



Between East and West: From Singularity to Community (European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism)

Luce Irigaray

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With this book we see a philosopher well steeped in the Western tradition thinking through ancient Eastern disciplines, meditating on what it means to learn to breathe, and urging us all at the dawn of a new century to rediscover indigenous Asian cultures. Yogic tradition, according to Irigaray, can provide an invaluable means for restoring the vital link between the present and eternity -- and for re-envisioning the patriarchal traditions of the West.

Western, logocentric rationality tends to abstract the teachings of yoga from its everyday practice -- most importantly, from the cultivation of breath. Lacking actual, personal experience with yoga or other Eastern spiritual practices, the Western philosophers who have tried to address Hindu and Buddhist teachings -- particularly Schopenhauer -- have frequently gone astray. Not so, Luce Irigaray. Incorporating her personal experience with yoga into her provocative philosophical thinking on sexual difference, Irigaray proposes a new way of understanding individuation and community in the contemporary world. She looks toward the indigenous, pre-Aryan cultures of India -- which, she argues, have maintained an essentially creative ethic of sexual difference predicated on a respect for life, nature, and the feminine.

Irigaray's focus on breath in this book is a natural outgrowth of the attention that she has given in previous books to the elements -- air, water, and fire. By returning to fundamental human experiences -- breathing and the fact of sexual difference -- she finds a way out of the endless sociologizing abstractions of much contemporary thought to rethink questions of race, ethnicity, and globalization.

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