

Gift giving and exchange:

Genders are economic identities, and economies are based on gender

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The circumstances of my life brought me to begin thinking about communication as based on gift giving as early as the 1970's. In 1963 as a young woman I married the Italian philosopher, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi and moved to Italy from Texas (USA). The following year he was invited by a group of his colleagues to write about language as seen through the lens of Marx's analysis of the commodity and money in *Capital*. He developed a theory along those lines, which can be seen, in his books, *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato (Language as labor and trade)* (1968) and *Linguistics and Economics* (1974). I was completely fascinated by this project and spent a lot of time throughout those years trying to fit the pieces of the complex puzzle together. For me it was as if language and exchange (trade, the market) were in some ways really the same thing - but some of the pieces just didn't fit. There was a sense of sharing and cooperation, a kind of life-enhancing creativity in language that was just absent from most commercial relations as I understood them. During those years I gave birth to our three daughters and was taking care of them. Because I had been concentrating on the comparison between language and exchange I could not avoid noticing that they were learning to talk long before they learned about exchange for money and before they were doing anything that might be called work. Maybe, I thought, it is

language that comes first in society and exchange derives from language. It seemed improbable that exchange could have made the same kind of fundamental contribution to our becoming and being human that language did. I knew that the indigenous peoples of the Americas had not had money or markets as such before the European conquest, yet they certainly spoke. Meanwhile I tried not to manipulate my children, or anybody else because that was antithetical to the way I thought human relations should be. The kind of - if you do this, I will do what you want - exchange, seemed to me to be a negative way to behave.

At any rate at the time I would not have thought of looking at communication as gift giving if I had not been trying to distinguish communication from exchange and to find a way to salvage language from the relations of capital and the market and even from work, considered as the production and use of tools. The theory my husband was developing, while fascinating, did not convince me. There was something else. An image came to me. The construction of Marx's analysis as well as of my husband's theory had a false floor. Underneath it was another layer where there was a hidden treasure, or perhaps better, a spring that was welling up, the spring of what I later began to call "the gift economy".

I spent two years in the US in the early 70's with my children, and used the free time I had there, to write and think about language and communication. From the work I did then I published two essays in semiotics journals. The first was "Communication and exchange"(1980) where I developed the idea of communicative need, and described words as the verbal elements people use for communicative need-satisfaction. Money then appeared to be a kind of materialized word, used to satisfy the peculiar

communicative need that arises from the mutually exclusive relations of private property. The second essay was “Saussure and Vygotsky via Marx”(1981). I had read L.S. Vygotsky (1962[1934]) and linked his idea of abstract concept formation with Marx’s idea of money as the general equivalent. In Vygotsky’s experiment any item of a set could be taken as the exemplar for the concept, but it had to be held constant or the concept did not develop as such. If the exemplar varied, the abstraction would be incomplete and the relevant common qualities would not be separated from the irrelevant qualities. I realized that the general equivalent, money could be understood as the exemplar for the abstraction of the concept of value in the market. It measures the ‘common quality’ of exchange value¹ in commodities and leaves aside as irrelevant whatever does not have that quality. Whatever is not commodified does not have that quality and thus appears to be irrelevant to the market, outside its “concept”.

Although I had read Malinowsky (1922) and Mauss (1990(1925]) as a student many years earlier, I did not immediately see the continuity between gift giving and communication, perhaps because the term used to describe the process in indigenous cultures was gift “*exchange*” and I had made the distinction between exchange and unilateral need satisfaction. However I remember that by 1978 I had made the connection between communication and the gift giving of indigenous peoples. I also realized at the time that market bias was so strong that everyone, including

¹ Vygotsky and Marx were both investigating what Irrigaray and others would call Aristotelian ‘monologic’ .However this logic is not just descriptive but it is incarnated *in res* in the market and other patriarchal structures. This incarnation validates the monologic both as a description and as a concept forming practice.

anthropologists, used the term 'exchange' without questioning it.² There could be a different perspective though, I thought. If communication was based on gift giving, maybe societies that did not have markets, used gift giving for communication. Then maybe exchange and markets could be seen as altered gift giving, altered communication.

In that year also I encountered another important idea, which redirected my thinking. After my divorce from Rossi-Landi, I began going to a feminist consciousness raising group. There I found out that women's free work in the home is an enormous unrecognized contribution that women are giving, both to their families and to the economy as a whole.³ Part of that work of course is childcare, the free services that mothers give to children on a daily basis. Satisfying another's communicative need was that kind of thing, I realized, a unilateral gift that, even without an immediate counterpart, establishes a human relation. Even in dialogue, what is happening is not

² I mention this particularly because I want to distinguish myself from the French sociologists of the gift who publish in the MAUSS Revue. I did not read any of their work until sometime in the 1990's. This lacuna may seem strange but first I am not primarily an academic and secondly, I did search for other writers on the gift but always found they had not made the distinction between gift and exchange. That was the case for a long time regarding the MAUSS Revue as well. Writers on gift giving also did not make a connection between mothering and gift giving. For one exception see Lewis Hyde (1979). A particular problem I see with the concept of Anti-Utilitarianism is that it links exchange and the utilitarian satisfaction of needs, as if gift giving could not satisfy basic 'utilitarian' needs. Women's gifts are also invisible as such just for this reason- because they do so often satisfy basic needs. That does not mean that they do not also have psychological and spiritual or aesthetic aspects and consequences.

³ Seeing the immense amount of free work that is performed by women made me realize that Marx's theory could only be a partial explanation of Capitalism, since he did not include it as a determining factor. For that reason I stopped considering myself a Marxist. I believe feminism is broader and deeper than Marxism because it includes free labor. Unfortunately attempts to create a better world have almost always been patriarchal and therefore unsuccessful. Women are a vanguard composed of more than half of the population and can create the necessary social change if they can let go of their patriarchal conditioning. In fact their free labor is a gift to the economic system, perhaps even a way of "communicating" with it and giving it importance.

exchange but turntaking in giving unilateral gifts. I speak and you understand what I say, whether or not you reply.

Ferruccio had talked about a kind of inevitability of understanding the verbal products that come ungarbled to one's healthy ears and brain, if one knows the language. It seemed clear to me that if it is inevitable that others understand our words, our giving our words to others and their receiving them will not be contingent upon a reply. If there is a reply, it is couched in the same unilateral gift logic as the previous speaker's words. Even questions, which are asked in order to receive a reply, are verbal products that are given and received as such, unconditionally. That is, they are understood anyway even if no reply is actually given. In market exchange instead, one does not give up one's product except in exchange for money. Both seller and buyer necessarily participate in the *do ut des* self-reflecting and contingent logic of exchange.

As the years have passed since the 60's when I first began thinking about all of this, it has become more important than ever to distinguish communication from exchange, and to refuse to see the logic of exchange as the basic human logic. In fact I think that as a society we have believed acritically in the fundamental value of the logic of exchange and we have consequently embraced and nurtured an economic system that is extending itself parasitically over the planet, feeding on the unilateral gifts of all. These are the unilateral gifts of tradition, of culture, of nature, of care and of love as well as the forced or leveraged unilateral gifts imposed by exploitation, the gifts of cheap or free labor. If we look at exchange as the basic human logic, those who do it best will seem to be the most 'human'. Conversely, those who do not do it well, or do

not succeed in the market, will seem to be 'defective', less human⁴ and therefore more exploitable. In Capitalism the values of Patriarchy - competition, hierarchy, domination - have been united with the values of the market. In order to understand this merger and justify some startling similarities in what are usually considered widely different areas, we need to look beyond both Capitalism and Patriarchy to underlying patterns.

I used my understanding of the similarity between Vygotsky's concept formation process and Marx's general equivalent to develop a theory of Patriarchal Capitalism⁵ in which neither male dominance nor the market economy is primary. Rather both are caused by epistemological distortions and incarnations of our concept forming processes, which are due to the social imposition of binary gender categories. For this reason the values of Capitalism are similar to those of Patriarchy. In Patriarchy, males vie to dominate, that is, to achieve the general equivalent or exemplar position, which has become not just an element in the distribution of goods on the market or a way of organizing perceptions, but a position of 'power over' others. In Capitalism, those who have the most, who have succeeded in dominating economically, are the exemplars of the concept 'man' extended to 'human'. This race to the top position can be seen at other levels as well. For example it can be seen in the way that nations vie with each other for supremacy, to become the 'exemplar' nation, which dominates economically and militarily. Each area of life, the military, business, religion, even academia, seems

⁴ Unilateral gift giving thus appears not to exist or not to be human, and mothering, which is a large part of human experience, is cancelled or misread as defective exchange and also not human in the sense of being "merely natural".

⁵ I was able also to draw on Jean Josef Goux's (1990) exploration of the different forms of the general equivalent in society: the king, the phallus, the head etc.

to incarnate the concept form as a life agenda rather than merely as a mental process of abstraction. In each area the 'exemplar' position is invested with special power or value, and is not seen as just any item that is being used as a point of reference for sorting members of categories. In fact a flow of gifts towards the item in the 'top' position is created and justified by the attribution of this special value.

This view of the 'top' as the exemplar position allows us to see Patriarchy and exchange as embedded not in our brains or chemistry but in our minds and in society, not in something inevitable but in something we can radically change. It allows us to see the problem as our socialization of boys into the male gender in binary opposition to something else: a gift giving process, which is the *human way*.⁶ This socialization varies culturally but the problem has arisen particularly intensely with the Euro-American construction of gender, and its externalization in the economic system of Capitalism. The relation of money, as the exemplar of value, to commodities in the market, is an incarnation of the equivalent position in the concept forming process. This logical structure can extend to all cultures because it is as familiar to them as the way they think. Patriarchy, which puts the father or male leader in the position of exemplar of the human, can infect previously non patriarchal cultures in a similar way.⁷

⁶ Females could also be socialized in this way, away from mothering, and to some extent this is happening as we are absorbed into the market. However, without the gift logic and values, it becomes difficult to spend the time and attention that is required to do adequate mothering.

⁷ In fact the exemplar used in forming concepts can be just any member of a category that is like the others. The exemplar position has been invested with privilege and power-over by Patriarchy. On its own it is just a moment in a process of thought.

The exchange paradigm

Patriarchal Capitalism justifies itself by a worldview I call the 'exchange paradigm', which frames everything in terms of the exchange logic, from the marriage market to military 'exchanges', from justice as payment for crimes, to the equations of a self reflecting consciousness. This paradigm arises from and promotes an area of activity, the market, where gift giving is absent or concealed and where Patriarchal males find a non-giving field of endeavor in which to practice their quest for dominance. The seemingly neuter and therefore neutral 'objective' exchange approach conceals and denies the importance of unilateral gift giving at every turn, while at the same time making it possible for many hidden gifts to be given to the system. These are for example, the gifts of women's free labor in the home. They are also the gifts contained in the surplus labor of workers, which creates surplus value: that part of the labor that is not covered by the salary and is therefore a free gift to the Capitalist (though constrained and leveraged) from the worker. The gifts given to the system include all the free gifts of nature and culture. These are not viewed within the exchange paradigm as gifts but rather are seen as 'deserved' by the investor who extracts, privatizes, exploits and pollutes. The sum of the gifts given to those at the 'top' is concealed by renaming it 'profit' and it is what motivates the whole system.

Although Capitalism is now being extensively criticized by the anti globalization movement, a clear and radical alternative has not yet been collectively embraced because the logic of exchange itself has not been identified as problematic. Moreover, the logic of the unilateral gift continues to be unrecognized, discredited, and even sometimes despised. The women's movement, while decidedly anti Patriarchal, is not

in many of its aspects anti Capitalistic. In fact the links between Capitalism and Patriarchy have not been clearly delineated. Instead it appears that only by being absorbed into the work force as persons with economic agency in the system, have women been able to free themselves from domestic slavery, ⁸ disempowerment and 'dependency'. As happens in any situation in which the market takes over a previously free area of the world, causing at least short term improvements for some of the inhabitants, some women who have been effectively absorbed by capitalism have had an improvement in the level of their lives. They have had an increase in personal freedom but have also become dependent on a market situation that is beyond their control. This state of transition, like the transition from pre capitalist to capitalist cultures, gives women a chance to participate in and become conscious of both paradigms.⁹ The recognition of a shared gift perspective could link the women's movement cross-culturally internally. It could also link it externally with movements of indigenous, colonized and exploited people of both genders who continue to participate consciously or unconsciously in the gift paradigm. This is possible if we can leave aside the biological differences between male and female as the determinants of gender and base solidarity on processes and values coming from economic gender identities.

⁸ Slavery is a way of directing gifts into profit which are free to the receiver but imposed by force upon the giver. Slavery is typically seen as imposed by race rather than by gender and existed long before as well as during Capitalism. Together with the free gifts of the lands of the Native Americans, the constrained gifts of African slaves constituted the pool of capital upon which the US economic system is based. As salaried labor replaced slavery the free aspects of labor became invisible. The hungry parasite began to cast about for ever new areas of gifts, ever new hosts.

⁹ Perhaps they could be considered 'economic mestizas', part of a 'border culture' between one kind of economy and the other. See Mechthild Hart's paper in this volume..

By recognizing 'female' and 'male' as economic identities, having to do with the modes of distribution - of gift giving or exchange- we can also look at some cultures as economically 'female' and others as economically 'male'. The two economic 'structures', gift giving and exchange, give rise to characteristic and distinguishable ideological 'superstructures', which are the value systems and world views that I am calling the gift and the exchange paradigms. That is, the cultures issuing from the practices of gift giving or of exchange have to do respectively with celebration of the other, compassion, and the affirmation of life or on the other hand with subjugation of the other, egotism, competition and the affirmation of 'value-free objectivity'. These two cultures co exist at various levels, and, as I was saying, can also be found within the same person.¹⁰ This already complex situation is further complicated by the fact that the two kinds of economic identities are not independent and unrelated but 'male', and especially Patriarchal, economies and cultures are based on the denial and distortion of gift giving and the direction of the flow of gifts towards the dominators. For example, the Global North is now acting as an economic male, attempting to extract the gifts of the South, which it is forcing or manipulating into an economically female position.

The market, like the Patriarchal identity, is a social construction that is made to receive free gifts. Because in the 'developed' countries women have been assimilated

¹⁰ It is now fashionable to call gift and exchange within the same person, the masculine or the feminine 'sides' of the individual. In this way of thinking, taking the initiative, even to give, appears to be 'male' while receptivity appears to be 'female'. Privileging the male continues to be done surreptitiously by considering the male the active principle while considering the female the passive principle (see for example the *I Ching*, the Chinese Book of Changes where the Creative is male and the Receptive is female.) Yet gift giving and mothering are certainly active and creative though they are rejected as part of the male identity in the West. Receiving is also creative in that the receiver must engage in the appropriate use of the gift in order to bring it to fruition

as market agents and their gifts are now being taken not as direct free work only but as surplus value, they have gained some equality with men as 'economic males' and some 'economic male' privileges. As the economy of Patriarchal Capitalism in the North has somewhat relinquished its hold on the gifts of women, and has been forced by the workers' movements to diminish some of its profits, it has displaced its gift-extracting mechanisms into other areas. The new gifts that come from the Global South to the North, are added to other gifts that for centuries have been flowing from women to men, indigenous peoples to colonial powers, from people of color to whites, and from the general public to corporations. Patriarchal Capitalism is commodifying previously free gift areas such as traditional knowledge, seeds, species, water, even blood and body parts. Women and children are being commodified and trafficked. The 'female' economies of the South, and gifts of nature and tradition are being seized and transformed into new 'food' for the hungry market mechanism.

By recognizing that the market is not an inevitable sui generis process however, and looking at it dispassionately as a transposition and incarnation of the concept formation process as it is used in sorting, particularly in the sorting and formulation of gender, we can approach it in a new way without fear, in order to peacefully dismantle it.

Subjectivities

The two logics, exchange and gift giving, also produce different kinds of subjectivities. The practice of exchange creates an ego-oriented ego according to its logic of self interest while the practice of gift giving promotes more other-orientation.

Exchange is a gift turned back upon itself, doubled and made contingent. It requires quantification while gift giving is mainly qualitative. Exchange is ego oriented and gives value to the self, while gift giving is other-oriented and gives value mainly to the other. Exchange places the exchangers in adversarial positions as each tries to get more than the other out of the transaction. The values of patriarchy are implicit in exchange, and drive Capitalism, as each contender struggles to reach the top of the hierarchy to own more and to become the Big Man. The kind of ego that is based on the exchange logic is necessary for the market, while the gift giving personality is eliminated, or is easily victimized and becomes the host of the exchange ego.

One superstructural consequence of this kind of ego formation is that consciousness itself is considered in the light of exchange as self reflecting, in a sort of equation of value with itself. The subconscious is thus placed in the gift giving position. We might say that our idea of consciousness in its capacity for self-evaluation is made in the image of preparation for exchange. It floats upon the gifts of the subconscious and of experience, without a clear indication of how those gifts come into the mind. Similarly the market floats on a sea of gifts without a clear indication of where they come from and how they constitute profit.

In individuals, the coexistence and conflict, as well as symbiosis of these two kinds of ego structures, can be seen as a result of the exchange paradigm, not its cause. That is, it is not that human beings are greedy and therefore create the market and capitalism. Rather, the system has an existence that is over and above that of its individual participants. The market and capitalism create the human ego structures that are well adapted to their needs. Greed is one of the human qualities that is functional

to the maintenance and development of the market as such. Competition for narcissistic self aggrandizement and dominance are played out on the economic plane because otherwise the market would not 'grow' and maintain its control over other possible ways of distributing goods i.e. gift giving. Patriarchy supplies the motivation that drives Capitalism and the individuals who embody the motivation, with the ego structures and belief systems that justify the embodiment. Capitalism supplies the tools and rewards with which individuals and now corporations carry out the Patriarchal agendas on the terrain of so called 'distribution' of goods to needs through exchange.¹¹

Mothering, on the other hand, involves the unilateral free distribution of goods and services to young children and a consequent creation of human bonds between givers and receivers. Society has assigned this role to women. Although it may be characterized as the distribution of goods, mothering is usually not seen as an economic category. In fact by overvaluing exchange and making it dominant, the market devalues mothering, making it dependent and subservient. The gift paradigm allows us to see that the direct distribution of goods and services to needs that is present in mothering can be understood as an example of the practice of an alternative

¹¹ The ego orientation of exchange has had a liberating effect for women in many ways. On the other hand the logic of ego orientation is more limited and more narrowly focused than that of other orientation. Like the class consciousness of the workers' movement in the North, it has had the effect of improving the lives of some through the validation of profit-sharing while obscuring the sources of the gifts that constitute the profit. This has the effect that some feminist movements in the North are inward turning and localizing while not recognizing the source of gifts in the exploitation of the women and men of the South and their resources. When these gifts diminish, due to the depletion of the level of life and the machinations of finance, such feminisms find themselves losing the ground they had previously gained in terms of individual well being. Nor do they have any real possibility of regaining it. The problem is that extending ego orientation to more people (eg. a class or a gender) does not change the exploitative system. The logic of other orientation opens us to recognize gift sources (in solidarity against exploitation). This recognition reveals the parasitism of the system and thus the need to change it. Feminism needs to embrace the gift logic with an international perspective in order to effectively challenge and dismantle the totalizing system of Patriarchal Capitalism.

economy. As a mode of distribution, it is present in all societies because it is required, not by the biology of women, but by the biology of children. That is, for a very long period of time, children's biology does not allow them to independently satisfy most of their own or others' needs. It requires and elicits other-orientation and unilateral gift giving from their caregivers.

Patriarchy

Children begin their lives with their mothers in a relation- creating communicative gift economy and they begin learning language at the same time. However binary gender categorizations in language and in society soon intervene and the boy child finds that he belongs to a category that is the opposite of that of his nurturing mother. That is, if her most salient characteristic for him is the unilateral satisfaction of needs, the fact that he belongs to a binarily opposite gender category implies that he will not unilaterally satisfy needs. There is very little for the boy at this early age that is not part of the gift giving and receiving economy. He learns to deny its importance, transform it into something else and even take categorization itself as part of the content of his identity. The father (who went through the same process when he was a child) becomes for the boy the exemplar of the human, taking the place of the mother who paradoxically gives more to the father and son than she does to herself or her daughter. That is, she gives and gives value preferentially to those whose gender identity requires that they NOT give. The displacement of the mother model and take-

over by the father of the role of exemplar of the (not giving) human is the seed of the dominance of male over female, categorization over communication, and eventually exchange over gift giving. In fact the ego oriented relations of exchange are a socially created opposite of gift relations and they provide a way for society to distribute goods to needs without individual nurturing. The market is an area of life where, by exchanging, we can give without giving and receive without receiving. In fact, in the market we must 'deserve' what we receive, that is, we must have previously 'given' an equivalent for which the present 'gift' is a payment. The equality of the commodities and money in exchange cancels out the gift. Since we necessarily get back the equivalent of what we gave, there is no visible transfer of value from one person to the other. The market is one of the solutions society has provided for the conundrums created by the imposition of binary gender categories upon its children. It is a part of life and a place where people can deny their other orientation and turn their production for others to their own advantage, a place where they will not be accused of direct mothering. The fact that women can participate equally with men in this un-giving area simply shows that its roots are not biological but social, located in a social, not biological, construction of gender.

The escalation towards dominance through competition can be done not only economically of course but also physically, psychologically, linguistically and institutionally, at the level of individuals and at the level of groups. One of the first non-nurturing human interactions that boys learn is *hitting*. In fact hitting may be seen as a transposed gift in that one reaches out and touches the other, transmitting physical energy, not to nurture but to hurt and to dominate. The fact that this is a transposed gift

can be glimpsed in such linguistic expressions as “Take that!” and “You asked for it!” Such physical competition permits the one who can ‘give the most’ harmful blows, to dominate.

As many women have noticed, there is a continuity in kind between the backyard brawl and war. The same principles seem to apply in both. The technology is different though symbolically concomitant. Since the penis is the identifying property of those in the non nurturing category, ‘male’, it is not surprising that the individuals and the groups that are competing for dominance provide themselves with ever larger and more dangerous category markers, from sticks to swords and from guns to missiles. Moreover, competition between sons and fathers for dominance pits those with the smaller phallic properties against those with the larger. Thus in an attempt to achieve the position of the exemplar, the dominant father, groups supply themselves with ever larger instruments of death, which can destroy ever more people and goods. The aspect of size can then be substituted by the aspect of effect, in that WMDs whether biological or nuclear become the mark of the dominant male nation.

This collective striving to achieve the dominant male position can have the effect of confirming the masculine identity for the men who fight and even for those who are just members of the nation. Women can fight or give support to those who fight or participate in other ways, also just as members of the nation. Society thus provides a way for groups to achieve a collective male identity that is actually independent from individual biological gender in that both men and women can participate in it. Male

dominance is then read as neuter objective *power*¹² over others and both women and men can achieve it as can, at a collective level, nations or corporate entities. Both women and men can also of course participate in a collective male dominant identity of their nation (or corporation) even if individually they are subservient. Such is the content of patriotism (or company loyalty). Racism is the participation in the collective male dominant identity of the supposed 'exemplar' race. Classism is the participation in the collective male dominant identity of a supposed 'exemplar' class.

Psychological competition for dominance can take the place of physical competition, and the categorization of others as inferior replays the gender distinction over and over, placing some people, who are usually also themselves the categorizers, in a 'superior' category to which those in 'inferior' categories must give. At the same time the positive gift giving and receiving that is actually continually being done in material and linguistic communication is unrecognized as such and disparaged - or over valued and made unreachable for ordinary people. In its place we have neuter and neutral¹³ 'objective' categories which reflect the neutral non giving market categories: exchange value, production, distribution (through exchange) consumption, supply and demand, monetized labor, commodities, money, capital, all of which are constructed on the back of the gift economy.

¹² Power -over can be described as the capacity to make others give gifts.

¹³ We might say that the not giving area of the market is made to look neuter by patriarchy to hide the gendered character of gift and exchange and to make the market an area where the gender relations can be played out again on a more neutral territory. It is a sort of acting out of an original change of models, from mother to father. (see For-giving.)The neuter character then extends into other areas as well, from which gender and gift giving are cancelled.

Gift giving is made arduous by its co existence with exchange. Since it is cooperative while exchange is competitive, it loses the competition by not competing. The context of adversarial exchange creates suspicion in the community and gift giving can appear to be a moral ego trip or a veiled bid for power and recognition. In fact, especially in a context where exchange relations are the norm, gift giving can become manipulative, and be used for ego oriented purposes, transforming away from its unilateral transitive path, and doubling back upon itself. The worst aspect of the competition between exchange and gift giving is that the exchange paradigm really cannot compete in a fair way with gift giving, because living according to the logic of the gift would be life enhancing, while living according to exchange is bio pathic. The exchange paradigm has therefore created a system that cripples gift giving and makes it dependent on the market for access to the means of giving. By diverting the flow of gifts into the hands of a few (in the US the richest 10% of the population now owns 83% of the wealth) by wasting 'excess' wealth on armaments, drugs and symbols of power (skyscrapers, monuments, jewels), as well as by privatizing the free gifts of nature and culture, Patriarchal Capitalism creates the scarcity that is necessary to keep gift giving from prevailing. In fact the flow of gifts to the wealthy must be regulated so that not too much will trickle back down. The tide must be kept low; otherwise all the ships would sail away.

Although girl children are not socialized to construct a gender identity that opposes that of their nurturing mothers, and many of them will have to do mothering themselves as adults, they can be encouraged to strive for inclusion in 'superior' categories and to achieve the 'male' exemplar position. In a context of scarcity, where categorization

itself has become so important due to the binary categorization of gender, girls also strive to be included among the privileged group to whom others must give.

Nevertheless, because children require unilateral gift giving to survive, women who have been socialized towards this work, remain in the gift logic in many parts of their lives, even when they do not have children and even when they have been absorbed into the market and see the world mainly through the eye glasses of the exchange paradigm.

The practice of the gift logic at the material and at the verbal level can take place without our being conscious of it as such. In fact unilateral gift giving is transitive and gives value and attention to the other, while exchange requires quantification and measurement, reflecting back to the exchangers what they are doing. We in the North are accustomed to the exchange way of knowledge and self-reflecting consciousness and so we embrace what we see in that way, which is of course NOT the gift. Gratitude might make us conscious of the gifts we receive and give but if we make our gift contingent on the others' gratitude, the gift is no longer unilateral. In the context of exchange, even gratitude becomes problematic. There is a sort of scarcity of gratitude because 'deserving' appears more honorable than receiving. What is necessary now is to see gift giving and exchange from a broader 'meta' point of view that includes them both as paradigms, look at the way they interact, and deliberately restore the consciousness of the gift where it has been erased.

Communication

By looking at communication as unilateral need satisfaction we can view mothering as communication, and exchange as altered and distorted communication, that is, altered and distorted mothering. We can see unilateral need satisfaction as communication not only on the plane of signs and language but on the material plane. Gift giving creates not only minds and psychological subjectivities, but also bodies, material subjects and human relations. The relations created in this way are bonds of a possible community that is not based on exchange but on turn taking, participation in a gift circle or circulation that does not require equivalent paybacks by receivers to givers.¹⁴ Such a communicative 'female' economy continues to exist within some indigenous communities and in Capitalism within some families. However in families it is often altered and distorted internally by Patriarchy as well as externally by the context of the market and the exchange paradigm. Many indigenous communities had positive 'female' economies based on common ground and the circulations of gifts to needs without the intervention of exchange. The parasite of Patriarchal Capitalism has captured these economies whenever possible however, and on pain of death, made them its hosts.

Viewed from Patriarchy we usually only see the victimization of gift giving. From the point of view of the gift paradigm we go farther into the question and see the positive and creative root of the gift. Language itself can be viewed as an ideal abundant gift economy in which everyone possesses the means of production and a sufficient supply of the products of previous labor to be able to give again in turn. I want to include here at least a few indications of the steps I have taken in developing this perspective

¹⁴ See Lewis Hyde (1979) on community and Kaarina Kailo in this volume, on circulating gifts.

because I think that embracing this view can have far reaching consequences for the rest of one's worldview. By discovering gift giving in language, and characterizing language as gift giving at many levels, we can re claim both language and linguistics for mothering. On the other hand, by extending mothering beyond gender and beyond economics to the pan human processes of linguistic communication, we situate it as one particularly intense moment of gift giving within a much wider context of gift processes.. These processes are constitutive of the human in a way that Patriarchy, Capitalism, the market and exchange are not.

Recognizing the communicative relation-forming capacity of material gift giving, allows us to find something that words and things have in common, which in turn allows us to consider words not only as abstract values of a combinatory mechanism, but as verbal gifts which take the place of material gifts. Words function as verbal gifts in their capacity for forming human relations among people in regard to parts of the world that are gifts or potentially gifts. Verbal gifts can take the place of material gifts in forming human relations but they do not supersede them altogether. Indeed material gifts continue to be given at all levels whether or not we are talking about them. ¹⁵

Material gift giving creates human relations and gifts can be given in order to create the relations (that is to satisfy the social and psychological need for relations) rather than primarily to satisfy material needs. Verbal gifts can perform this function as well and in fact, once the possibility of verbal communication is broached, a communicative need arises for verbal gifts regarding all the parts of the world with

¹⁵ Non-verbal gestures and signs can be considered gifts as well. They satisfy communicative needs and are non linguistic yet not completely material because they are received as located within sign systems.

regard to which human relations can be formed. Words can thus be seen as verbal gifts which substitute for material gifts, satisfying communicative needs and thereby forming human relations regarding the interlocutors and regarding as well the gifts of the world that have been substituted. Words are verbal gifts originally given to us by other members of the community and we can give them again in turn. The question as to what words and things have in common is thus answered by the recognition of both words and things as relation-forming gifts. Would words or things have this capacity without the presence of human beings? No, any gift needs a receiver. However when members of a linguistic community are available to receive them, they do have this common gift character. Exchange causes problems, however, because it cancels the gift and so makes it appear that there is no connection between the verbal and the material or non-verbal levels.

Not only are words verbal gifts but they combine according to the gift principle as well in that they are given to each other. That is syntax, which is considered by linguists to be a *sui generis* rule-governed mental activity, is actually a construction of transposed gift giving. From the gift perspective, adjectives combine with nouns for example because one word can satisfy the 'need' of the other, a need arising from the relation of the referent to the word and to the human beings involved. If a human being wants to communicate about a red ball, she finds 'ball' has a need for 'red' in order to convey that idea, and she gives 'red' to 'ball'. On the reality plane I believe that we can also make a case for the way we understand the 'properties' of objects. That is, a ball is red because the 'property' red has been given to it. Some words can receive some other words as gifts while others cannot. A plural ending prevents the word from

receiving a singular indefinite article, an adverb cannot be given to a noun. Similarly humans can eat eggs but not elephants or mountains. That is, there are constraints on the kinds of material gifts that can be given and received as well.

Even the noun-verb-complement structure can be understood as transposed giver-gift or service-receiver: "The girl hit the ball". Verb phrases are given to noun phrases with the help of transmitters like prepositions. Prefixes and suffixes determine what kinds of word gifts can be given and received by other word gifts. Moreover as each person satisfies the communicative needs of the other person, she also conveys her own ideas, feelings and intentions, stimulating and satisfying the others' needs to know. At a purely material level sound flows through air from the vocal chords and the breath of one to the ears of the other. Writing is inscribed upon the page and is perceived/received by the eyes of the other. Language is thus complex multi layered gift giving and receiving, and as such would require as thorough treatment as theories of language now provide from a much more mechanical viewpoint. For example, calling a sentence an "assertion" leaves aside its gift aspects under a neutral cover. Instead renaming a sentence as a gift made up of many gifts at different levels and itself contained within larger gifts such as the discourse, also made of many sentences and the text in turn made of many discourses, gives a radically different view of what we are doing when we communicate linguistically. We cannot even declare anything without satisfying communicative needs of the other, that is, giving word-gifts.

Perhaps it appears that language, considered as the giving and receiving of verbal gifts, cannot be hardwired in our brain circuitry. Yet we must also be able to satisfy needs on a material plane if we are to form communities, and that ability to give must

be hard wired to some extent. Sex and mothering are two areas in which both human and non-human animals have to satisfy others' needs. Moreover the cry of the animal that perceives a danger satisfies the need of others to be warned – a situation analogous to the satisfaction of a human communicative need. Perhaps our brains themselves can be considered from the point of view of need satisfaction in that a neuron fires and satisfies the need of another neuron for stimulation. That neuron can then 'pass it on'. At another level brain cells even sometimes physically migrate from one area to another area where they are needed.

There is much more intentional and unintentional gift giving in the universe than we imagine due to our entanglement with exchange and patriarchy. The possibility that humans are doing multi level gift giving when they communicate linguistically is therefore not as unlikely as it might seem. Nor does the hard wiring in this case diminish the social character of linguistic (or non linguistic) communication. Looking at language from the point of view of giftless brain mechanisms, like looking at life from the point of view of patriarchy and the market, leaves meaning aside. Looking at language and life from the inside, from the receivership of a wide variety of gifts at different levels and the ability to give gifts again, as well as transpose them from one level to another, gives us a point of view from which we can look back at brain circuitry as possibly functioning also according to gift principles. If we see this as a projection of mothering, then we must certainly also see giftless brain circuitry as a projection of neutering Patriarchy and exchange. The fact that there is meaning both in language and in life speaks to the existence of gifts and gift giving everywhere. Meaninglessness is a result of Patriarchal Capitalism at both the level of life and the level of language. In

fact exchange leaves everyone starving for the gift principle and for free gifts. This starvation for gifts could be seen as one main component of greed.¹⁶ At the same time there are billions of people who are actually starving because their gifts have been taken away.

Meaning in language can be seen as the other- directedness of words and things, our ability to attribute a gift character to them as being potentially and/or actually for others, pertinent to them. That is, they are receivable by others, which implies that they can also be given, whether actually or only perceptually or experientially. Their receivability by others accounts for their significance. The fact that we can also use both words and things by ourselves alone conceals their other-direction from us especially when we are living in a society that validates self reflection and self interest. Meaning in life is the turning of goods towards needs, unilaterally giving to others that which is useful for them at whatever level. It is not the exemplar position that makes life meaningful in Patriarchy. In fact the satisfactions of that position as such are usually illusory except to extreme narcissists. Rather the capacity to satisfy numerous needs that the exemplar position could potentially bring, gives it the 'meaning' we see in it.

The market, the law, the commons

The market and private property go hand in hand, because exchange allows private property to change proprietor. If property could not be transferred from one mutually exclusive owner to another, there would be paralysis. Commons have

¹⁶ The desire for knowledge has been altered because whatever is new can potentially be sold for a high price. Thus "thirst" for knowledge is now profit driven and becomes greedy, as the huge profit-making

sometimes been left as gift sources, without a proprietor, or with a collective proprietor. In a context where gift giving and the gift paradigm are not recognized as valid, however, ownerless or collectively owned property can be seized and made the host of any parasitic corporate entity with the capacity to legally and materially enforce its ownership. In fact gifts are logically prior to the law because they are prior to exchange. The law regulates exchange from an exchange point of view, that is, by categorizing actions as crimes and making criminals pay for them. Gift giving does not require retribution but what we call 'compassion', the recognition and satisfaction of the social, psychological and material needs that cause people to commit crimes. The mercy movement, and the movement against the death penalty are gift-based initiatives but they rarely have a chance to generalize their values. The generalization of the gift paradigm would connect those issues to other issues such as the privatization of the commons.

Because gift giving is prior to exchange, it is not recognized by the law, and places where it can be done are usually considered as existing only inside private property, as happens in the home. Thus it seems that any free area can and perhaps even should be privatized, becoming the property of individuals, corporations, or the state, and thus regulated by law. As long as gifts continue to be unrecognized as such, not only by the law, but even by the very activists who are trying to defend the commons, the only appeal will be to the law itself, which is structurally based on patriarchy and exchange. Even winning such battles brings the gift into the patriarchal capitalist camp and co-opts, denatures and disqualifies it. The same might be said about the rights discourse, which legitimizes the law as arbiter, leaving needs in second place. Even morality can

(gift-garnering) capacities of new discoveries and new fields such as genetic engineering are revealed.

be seen as an attempt to mitigate some of the worst aspects of the exchange paradigm, while the gift paradigm is (which actually motivates morality) is completely invisible.

At another more abstract level the law may be seen as a gift - to the patriarchal capitalist system itself. The needs that are satisfied by the law are the needs of the system to maintain itself and expand. As regards the perpetrators of personal crimes, these are systemic needs for the defense of property and proprietors. As regards the privatization of the commons¹⁷ or the corporate commodification of the gifts of seeds, water, and genes, these are systemic needs for growth and expansion. They are not the human needs of individuals but the impersonal needs of collective entities to maintain the status quo and to make ever larger profits.

The corporate entities do have human 'carriers' of course, and these carriers have human needs as well as points of view, which are typically based on the exchange paradigm and promote ego orientation and self-aggrandizement. They may also involve gift based abilities however, such as cooperation and teamwork within the corporation itself. As individuals they are presumably required to obey the law while as members of corporate categories or entities, other rules apply.

Non human corporate entities have many resources for protecting themselves from regulation by the law and from the protest of those they harm. However they are presently being undermined from within by the individual crimes of their CEO's who have stolen and pocketed the money of investors, as in the cases of ENRON and

¹⁷ The question is no longer just the ownership of means of production but of the means of giving. Collective access to the source of gifts contradicts the system based on private property and exchange.

PARMALAT. Though a few of these persons are caught, since the market really *requires* the kind of greed and dishonesty that drives people to implement the expansion of the system, others soon replace them and try similar maneuvers. The law works to some extent to regulate the crimes of the individual, though it rarely works to regulate the corporations themselves. The more general, broader injustice usually remains even when some of the more particular ones are remedied. These considerations, while depressing, point to the fact that the most impelling need at present is for general, big picture social change. In order to create this change a paradigm shift is necessary. Without it, both individuals and corporate entities are continually validated in their parasitism. By reducing this validation at all levels of society we can create a new context where the need for systemic change can be more easily satisfied.

The paradigm of exchange justifies the spread of the market into ever new areas by occupying the top place in our individual hierarchical priority systems¹⁸ and characterizing itself as the main or only need-satisfier. Not only does there appear to be no clear alternative to Capitalism but (apart from a few courageous attempts to choose sustainability or live in alternative communities) most of us, especially in Euro/America, cannot recognize any viable alternative to the market logic for our own lives, nor do we see what we might do to change things for the better. Although ethical

¹⁸ Perhaps the exchange paradigm is most firmly held by those who receive the most advantage from it. It contains mechanisms by which it validates itself however, with the consequence that even those who are exploited by it, believe in it. Ethnic traditions of family and culture often contain strong gift elements, which continue to create community in spite of the market. However they are also subject to erosion by the values of the system.

systems, compassionate religions and simple human kindness continue to pull individuals away from the market logic, the values of self interest that the market promotes and the general scarcity for the many that is artificially created by Capitalism keep most people stuck in the exchange paradigm. Indeed everyone's survival is made to seem contingent upon accepting it. The overvaluing of the exchange paradigm by the culture of Capitalism focuses the attention of the entire society on exchange, distorting the perspective even of those who are practicing gift giving or who are on its margins. People who do not share the values of exchange are considered 'failures' by those who do, and may be discounted and subjected to ridicule.

We can alter this negative picture if we realize that there is in each of us the core of an alternative paradigm that already exists and is based on the unilateral gift logic that we use to communicate as well as on our experience as mothered children. Bringing this paradigm to the foreground and understanding its logic as the basic human process rather than the logic of exchange, gives a leverage point with which we can reduce the hegemony of exchange over our thinking, and understand how and why our 'creature' has taken over and turned against us. Whatever place in society we occupy, we can find the gift paradigm within ourselves if we can look beyond the exchange paradigm.

The devastating real world life and death consequences of the expansion of Patriarchal Capitalism hide the fact that even the people working for businesses and governments in the North and elsewhere have beliefs and value systems they are putting into practice, which they have learned growing up, in homes, religious institutions, schools and in universities which make learning those beliefs and value

systems a point of pride. They have been educated to derive their self esteem within the exchange paradigm framework and to consider gift giving, not as an economy or as an interpretative key, but as at most an ('unrealistic') moral stance.

Academic endeavor is not 'value free'. Indeed it usually promotes the exchange paradigm while appearing neutral and objective. The reason for this is not so much that academics are in bad faith, though some are, but that for centuries the exchange paradigm and Patriarchy have had free reign in defining the terrain upon which questions are addressed, and in determining the questions themselves. Perhaps we could say that misogyny and the devaluing of the gift paradigm are one and the same, at least they coincide to a great extent. Women were kept out of universities for centuries. When they were finally admitted, academic endeavor was already deeply and firmly patriarchal, allied with the exchange paradigm. The result is that the gift paradigm has been deleted from academic disciplines. Mothering has not been considered as having an economic character, but also gift giving has been deleted from epistemology. Yet humans are intensely mothered children. Patriarchy and exchange have made us turn against that common legacy as a model for understanding, and deny its importance, as is typical when one is exploiting something or someone. Yet it is only by *projecting* mothering in terms of giving and receiving, onto the Universe that we can understand it in a way that does not leave us orphans among lifeless stars, ready to plunder and prey upon each other.

The gift paradigm needs to be reinstated throughout science, not only in economics, psychology, semiotics and linguistics, but also in biology and the 'hard' sciences. We

need to extend the metaphor or metaform¹⁹ of giving and receiving to perception as the creative reception of experiential data, as well as to atomic-level electron 'donation', and to the 'transmission' of hormonal messages. The transmission of motion can be seen as a variation of the gift syllogism: "If A gives to B and B gives to C then A gives to C." However we need particularly to re vision signs, language and communication from the point of view of the gift paradigm. Otherwise a central aspect of the way we are human is invisible to us, and we misinterpret what we are doing in ways that validate both the suicide of 'mankind' and its matricide of mothers and of Mother Earth.

It is not that material gift giving, language and sign behavior are not to a certain extent brain functions as well as social gift constructions, but that brain functions should also be understood in terms of gift giving and receiving need-satisfying, -eliciting and -educating impulses. The release of adrenaline in the bloodstream is a gift from the hormonal level to the human being as a whole, who needs to run away. The brain can be seen as organized according to giving and receiving, and capable of internalizing those patterns in consciousness when it encounters them in language and life. If language is based on gift giving, it serves as a model in that sense, as well as in the capacity for abstraction and concept formation. Mothering must take place for children to survive. Since mothering happens from our earliest moments, inside as well as outside the womb, the patterns of gift transmission must be at least as familiar to us as those of abstraction. Only because as a patriarchal and capitalist society we renounce our mothering heritage, do we cancel the deep metaform of mothering.

By extending our notion of gift giving to nature, revivifying it/her as the locus of multilevel processes of gifts to needs, from the atomic level to the level of centrifugal

¹⁹ See Danesi and Sebeok (2002) for the term 'metaform'.

and centripetal swirls of galaxies²⁰ , from the biological level where the heart sends blood with nutriments and oxygen to the cells, to the level in which the other-turning and -tending activity of our attention becomes the mind, we can find and restore our commonality with Mother Nature. It is by erasing the idea of the gift at all these levels instead of extending it to them that we have permitted the destruction of the environment by a non nurturing economy. Misogyny could be seen as an economic emotion, a hatred and devaluation of gift giving in women, which allies with a hatred and devaluation of the gift aspects of nature.

It is against the image of the mother, robbed of all these connections with gift giving in the rest of life, victimized and giving gifts to extenuation, that the feminist movement has rebelled. However this is a false image. If we refocus and consider mothering and gift giving as the human norm, we can see that it is not mothering but patriarchy-and-exchange that is the aberration and the cause of the problem. Mothers and other gift givers *are* often victimized, but this not caused by their defects, weaknesses or masochistic tendencies. Even the image of their victimization distracts women (and men) from the truth, which is that it is the whole Patriarchal Capitalistic context of artificial scarcity and power-over that is responsible for the suffering of all and must be changed. Women cannot solve the problem by individually rejecting the image, though perhaps by refusing that model, they can become strong enough to do something about it.

²⁰ See on the extension of another life-based concept, autopoiesis, to the universe Elizabeth Sahtouris (2002; 43). She also discusses Walter Russell's "model of continual creation, through the inward and outward motions of contraction (gravity) and expansion (radiation)". I think these could also be seen as a physical template for receiving (gravity) and giving (radiation).

Essentialism

Essentialism and anti essentialism come from the same matrix: the processes of abstraction by which males are sorted out from females, and commodities are sorted out from gifts. ²¹ These processes have deleted, concealed and manipulated the mother model, banishing it and replacing it with the model of the father, then replacing it again as a model in the market with the 'neuter' object, money. The non nurturing models propagate in academic endeavor, religions, science, business and politics. The father is the exemplar of the category 'human' while money is the exemplar of the category 'value'. Both of these categories are constructed by abstracting from gift giving. That is, they are categories with regard to which gift giving is seen as irrelevant, a discarded quality²². Money and the father (as well as the king, the general, the C.E.O. etc.) are "general equivalents", used to evaluate and sort the items relative to them. The "common quality" or "essence" of commodities is exchange value and it is

²¹ Saying that set theory derives from Aristotelian metaphysics, Maya J Goldenberg argues that anti-essentialism cannot be negotiated within that framework because it necessarily becomes a problem of inclusion according to a monologic.. Her project is "to follow Irigaray in theorizing difference instead of sameness to construct an independant and positive category of woman". (Goldenberg 2003:2) My alternative solution is to consider the gift process as prior to categorization and especially to gender categorization. Thus it is a process practiced by both genders but denied and exploited by men whose gender identity has been constructed specifically according to Patriarchal monologic.

²² While women's gift giving is irrelevant there is a way in which money and the father 'provide'. That is they take over the mother model and re propose it at a different level, since it is upon them that gift givers are made dependent for access to the means of giving. Thus the boy who gives up giving as his gender identity can paradoxically practice it again as an adult through participating in the market and supporting his family, "bringing home the bacon"..

expressed in a certain quantity of money, which is exchanged for the commodity. Every time we evaluate a commodity in money, buy and sell, we abstract from gift giving and affirm the common quality of exchange value. (The gift is always just beyond, as “the road not taken”. In fact in every personal transaction, we could just decide to give the other person something instead of selling it to h/er.) We usually perform this operation of evaluation and abstraction daily in Patriarchal Capitalism, and at a number of different levels. The common quality of exchange value thus appears to be real and evident. Similarly every time we use the term ‘mankind’ we abstract from mothering, leaving it aside as irrelevant to the formation of that concept.²³

The male identity leaves aside gift giving in a way that is somewhat different from the market abstraction, yet both are social sorting processes. For boys, manhood is a goal rather than an inherited property.²⁴ A metamorphosis must take place that turns the tiny child into a dominant male. In Euro/American Capitalist Patriarchy, males are expected to create the kind of personality and behavior that is identified as ‘masculine’. That is, they have to sort their own behavior, abstracting from gift giving within themselves and replacing it with other behavior, engaging in hitting and competition with other males. Otherwise they are penalized, by being considered ‘sissies’, ‘girls’ and ‘soft’. Since numerous ‘exemplar’ positions have been invented in social hierarchies of all kinds, males have a chance to reach that position not only as exemplars of their gender but as exemplars of many other male-dominated categories,

²³ The common quality of mankind, leaving the mother aside, is then identified in higher, more “spiritual” qualities, for example, “valor”, the homonym of “value” - a homonymy that should give us pause.

²⁴ See Gilmore (1990) on the “manhood agenda”.

from the military to religion to government etc. Paradoxically the ability to be dominant and the 'one' to whom the many relate, appears to be a *common* quality of the male gender. In fact it cannot be *common* because logically not all of them can be dominant or the 'one'. These are relational qualities, not properties. Manhood is a socially imposed agenda into which the sorting process itself has been absorbed. By sorting out and discarding his female qualities, a male hopes to become an exemplar of the non mothering category. Sorting itself, in the sense of judging, naming and categorizing are seen as predominantly male 'capacities'. Hitting replaces gift giving as a way to interact with others, establishing relations of dominance rather than mutuality. This replacement of giving by hitting also appears to be a commonality of males, possibly a biologically determined characteristic. Exchange replaces gift giving, canceling the gift with an equivalent return 'gift' and creating a non-nurturing interaction. Similarly hitting provokes a return of hitting, an exchange of blows.

Those who do not relate in this way are seen as 'acting like girls'. That is they are acting like those people who are expected to be the second term in a dominance-submission relation. Empathy is seen as a female, not a male quality, I believe, because it is necessary for gift giving. That is, in order to identify needs we must respond emotionally to the other person. The 'masculine disassociation' and refusal of empathy and emotion are thus part of the refusal of the gift economy, not just a defect that biological males are born with. The masculine 'essence' is constructed as an artificial quality or group of qualities in opposition to gift giving. However gift giving does not begin as an abstraction but is itself a basic and necessary transitive process in

which some give and other(s) receive many kinds of goods and services at different levels. In fact it is the process in which the child is deeply involved when he learns he is 'other', something else, in an opposite gender category.

Because the socialization of the boy takes place so early, it is the mother with regard to whom he finds himself to be the opposite, not women generally. Moreover since the male identity is so difficult to achieve and so conflicted throughout men's lives, the mothering role is what continues to be identified (by men) as women's and not men's 'nature'. The childhood binary opposition with the mother (and gift giving) remains as the basis of the male identity and thus mothering is the most relevant aspect of the female identity for the male gender construction. In fact this renunciation of gift giving seems to give males the right to plunder those who remain gift givers. On the other hand the market provides the possibility for males to 'make money' and maintain their families, becoming gift givers after the fact. That is at this level they can provide a kind of market-based neuter nurturing-without-nurturing that is even more necessary than the gifts of nurturing proper, as it has been made their pre requisite. Males can provide the money that gives access to the means of giving, though fortunately they no longer have a monopoly on this ability as women have obtained more equal status, though constructing that equality using the (now neutered) male exemplar.

Processes not properties

Both female and male identities are based on processes, not properties. Mothering is a particularly intense moment of gift giving which is one of the major processes of life

itself but which, however, appears to be a defect and a liability for 'real' human beings who are those engaged in violent conflict, competition, and the market.

The process of gift giving requires and produces some human qualities and capacities that are different from those of exchange (which denies gift giving). I just mentioned empathy and I believe that the emotions create a kind of map that lets us identify needs. Sensitivity to what others are experiencing is an aspect of the gift mode. Other-orientation is not only a pre requisite for gift giving but is also its result. We care about those to whom we give, and we give value to them. The relation-creating capacity of giving and receiving, which confirms the existence and positive character of each for the other, with or without explicit gratitude, is an important aspect of gift giving which is often identified with women. On the other hand the kinds of relations that are necessary for exchange and are created by it are more similar to those usually identified with masculinity: separation, competition, instrumentality of the other, ego orientation, adversarial behavior, acquisitiveness, growth to a large size. It is the comparison between the qualities coming from the "economic modes" in which we participate, as mothers on the one hand, and as (male and female) exchangers on the other, that makes us think we are looking at essences. Instead gift giving is not an essence but a process with emotional, psychological and material consequences. Exchange is also a process but it is the very process of abstraction (sorting) itself, transferred onto the material plane. The identification and the giving-without-giving of a socially created 'essence', exchange value, is its reason for being. In investigating a female 'nurturing essence', we are looking at women in the light of the market. We are trying to accept or reject the existence of a common quality that is a kind of reflection of

exchange value, which itself is a quality artificially created by the aberrant *do ut des* exchange communication. Without a common essence, the members of a category, in this case women, would seem to fall into the reciprocal independence and indifference that is the common relation of (mutually exclusive) exchangers to each other. However women's commonality comes not from their membership in a category but from the practice of a process that is creative of subjectivities, of self as well as of others, as we have been saying. It comes from what women do, not from what they are.²⁵

Gift giving is the ground upon and against which both the process of the male identity and the process of exchange are constructed. What women have in common is that they have not been made men. They have not been estranged from the gift process early in childhood, and they can therefore practice it in a relatively straightforward way. This is changing to some extent as women take on the values of the market in order to survive and succeed there. However if they become mothers they still have to access the gift values and practice the gift processes at a personal level in that period of their lives, often maintaining the two paradigms internally at the same time. Moreover many women who do not become mothers nevertheless practice intense gift giving in other areas. Women can unite across all the patriarchal boundaries as those who continue to practice the human gift process outside the context of the market and often inside it as well. Though this process involves different kinds of gifts and has many cultural variations, women are similar because they make themselves by 'making' others through satisfying their needs unilaterally, beyond the exchange process.

²⁵ I am reminded of the Sinatra existentialism formula I saw on a tee shirt Do-be, do-be, do.

Mothering and gift giving are the thesis, the male and the market are the antithesis, and exploitation and parasitism are the synthesis. We need to go back and start a different dialectical progression, so that everyone can be included in the practice of the gift process and validate it.

The essence of profit

The market can be seen as a gigantic process of sorting products having the common quality of exchange value, using money as the exemplar. Gift processes and their free products, services and resources are sorted out, discarded as irrelevant. They are relegated to an area outside exchange but many of them are then turned towards that incarnated sorting process itself and made to support it, giving it value by implication, flowing into (and mixing with) exchange value. Thus there is a kind of de facto essentialization, a kind of 'reprocessing' of the gift which abstracts it (or extracts it) from its particular concrete transactions and channels it 'upwards' towards the capitalists as profit. The value of the caring labor of housework passes invisibly and noiselessly through the surplus value created by the worker into the profit of the capitalist (even when the housewife is herself also the worker). Similarly the gifts of nature and of past and future generations flow into profit unrecognized. These are gifts of all the collective caregiving and maintenance of the past, which have preserved the environment and the (physical and spiritual) community up to the present, the gifts of traditional knowledge which have been handed down through generations, as well as the gifts of the people of the future who will not ever have access to the natural and cultural abundance that is now being used up, flowing to corporations and their

investors and stockholders. These are also the gifts that the poorer nations are giving to the richer ones due to level of life. Not only is labor cheap (that is, a large part of it is a gift) but the population collectively receives fewer of the gifts of its environmental and cultural context and thus passes on more of them into the profit of the investors from the North. The goods that are consumed are cheaper to produce than those in the rich countries and of poorer quality. Access to natural and cultural gifts and resources is limited; even expectations of a good life are limited. By restricting the production and consumption available for local use and channeling money, products, work and resources out of the country, gifts for the local population are made scarce and the gifts of cheap goods, resources and labor are made to flow Northwards. This process of exploitation 'refines' gifts making them invisible, 'purified' of their local relevance, and 'vital', essential to the functioning of the capitalist machine. *Pecunia non olet*, money doesn't smell, however, and we cannot tell the difference between the money that has come as a forced gift and money that has come from an 'equal' exchange.

If we look at all the elements that go into profit: the surplus value of present and past labor, the value of gift labor such as housework and other free labor that flows unseen into value and surplus value, the gifts of free and cheap raw materials, the gifts leveraged from the public by high prices, gifts leveraged by inflation, and deflation, gifts given as interest on loans, gifts coming from differences in level of life in the country of origin and in the country of sale, gifts taken by appropriating species and knowledge through patenting, gifts of savings garnered by desecrating the gifts of the environment etc., we can see that profit is a gift made of many gifts. In profit the market abstracts

again from concrete gift processes and re presents the gifts amalgamated, homogenized and sanitized under the name of 'making money'.

Any income above the cost of production and capital is free to the capitalist, who also may contribute free work, but whose 'risk' is only that s/he will not be able to leverage these gifts through h/er exchange activities. The common quality of profit is that it is a free gift to the capitalist. That is indeed its essence. ²⁶

Thus the gift of profit is the actual essential aspect of production for needs and for exchange that flows from the unpaid work of the many into the hands of the few in an economy based on exchange and patriarchy. This gift essence is the ownable (common un-common) property of successful capitalists. It is passed on to others not as a gift however but as an exchange, when it is invested in order to extract the gift essence again from other labor. Far from being the common property of women the nurturing essence is the invisible motivator of the whole economy.

Conclusion

²⁶ Unions and worker's movements throughout the world have succeeded in regulating working conditions and pay scales to some extent. However much labor now has been taken out of the workplace and is done in the home without any guarantees and with irregular pay. This is what Maria Mies calls the 'housewifization' of work. If we look at it in gift terms we can see how more gifts are made to flow into profit by once again reducing the expenses for the capitalist. Because the house has substituted the factory, the actual care of the house flows directly into profit as a gift rather than going first to the children and adults and then through their work into profit as surplus value. Isolation in the home away from other workers, and irregular and low wages continue to leverage more surplus value as a gift and create a greater dependency of the worker on the capitalist. This precarious situation disempowers the worker and de facto essentializes work, as it makes more and more of it into a gift that nurtures the capitalist.

It is against the market and patriarchy that we should direct our rage not against mothering. The context created by the market and patriarchy is what makes mothering/gift giving difficult. Mothering is not per se a self-sacrificing role leading to victimization, but is a more positive human process than for example, the market, the law or the academic disciplines from which it has been deleted. Women (and some men) continue to do gift giving in the face of great obstacles because they are human, not because they are masochistic. Self-sacrifice is sometimes the only way to assert our humanity in the face of a corrosive and poisonous Patriarchal system.

If we stopped educating our boys not to be like their gift giving mothers, we could recreate humanity on the basis of the gift paradigm. However we would also need to change the institutions that have been made in the male image or with the neuter cover of the market. That change is what I am proposing. The first step in doing this is of course recognizing what needs to be changed and what to put in its place. Schools, governments, religions, media, corporations, the law, the market: all of these institutions can be changed from within, under the non patriarchal leadership of women, by promoting a paradigm shift in the minds of the individuals who implement them. As mothered children we all have the gift paradigm deep within us. As communicators we practice gift giving all the time and develop our subjectivities accordingly. As mothers we have to do intense gift giving in that period of our lives. As caring human beings we continue to satisfy needs of all kinds, without recognizing that is what we are doing. If we can re focus, we can shift our priorities. In the US the discourse on 'values' seems to be the province of the Right Wing. That is because values are identified with the Patriarchal values that denigrate gift giving and/or capture

it in the kitchen and the nursery. It is time for a widespread affirmation of values based on the gift paradigm. Sharing the analysis of the gift and exchange can provide the rationale for the gift giving behavior of everyone in a new world beyond the exchange paradigm.

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