Summing up the contents of this fragment, Husserl says that the sexual drive embraces all subjects, which means that all monadic subjects are, by extension, both “with and in one another” (*Das Miteinander und Ineinander aller Monaden*), in the unity of universal development.<sup>65</sup> To clarify, “being a subject” has for Husserl from early on been synonymous with being in constant development: psychic or “spiritual” and ultimately moral development. According to Husserl there are, on the one hand, relative monadic worlds which consist of the subjects living in them, but on the other hand, and at the highest level, taken together these relative worlds make up a monadic totality, which consists of the whole of humanity as a constant streaming in endless progression, and this is what he means by the “universal teleology.” It is virtually the only similar text to have been translated into English, and it is therefore sometimes erroneously taken to be his only written text on sexuality, and has

<sup>64</sup> Husserl, *Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution*, 438 [1931]: “Gleichwohl erwächst die transzendente Frage nach Geburt und Tod und Generation, weil die transzendente reine Innenauslegung des intentionalen Lebens und Ich-Seins auf keine Vorstellbarkeit von Anfang und Ende führt [...]. Dazu kommt die transzendente Aufklärung der generativen Erbschaften, nicht der biophysischen, sondern der psychischen und somit transzendentalen.”, my translation.

<sup>65</sup> Husserl, “Universale Teleologie. Der intersubjektive, alle und jede Subjekte umspannende Trieb transzendental gesehen. Sein der monadischen Totalität,” [1933] *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* III, 593. In English “Universal Teleology,” transl. Biemel, reprinted in *Husserl. Shorter Works*, eds. Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

accordingly been regarded as both “curious and exceptional.”<sup>66</sup> But in fact it is neither. In all its density, this short text—like hundreds of other post-humous fragments from that period—brings together many strands from the final years, including sexuality, that together make up a peculiar submarine archipelago of tightly compressed ideas. Here only two themes will be discussed: androcentrism and its simultaneous problematization.

When speaking of sexual intercourse and the “intentionality of copulation” in “Universal Teleology,” Husserl presents an intentional analysis of the “intersubjective drive transcendently seen.” In the fulfilment of the drive (i.e. ejaculation and orgasm) there is, according to Husserl, nothing “immediately seen” that relates to the engendered child, nothing to suggest that this could result in “the well-known consequences in the other subject where finally the mother gives birth to the child.”<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, the intersubjective “act of procreation” does motivate new processes in the life of the other, but these are only given as mediated. These processes include an “innerly transformed self-temporalization,” but there is also an “outer, worldly disclosure” of the reproductive act, which manifests itself as “the physiology of pregnancy.”<sup>68</sup> Here is a central passage:

In the fulfilment of the drive there is, when viewed immediately, nothing of the created child, nothing regarding the well-known consequences it has in the other subject such that the mother finally gives birth to the child. But the fulfilment of the drive as reaching all the way into the “soul” of the other is not empathy with the other, nor a continued experience of the life of the other, of the worldly consequences of the act of conception as a worldly occurrence, and so at first really not an act that is related to the other, an act that would reach into her, as precisely an act in worldly life. [...] The intersubjective “act of conception” “motivates” new processes in the other, it changes the self-temporalization and in the disclosure of the worldly side, as human, I experience what shows itself there as worldly and what by means of further inductions can be said about this in relation to the physiology of pregnancy.<sup>69</sup>

Now it could be argued that there is indeed something important missing from Husserl’s understanding of transcendental subjectivity if sexual intercourse has no immediate relation to pregnancy. Maybe these potential con-

<sup>66</sup> See Johanna Oksala, “What is Feminist Phenomenology? Thinking Birth Philosophically,” 16.

<sup>67</sup> Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* III, 596.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 597.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 596, my translation.

sequences are not there for the man, one might object, but ask any woman of the 1930s and one would most likely have come up with a different answer. And even though it has been stressed here that Husserl has dealt quite extensively with womanhood and birth, the fact remains that pregnancy is really a marginal theme also in the sense of being insignificant, judging by the material published so far. So what is de facto a major condition of possibility—pregnancy—for there at all being thinkers, philosophy, knowledge and love of truth, is transformed into a minor theme, which is perhaps only even mentioned once.

Is this analysis sexist, as has been argued by Oksala for instance, when she speaks of Husserl's "heterosexual prejudices"?<sup>70</sup> Although she is no doubt right in pointing out the fact that the general tenor of the discussion concerns heterosexuality, Husserl makes no secret about his own sexuality and furthermore argues for the methodological necessity of starting from his own embodied existence:

When, in my worldliness, I interpret the intentionality of drives in the most originary way, I can only do so as a sexual human, and thereby from a human to other humans in actual empathy, from man to woman (which naturally, and generally speaking, is already mediated).<sup>71</sup>

Criticizing Husserl for being unable to address pregnancy due to his being a man is therefore not just.

Concerning the charge of heterosexual prejudice things also get more complicated as soon as one looks at the text in all its detail. For Husserl does not start out from the unquestioned assumption that women are the objective aim of the sexual drive, instead he makes it clear that in a first stage, the aim is the other. It is only once the analysis moves on from this general determination to a more specific, individualized position that the sexual difference comes into play (as shown above):

The drive can be in a state of undetermined hunger, which does not yet carry its object within itself as its "where to." Hunger in the ordinary sense is more determined, when it as a drive refers to eating—in the originary mode it is directed in a determinate way [...]. In the case of sexual hunger in its determined direction it is the other [*der Andere*] that is its affecting, alluring goal. This determined sexual hunger has its figure of fulfilment in copulation. In the drive

<sup>70</sup> Oksala, "What is Feminist Phenomenology?" 16.

<sup>71</sup> Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität* III, 594, my translation.

itself lies the relatedness to the other as other, and to its correlative drive. The one and the other drive can have the mode—mode of transformation—of refraining, or of wanting again. In the originary mode it is however unmodalized drive “without inhibition,” which always reaches into the other and whose intentionality of drives has always reached through to the other through her correlative intentionality of drives. In the simple, originary mode of fulfilment we do not have two separate fulfilments each in the one and the other primordiality, but a unity of both primordialities that is brought about by means of the fulfilment of one-within-the-other.<sup>72</sup>

As to the charge that Husserl’s analysis is androcentric for not seeing the relation between male ejaculation and the possibility of pregnancy (not addressed by Oksala), it rests on disregarding the fundamental methodological distinction between *Gegenwärtigung* and *Vergegenwärtigung*, or presentifying acts (such as perception) and re-presentifying acts (such as recollection, phantasy, and empathy). The sexual relation is in this text analysed in relation to empathy and thereby it falls under the category of re-presentifying acts—this is why there is no “immediate” relation to the possibility of becoming pregnant from the point of view of the man, but only a mediated one. For sure, one could argue in another step that the very distinction between re-presentifying and presentifying acts is “sexist” in one sense or another, but that is quite a different thing.

It is clear already from this sketch that the so-called marginal problems indeed posed crucial questions to Husserlian phenomenology, problems that forced it to engage with its own limits, both methodologically and thematically, and to open itself up transformatively in order to accommodate these new findings. Therefore it is also clear that these analyses did in fact play a decisive role in the development of Husserl’s thinking, notably in bringing to light the whole field of generative phenomena.

### The structure of pregnancy in contemporary thought

While pregnancy is paradigmatically a subjective experience in the pregnant woman, it is also often described as the announcement of something “foreign” to the self, although paradoxically this foreignness is located right at the centre of the pregnant body. This twofold characterization of pregnancy as being both of the self and foreign has engendered a lot of philo-

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 593f, my translation.

sophical work that conceptualizes and problematizes what for centuries had been considered to be an exclusively private matter of family life, and thus something bordering on muteness. Given that pregnancy is—at least minimally—a twofold relation (foetus and mother), the general structure of its experience can be shown to rest upon a series of non-symmetric poles: on the side of the mother there is self-awareness, a personal history and future projects that can be expressed in language, whereas on the side of the foetus there is as yet none (or very little) of this. Pregnancy thus seems to bring us to the very limits of rationality, language, and self-consciousness, while still being connected to these since the child will eventually come to acquire these capabilities.

This means that an experiential philosophy of pregnancy can be inscribed, on the one hand, as a still under-theorized part of the focus on *otherness* and *alterity* that has been central to so much philosophy and phenomenology during the last decades. This can be witnessed in the shift from, say, Husserlian and Levinasian modes of thought, in which otherness is not primarily thought of from the point of view of femininity, to those presented by Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray in which feminine otherness, although in different ways, is a central feature of selfhood. On the other hand, such a philosophy of pregnancy would fit equally well into the continuous discussions of selfhood and egology that form an equally central—correlational—part of phenomenology. However, what really makes pregnancy stand out in these classical debates is precisely the fact that it is neither “otherness” nor “selfhood” but both at the same time, in a combination that challenges the fundamental set-up in which phenomenology first began to address these issues. Had phenomenology incorporated the perspective of pregnancy from the start, it would most likely have resulted in a different conceptualization of what it means to be a transcendental subject, and of where the encounter with otherness first occurs.

The temporality of pregnancy and the bodily transformations of the woman carrying the foetus, which go together with some of the most profound psychic alterations a human can go through, are all particular to the experience of pregnancy. Commenting on filmmaker Maya Deren, Silvia Stoller says that it is “due to a woman’s awareness of pregnancy that they hold another gender-specific time experience.” The waiting involved—recognizing the bodily changes, the growth of the foetus and so forth, all within a limited time frame—seems to point to the conclusion that there is

indeed a different mode of temporality that is based in women's bodies.<sup>73</sup> However, as Stoller is quick to point out, this position cannot plausibly be used as a basis for generalization, such that what holds for women who have experienced pregnancy must hold for all women. The point that Stoller comes up with instead is to argue for the necessity of taking the deepest level of phenomenological investigation of passivity—which is where Husserl located anonymity—into account in discussions of gender and temporality. The anonymity of experiential life is basically the very source of temporalization and spatialization, which Maurice Merleau-Ponty developed mainly with a view to embodiment in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (which has ever since become one of the most important works at the intersection of phenomenology and feminism).<sup>74</sup> Stoller employs Merleau-Ponty's reworking of Husserlian anonymity in arguing that it is the origin which underlies all different types of temporal experience, a "primordial temporality," which "is not juxtaposition of external events, since it is the power which holds them together while keeping them apart."<sup>75</sup> This is the heart of what Husserl called "a phenomenology of the so-called unconscious" in his lectures on active and passive syntheses.<sup>76</sup> The role it acquires in Stoller's analysis is to be a source of functioning intentionality of which we are never—and can never be—aware. This then, is a level which precedes the gender experiences that Stoller referred to above, and in this sense the sphere of anonymously functioning intentionality can serve to open up the political, but is itself pre-gendered, pre-political.<sup>77</sup>

A different, to some extent contrary, position will be presented shortly regarding the extent to which experiences of pregnancy might affect the deepest, methodological level of phenomenology. But first another central feature of the structure of the experience of pregnancy must be introduced. Pregnancy, it might be said, is a specific mode of "in-between," which is a phenomenological concept that has been central ever since Heidegger's *Sein*

<sup>73</sup> Silvia Stoller, "Gender and Anonymous Temporality," *Time in Feminist Phenomenology*, eds. Christina Schües, et al., (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011), 80.

<sup>74</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962).

<sup>75</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 422; quoted in Stoller, "Gender and Anonymous Temporality," 86.

<sup>76</sup> E. Husserl, *Collected Works vol. IX, Analysis Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, ed. and trans. Anthony Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 201.

<sup>77</sup> Stoller, "Gender and Anonymous Temporality," 88.

*und Zeit*.<sup>78</sup> Heidegger, it must be remembered, does characterize *Dasein* as being stretched out “between birth and death,” and argues that without a proper conception of birth as a temporal and historical fact, no understanding of *Dasein* in its everydayness is possible—and thus no understanding of being and time. But he still insists that it is only our relation to death that can trigger an existential awareness that is sufficiently radical for philosophy to begin.

Hannah Arendt famously criticized him for this in *The Human Condition*, and instead argued that natality is more fundamental for a proper understanding of all human activities.<sup>79</sup> Now, pregnancy as outlined here is a mode of “in-between” that was not thematized by Heidegger and which would most likely never have been discovered without the feminist critique that, starting with Beauvoir, insisted on expanding the field of experience to include also that of women. Whereas *Dasein* is “in-between” birth and death for Heidegger, it is here argued that in addition to this, and in addition also to Arendt’s view, pregnancy should be seen as a particular mode of “in-between” in its own right. Pregnancy then can be said to be a specific kind of phenomenological “in-between”—a transition between one kind of everydayness (life prior to pregnancy) and the event of birth (termination of pregnancy).

This suggested focus on pregnancy as a particular mode of phenomenological in-between aims to complement the influential recent discussions by Kristeva and Young, who both argue that what characterizes the pregnancy body is that it is a “split subject.” The reason for suggesting this is that phenomenologically there must be something that coheres as this split subject, namely the unity that the pregnant woman after all does present: if not by other means then at least by the fact that her skin actually holds the two together for the time in which she is pregnant. So instead of saying that she is a unified subject, which would go against the arguments presented by Kristeva and Young, the suggestion here is to say that the pregnant woman should not only be characterized as a split subject, but that her (inter-)subjectivity is also in-between. In an early and highly influential text that thematizes pregnancy (first published in French in 1975), Julia Kristeva specifies what she means by split subject, which with some interpretative

<sup>78</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) 427: “As care, *Dasein* is the ‘between.’”

<sup>79</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 8f.

violence could also be read as the kind of in-between that I argue is characteristic of pregnancy:

Cells fuse, split, and proliferate; volumes grow, tissues stretch, and body fluids change rhythm, speeding up or slowing down. Within the body, growing as a graft, indomitable, there is an other. And no one is present, within that simultaneously dual and alien space, to signify what is going on. “It happens, but I’m not there.” “I cannot realize it, but it goes on.” Motherhood’s impossible syllogism.<sup>80</sup>

This particular character of the in-betweenness of pregnancy is often overlooked even in the phenomenological debate explicitly aimed at discussing birth in relation to transcendental phenomenology.<sup>81</sup> The philosophical discussion tends to either focus on life as it was before birth, or else the event of birth and the life that came after it, but it rarely seem to be directed to the waiting itself. It is as if there was a life prior to the birth of one’s children and another kind of life after, but with pregnancy only as a mark of the transition between the two, rarely more than that. Yet it could be argued that precisely this period of gestation is crucial for a proper understanding of phenomenological concepts such as intentionality, intersubjectivity, and responsibility: for it is during pregnancy that these issues begin to take on a new form that will become manifest only after delivery, and that will have decisively influenced the conceptions that arise *post partum*.

### Foetal asymmetry

So far it has been shown that the analysis of pregnancy contributes to the charting of what is presently an under-theorized part of female experience. It does so by providing more detailed descriptions of “marginal problems” such as the double embodiment of pregnant women, the future project of caring for infants, as well as early forms of responsibility for the other, thereby filling out the contours of a program already set down by the phe-

<sup>80</sup> Julia Kristeva, “Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini,” *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 237.

<sup>81</sup> See for instance the important discussions in Johanna Oksala, “What is Feminist Phenomenology? Thinking Birth Philosophically”; Christina Schües, “Empirical and Transcendental Subjectivity: An Enigmatic Relation?” *The Empirical and the Transcendental: A Fusion of Horizons*, ed. Bina Gupta (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

nomenological tradition. But at the same time, many thinkers have recently started to question whether this project, “in the margin” as it were, is all there is to it, and whether a serious engagement with issues relating to pregnancy, birth, and parenthood may not bring about a change in the core of phenomenology. According to Christina Schües, natality as the principle of our being born is fundamental both for our self-understanding and for the development of a political ethics, inspired both by Husserl’s generative phenomenology and Hannah Arendt’s view that we are born to live, not to die. We know that we must have been born, although we have no and can have no recollection of this, which means that the most fundamental knowledge we have of ourselves in an existential sense is literally without ground:

The natality of our existence is determined by the fundamental asymmetry between the certainty of being born and the withdrawal of this fact which occurs at the same time.<sup>82</sup>

The point that she is making is that natality and birth are not marginal problems for transcendental phenomenology but instead belong to the most fundamental problems of all—similar to what was argued above.

Schües’ argument hinges on regarding generative phenomenology as the apex, from which the partial projects of static and genetic investigations must be judged, and this goes slightly further than the position argued for previously, discussing Husserl on birth. On her view, Husserl was on his way to such an understanding of generativity, but was held back from it due to his inability to address and to think through these “feminine” matters:

I would like to defend the thesis that the perspective of natality serves to ground a generative phenomenology that turns phenomenology into an investigative and critical enterprise.<sup>83</sup>

It was seen earlier that Young’s analysis pointed out an insufficiency in (at least) traditional phenomenological accounts of subjectivity by emphasizing that the very genesis of subjectivity (within the pregnant woman) takes place not in a single, unified body but one which is experienced as being a “split subject.” Similarly, Schües’s interpretation shows that thinking

<sup>82</sup> Christina Schües, *Philosophie des Geborensseins* (München: Alber, 2008), 13, my translation.

<sup>83</sup> Schües, “Empirical and Transcendental Subjectivity,” 110.

through birth and pregnancy in a more thorough way brings out an inadequacy of both static and genetic phenomenology from what is basically a simple epistemological point: we don't know our own birth. To this one might add: just as we don't know our own prenatal life. For the asymmetry that she develops has a prehistory in the situation of the foetus inside the pregnant woman (which Schües does not discuss). There is a kind of asymmetry there for the foetus too, although there is as yet no certainty of being born, but only a different kind of "certainty" of "being alive", in whatever kind of modality this is present for the fetus. The "fact" of this "knowledge" is similarly withdrawn already from the outset, since there is no separation between "knowing one is alive" (hearing the mother's voice) and the representation of this via memory, either in the form of language or image. The asymmetry that Schües speaks of is another name for another kind of phenomenological in-between: the in-between of "knowing that I am born" while equally knowing that "I don't know this."

As convincing as her analysis is, there is reason to insist on the role played by pregnancy, which is a concept that she doesn't really touch. In her view, and this is one of the main points, birth is a condition of possibility for intentionality, which as everyone knows is the central concept of phenomenology.<sup>84</sup> What then, one must ask, is the role of pregnancy for intentionality? Is it again something to be bypassed, for whatever reason (unimportant, inaccessible), or does it have a role to play here that Schües doesn't want to acknowledge? Let us examine her argument. It is only after birth that one can ascribe full intentionality to the baby, while as a foetus living in "symbiosis" with the mother, it had only the intentionality of being directed towards things via the mother, which is not a genuine mode of intentionality.<sup>85</sup> But this conclusion goes against both scientific research of intrauterine life and psychoanalytical investigations: the foetus is active, initiates action and does not only respond, and so on—in short, it must have its own form of intentionality that is not merely mediated through the

<sup>84</sup> See Christina Schües, "The Birth of Difference," *Human Studies* 20 (1997): 243, 245f.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 243: "[...] intentionality inheres in a double difference that is fundamentally dependent on birth insofar as birth is an original differentiating from prenatal existence"; 246: "Naturally, the life of the child has already begun in the womb of the mother. However, her (the child's) mode of existence does not have the status of *Dasein* in-the-world. Rather, her development is directed toward this *Dasein*; it is a being-toward-being-there-in-the-world. As such the fetus has a certain intentionality (which I shall not attempt to determine here) which is, however, not inherent in the double difference described above."

mother. It may be that the intentionality of the foetus is distinct in comparison to that of a baby “out in the world,” but the latter can only be a consequence of the former, not its denial.

### Speculative outlook

Finally, it is time to pick up a thread from the opening of this text, concerning the role of pregnancy for thinking in a broad sense, and thereby opening a more speculative register of thought. What effects on philosophy might pregnancy come to have, other than what has already been discussed? Thinkers such as Kristeva have argued that unleashing the philosophical powers of creation, which through labour and pain belong to pregnancy, brings thinking closer to a crucial aspect of life. That could, in turn, bring about a transformation of the themes that have traditionally been associated with philosophy, and help to reverse conventional hierarchies and orders, and thereby give a new speculative impulse to philosophy today. Important work in this direction includes Kristeva’s reconfiguration of ethics as an ethics of difference, something that could be developed in relation also to the post-colonial critique of Western philosophy that has opened such necessary and promising new approaches to philosophy. On the basis of her investigations into motherhood, birth, pregnancy and the female genius, Kristeva developed a new kind of ethics called *herethics*.<sup>86</sup> It is an ethics that has its source in the generational bonds between mother and daughter. It is a bond of flesh, memory, and futurity since a central part of the experience of the pregnant woman, according to Kristeva, is the “recollection” of her own life within the womb of her mother (a recollection of what must have been). But it is also directed to the future, to the coming of sons and daughters, who will repeat these experiences in different ways. For Kristeva, pregnancy is ‘institutionalized psychosis’ since it opens for the question of whether I am myself or another while pregnant.<sup>87</sup> When the “I” cannot be separated from the other, psychosis occurs, but in pregnancy, unlike all other situations, this is precisely the point. Therefore, pregnancy is a kind of “psychosis” that is fundamental to all other kinds of relation between people. Here one could find a paradigm for intersubjective relations that is permeable, open to a come-and-go of

<sup>86</sup> See Kristeva, “Stabat Mater.”

<sup>87</sup> See Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unravelling the Double Bind* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 66.

ideas, associations, knowledge, the unconscious, love and hatred mixed in abjectal structures. Being pregnant, one might say, is the originary abjectal experience, and if our culture could be made more admmissive to this—the geniality of all mothers—it would surely be beneficial. There is a lot one can say in critical response to Kristeva’s program concerning both a reluctance to move beyond heteronormativity and the Occidentalism that is undoubtedly a part of her thinking, and important critique has been presented in works by Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler, Rey Chow, and Oliver Kelly amongst others on these points.<sup>88</sup> But from the point of view of a phenomenology of pregnancy, Kristeva’s work remains a central source of inspiration, and the critical remarks suggest reconsiderations and new directions rather than abandonment.

We know that just as individuals can change, so can cultures. Levinas for instance altered the course of phenomenology at one time, when he started to base it on Jewish thinking instead of Graeco-Roman philosophy. Thinkers such as Aimé Césaire have said that European civilization is “morally, spiritually indefensible” for the colonial brutality that spanned more than five hundred years and involved virtually all the countries in the world, and which many contemporary postcolonial and decolonial thinkers agree is far from over, due to the global hegemony of neoliberal capitalism.<sup>89</sup> Focusing on themes such as pregnancy and motherhood, and suggesting that Western philosophy should pay more attention to these issues, could easily be brushed off as yet another meek attempt to promote “good” moral values while—again—choosing to look away from a harsh reality. It would be easy to dismiss it on the grounds that it is too moral, too Christian, as Nietzsche might have said—precisely the kind of morality that is striving with all its power for “a universal green-pasture happiness on earth, namely for security, absence of danger, comfort, the easy life.”<sup>90</sup> The image of pregnant and good (white) mothers nurturing themselves and their babies—what could be further away from the political struggles of today, the fight

<sup>88</sup> See Gayatri Spivak, “French Feminism in an International Frame,” *Yale French Studies* (1981): 154–184; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 79ff; and Deepika Bahri, “Feminism in/and Post-colonialism” in Neil Lazarus, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 199–220.

<sup>89</sup> Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 31f. That colonialism continues in other forms even after decolonization is a central idea also in Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Walter Mignolo, Anibal Quijano and María Lugones, to mention a few.

<sup>90</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), No. 957.

against global injustice and terror? But if we are to change Western culture from being a “paradigm of war,” as Nelson Maldonado-Torres calls it, into something else, then starting to pay attention to pregnancy as an important source for enriching our understanding of intersubjectivity, ethics and politics seems to be a better suggestion than most.<sup>91 92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>92</sup> I would like to thank Martina Reuter for her comments on my text.