

PART TWO



The Gift in Communication

Exploring gifts and signs

Over the last ten years I have written quite a number of articles about gift giving and semiotics, which I have given in a variety of conferences, and which have been published in semiotics journals. I decided to weave them together for this book. Since the idea of the gift in communication is new, I have had to present it over and over again from scratch. I hope I have succeeded in weeding out the repetitions that would have made this section boring to the reader, without damaging the contents. The following section is taken from a presentation at the School of Semiotics in Imatra, Finland in 1999.

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 actual bodies, material subjects as well as minds, psychological subjectivities 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. Such a communicative 'female' economy continues to exist within some indigenous communities and in Capitalism within some families and wherever there is common ground and a circulation of gifts to needs without the intervention of exchange. However both indigenous communities and all kinds of families and cooperative initiatives are presently altered and distorted internally by Patriarchy as well as externally by the context of the market and the exchange paradigm. The parasite of Patriarchal Capitalism has captured female economies whenever possible and on pain of death, made them its hosts.

From the point of view of the gift paradigm we try to see not only the victimization of gift giving but to go farther into the question and see it as positive, creative and fundamental, the source of our humanity. 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. Even if the market has captured and commodified many areas of language, the basic gifts and function of language are free.¹⁴

I want to include here at least a few indications of the steps I have taken towards this perspective because I think that embracing it 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, signs and semiotics for mothering. On the other hand, by re visioning mothering as the principle of the gift economy and then extending gift giving beyond gender and beyond economics to the pan-human processes of linguistic communication and sign processes in general, we situate human mothering as one particularly intense gender-identified moment of gift giving within a much wider context of gift processes which are not identified with gender as

such. These processes are constitutive of the human in a way that Patriarchy, Capitalism, market exchange are not. The parasitism of exchange and patriarchy upon gift giving and its identification with mothering due to masculation, have conspired to eliminate gift giving as an interpretative key for language and life. By restoring this key we can look at language in a very different way.

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 combinatory mechanisms, but as verbal gifts which take the place of material gifts. Language can then be seen as verbal gift giving, which uses the patterns of material gift giving on another interpersonal plane. Words function as verbal gifts in their capacity for forming human relations among people in regard to parts of the world that are presently 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.

Material gift giving creates human relations and gifts can also be given *in order to* create the relations (that is to satisfy a social and psychological need for relations) rather than primarily to satisfy material needs.¹⁵ 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 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 at the same time regarding 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 might

¹⁵ One can give a material gift to create a relation of solidarity with another, but also to create a relation of dependence/superiority. There is a basic level of positive giving and receiving both in life and in language however, without which the material-and-linguistic self does not develop. Manipulations and exchanges presuppose that basic level.

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. To be complete, any gift needs a receiver. However when members of a linguistic community are available to receive them, they do have this common gift character. The logic of exchange causes epistemological problems, however, because it cancels and hides the gift and so makes it appear that there is no connection between the verbal and the material or non-verbal levels.¹⁶

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. (See also the section on syntax below). 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 referents 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 kinds of things can receive specific kinds of gifts, while others cannot. Some words can receive some other words as gifts, while others cannot. A plural ending prevents a word from receiving a singular indefinite article, an adverb cannot be given to a noun. Similarly humans can eat eggs but not justice or mountains. That is, there are constraints on the kinds of material gifts that can be given and received and there are constraints on the kinds of verbal gifts that can be given and received.

Even the noun-verb-complement structure can be understood as transposed giver—gift or service—receiver: “The girl hit the ball.”

¹⁶ The division between mind and body (or spirit and matter) also comes from a denial of gift giving because what the two have in common is made invisible at *both* levels.

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 other people, she also conveys her own ideas, feelings and intentions, stimulating as well as satisfying, the others' needs to know. The human relations that are created in this way are first, the basic and commonplace relation of the interlocutors to one another as both speakers and listeners of a human language, and therefore probably human beings themselves,¹⁷ secondly they are speakers and listeners of a specific language, for example, English, and some sort of standard or non standard version of that language. Thirdly they are persons who can give and receive the specific words that are combined as gifts in the sentences they are giving and receiving. Fourthly, through their communication, they are related together to whatever the sentence is being used to say or refer to. When one person satisfies the need of the other for a relation to something on the external by means of a word-gift, s/he creates a relation to that thing also for herself, a relation, which already has its equivalent in the relation of the other. All of these are relations of solidarity and similarity created by gift giving and receiving, which presuppose the possibility of continuing to give and receive verbally. Even if both persons categorize themselves and each other as human, they do not simply stop with the categorization, but continue to construct its content in the moment as they are speaking and listening or writing and reading. As they do this they are constructing their own and each other's variegated subjectivities as well as their relations to each other, to the world and to the topic. At these basic levels communication is positive even when at another, more particular, level it may be negative. "I love you" and "I hate you" both have the giver/gift/ receiver structure even if love is usually positive and hate is usually negative. Both are transmitted through a positive gift structure. I do not believe these structures are determined

¹⁷ I say probably because they could be computers or extraterrestrials who had learned a human language. These possibilities have not been present to mind of the interlocutors until recently.

by rules any more than material gifts are basically determined by rules. We eat with our mouths (we receive the gift of food) not with our ears or noses, because the mouth is where we can receive that kind of gift. This does not depend upon a rule but upon the qualitative nature of the gift given and the way we are able to receive it. Conceiving of language as functioning according to transposed gift patterns gives us a very different picture than conceiving of it as functioning because it is governed by rules.

We learn patterns of material giving and receiving from our experience as mothered children. We also learn and use, that is, we give again, the words and transposed gift patterns that have been given to us by our community. We invent new gifts with them, which express our individuality to others (who need to know us), and satisfy new needs that arise for human relations to changing circumstances.

At a purely material level, sound flows through air from the vocal chords and the breath of one moves towards the ears of the other. Writing is inscribed upon the page and is perceived/received by the eyes of the other. Words are gifts of the community to the community through us, but we also give them to each other as individual gifts, and give the words to other words within the gift constructions, which are sentences. We also transmit (give) information, feelings, attitudes, knowledge etc. in this way. Language is thus complex multi layered gift giving and receiving, and as such would require a treatment as thorough as theories of language now provide for 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 assert anything without satisfying communicative needs of the other, that is, without 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 live and form communities, and that ability to give must also

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. Feral children, who have not been mothered and have not learned language, have brains that do not fully develop. The physiological connections do not take place *because* the social connections of giving and receiving do not take place. 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, which can then 'pass it on'. At another level fetal brain cells even physically migrate from one area to another area where they are needed and become specific.

There is much more intentional and unintentional gift giving in the universe than we imagine due to our pathological entanglement with exchange and Patriarchy. The idea that humans are doing multi level gift giving when they communicate linguistically is therefore not farfetched. Nor does the hard wiring in this case diminish the social character of linguistic (or non linguistic) communication. Looking at language as produced by giftless brain mechanisms, like looking at life from the point of view of patriarchy and the market, leaves aside the issue of meaning. 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 physiological brain processes as possibly functioning also according to gift principles. If we look at this view as a projection of mothering, then we must certainly also look at supposedly giftless brain mechanisms as a projection of neutering and objectifying 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, which cannot however satisfy itself by taking. Meaning does not come by grasping through force and domination but it is created through transitive unilateral

other orientation and the receivership of such other orientation. While there are those in situations of privilege who are desperately searching for meaning, which they can only 'get' by giving and receiving unilaterally, there are billions of people who are actually starving because their needs are unsatisfied and their means of giving to one another 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 their needs. 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 mainly 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 Patriarchal exemplar position that makes life meaningful. In fact the satisfactions of that position as such are usually illusory except to extreme narcissists. Though the exemplar position is used so often for domination, it is the capacity to satisfy the needs of the many that that position could *potentially* bring, that gives it the 'meaning' we see in it.

It is the great long term blind spot about gift giving caused by Patriarchy and the market that has made meaning in language such a mystery and meaning in life so elusive. It is not by following rules or imposing other orientation through morality that we will liberate and understand meaning, but by accessing and elaborating upon ever-present, underlying, creative patterns of communication.

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 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 individual or corporate entity with the capacity to legally and materially enforce its ownership. Gifts are logically prior to the law because they are prior to exchange and the law mainly 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 functions according to the recognition and satisfaction of the unmet 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 the issues of mercy vs punishment to seemingly unrelated issues such as public or private ownership and the privatization of the commons.

Because gift giving is prior to exchange and the law, it is relegated inside private property, as happens in the home. Thus to the exchange paradigm 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, 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. As we said above even morality can be seen as an individual attempt to mitigate some of the worst aspects of the exchange paradigm, while the gift paradigm (which is what actually motivates morality unconsciously) 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 ex-

pand. With regard to the perpetrators of personal crimes, these are systemic needs for the defense of property and proprietors. With regard to the privatization of the commons 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 the system to expand and of collective entities 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 that 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 these carriers 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 PARMALAT. Though a few of these persons are caught, the market really *requires* the kind of greed and dishonesty that drives people to implement the expansion of the system, so 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 injustices 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 (exemplar) place in our

individual hierarchical priority systems 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 growing number of courageous attempts to choose sustainability and 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 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 inside the exchange paradigm. Indeed everyone's survival is made to seem contingent upon it. People who do not share the values of the exchange paradigm are considered 'failures' by those who do, and may be ostracized, subjected to ridicule and punished by poverty. The overvaluing of the exchange paradigm by the culture of Capitalism focuses the attention of the entire society on exchange, distorting the perspectives even of those who are practicing gift giving or who are on its margins. The market seems to be natural and unavoidable, a necessary fact of life, so the institutional alternatives, like religions, merge with it or find ways of co habiting with it. Even the people who are most driven by market values can justify gift giving in their personal lives by moral or religious conviction, practicing charity and family values. As Capitalism globalizes and intensifies so does Fundamentalism because it gives a social location for gift giving framed within Patriarchy and dominated and controlled by it. Thus it allows people to find some meaning in their lives while continuing to practice the exchange paradigm, competition and domination.

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 our human experience as mothered children, which gives rise to the unilateral gift logic we use to communicate. Bringing gift giving to the foreground and understanding its processes rather than those of exchange, as constituting the basic human logic, gives a leverage point with which we can reduce the hegemony of

exchange over our thinking, and understand how and why this ‘creature’ of ours 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 universities, which make learning those beliefs and value systems a point of pride. They have also 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 an (at times ‘unrealistic’) moral or religious stance.

Nor is academic endeavor ‘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, and perhaps even more importantly, gift giving has been eliminated 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.

Academic disciplines

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 deep metaphor or “metaform” (Sebeok and Danesi 2000) of giving and receiving to perception as the creative reception of experiential data, as well as to atomic-level electron ‘donation’, and the ‘transmission’ of hormonal messages. Even 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 revision 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 fight, to flee or to tend.¹⁸ 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 its 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, if not much more so. Only because as a patriarchal and capitalist society we renounce our mothering heritage, do we cancel the deep metaform of gift giving.

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

¹⁸ See *The Tending Instinct* (Taylor2002)

atomic level to the level of the centrifugal and centripetal swirling of galaxies, from the biological level where the heart sends blood with nutriment and oxygen to the cells, to the level at which the other-turning and other-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 created a blind spot, which permits 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 and extends to a class hatred of the parasite towards its gift-giving host. On the other hand, it is against the image of the mother, robbed of all the connections with gift giving in the rest of life, victimized by misogyny, and giving gifts to extenuation, that the feminist movement has rebelled. However this rebellion is misdirected. 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 are 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 of the depleted and suffering mother, though perhaps by refusing that model, they can become strong enough themselves to do something about its social causes.

Mothering and the Gifts of Language*

“Look at the world through women’s eyes” was the motto of the UN NGO conference in Huairou, China, which accompanied UN

* I gave the following paper in a slightly different version at Rice University, Houston, Texas in 1998 at a conference on “The Enigma of the Gift and Sacrifice.” The paper is now published in the book of that name. (...)

Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995. 40,000 women from all over the world attended the NGO conference. The critique of essentialism that is made by academic women's studies now makes us question whether there is any point of view "through women's eyes." This fact divides the women's movement for social change. I would like for this paper to help to bridge that divide and show a direction in which women and men can move, both theoretically and practically to solve the devastating problems caused by patriarchy and capitalism. The gift I am trying to give is not only academic but is directed towards social change.

Mothering is a practice called forth from adults by the biological dependency of infants. This dependence creates a social constant in that someone must care for the children unilaterally for an extended period of time or they will not survive. Societies have ensured that adults will take on the care-giving role by assigning it to females and encouraging girls to imitate their mothers. It is the dependency of children that requires the intense care giving activity not the biology of the mothers. In fact men could as easily engage in child-care and some do, but males are usually given an identity and gender role whereby they are encouraged to be different from their nurturing mothers.

The values of patriarchy and capitalism combine to make us look at mothering through the wrong end of the telescope, relegating it to a very specific area of life disconnected from the rest, unmonetized, almost mindless, uninformative. Instead, the unilateral satisfaction of another's need, which is necessary in mothering contains a basic recognizable logic with many positive consequences. This logic functions *prior* to reciprocity and informs it. I call it 'unilateral gift giving' in order to emphasize its continuity with other kinds of gifts and exchanges—which I believe are actually variations on the theme of the unilateral gift. By unilateral gift giving I mean that for example, a mother feeds her baby its lunch, the baby does not feed the mother lunch in return. (The transaction is thus at least deeply asymmetrical—the child may respond but that does not transform the unilateral or unidirectional gift into an exchange). From the child's point of view she or he is the recipient of unilateral

gift giving coming from the other. This would be the case even if the adult is being paid to do the care giving.

Before I begin to describe some elements of the logic of the unilateral satisfaction of another's need, let me say that there is also a logic of commodity exchange for money that lays down a very strong base metaphor or magnetic template that influences us to interpret everything in its image. It is because of this strong pull towards the logic of exchange that we tend to ignore, discredit or over-sentimentalize unilateral gift giving and over-value exchange patterns. Exchange is a doubling of the gift but has the effect of canceling the motive and motion of the unilateral process. The generalization of exchange results in a very different configuration of human relations than would the generalization of unilateral gift giving.

Since we are living in a society of 'advanced' Patriarchal Capitalism in which commodity exchange for money is the order of the day, we are practicing exchange all the time and we have become blind to the continued existence and the importance of unilateral gift giving. This blindness is also emotionally invested. It occurs in all areas of life and study, and progresses from a denial of the existence of the unilateral gift process to a denial of its validity, a knee jerk de-legitimation of gift giving as instinctual, sentimental privilege, saintliness, or at the other end of the spectrum, victimism or masochism.

The doubling of the gift in exchange forms the basis of a paradigm or world-view, which opposes and cancels the values and views coming from the unilateral gift process. Exchange, the process of giving-in-order-to-receive an equivalent, appears to contain a basic human logic of self-reflecting consciousness, self-respect, justice, fairness, equality. Quantification according to a monetary norm can be counted upon to assess the even-handedness of transactions so that all the parties seem to get what they gave, and what they 'deserve'.

In Western culture this pattern of interaction and its criteria are accepted as the normal human way of behaving, diminishing harm to the other while promoting the well being of the self. From economics to politics, the idea of not impinging on the other rules over the idea of helping (giving to) the other. Feminists have embraced the idea of equality with men and have shown that they can also embrace the

values of Patriarchal Capitalism. While continuing to identify and give importance to needs, women do not usually consciously step outside the exchange paradigm. Instead they take up a struggle for rights within the system rather than trying to change it altogether. One unchallenged Patriarchal ideal for example is justice, which is based on the model of exchange, requires 'appropriate payment' for crime, and gives rise to big business (now called by activists "the criminal-industrial complex"). The values of kindness, and the prevention of crime through the satisfaction of needs are not considered as relevant to the exchange-based discourse of justice and rights. The paradigm of exchange is actually conducting a continuous struggle against a hidden paradigm based on unilateral gift giving, an (ideological) struggle, which it is winning. We do not notice the gift paradigm or even know that it exists. Rather we attribute isolated instances of unilateral giving to individual virtue, quirkiness, disguised self-interest or even co-dependency.

Here I hope to provide a glimpse of what the world would look like if we restored unilateral gift giving to its place as the core human logic of which symbolic gift exchange and commodity exchange are both variations. I realize that using unilateral gift giving as an interpretative key gives some very different perspectives on a number of issues. It is important to conceive of a different way in order to create it, to liberate it from its surroundings like the statue from the stone. In fact I want to show that unilateral gift giving is THE basic mode of human interaction, which is already there and functioning, but half of humanity has been alienated from it by the imposition of the social construction of the gender of males, thereby deeply altering also the circumstances and the social construction of the gender of the other half of humanity.

If we can stand back and look at the exchange paradigm critically for a moment, we can begin to recognize the positive existence of the gift paradigm. The exchange paradigm has to dominate over the gift paradigm because the gift paradigm threatens it by making it unnecessary. Indeed if unilateral gift giving were the norm, no one would need to exchange in order to receive what she or he needs. The exchange paradigm requires scarcity in order to maintain its leverage and control. In capitalism, when abundance begins to

accrue, scarcity is artificially created to save the exchange-based system. Agricultural products are plowed under in order to keep prices high. Money is spent on armaments and other waste and luxury items, or cornered in the hands of a few individuals or corporations in order to create and maintain an appropriate climate of scarcity for business-as-usual to continue. These mechanisms have other advantages, which also reward successful exchangers with social status and power and penalize gift givers by making their gift giving (in scarcity) self-sacrificial.

A context of abundance would allow gift giving to flower while a context of scarcity discredits gift giving by making it painfully difficult. Because of the conflict of paradigms and the tremendous real world effects it has, it is not surprising that our individual views of the world have been deeply distorted. We are members of a society of advanced capitalism and have to succeed in it in order to survive, so that both women and men have adapted to the exchange paradigm and its values, allowing it to make us in its image. In everything we do we are looking through the distorting glasses of exchange. Nonetheless through an effort of imagination, and because capitalism is destroying the gifts of the earth and humanity, we can also take the point of view of the gift paradigm. Women, who are still being brought up with the values that will allow them to do unilateral care giving often maintain both paradigms internally, validating the exchange paradigm even while acting according to the values of the gift paradigm. It is important for all of us to resolve this contradiction and affirm that the gift paradigm is a valid way of viewing the world.

Indeed I believe that the conflict between paradigms may be an important cause of misogyny. Women bear the brunt of the fact that the unilateral giving, which they have to practice as mothers conflicts with and challenges the paradigm of exchange. In fact, because of the context of scarcity in which many mothers are forced to live, practicing the gift logic may even appear to be a punishment for not having succeeded in the system of commodity exchange. Alternatively it may appear to be the reason for women's supposed 'inferiority'. Women themselves sometimes attribute the source of their oppression to the role of gift-giving rather than to the context

of scarcity that has been created by the system based on commodity exchange. They think that by giving up gift-giving and convincing others to do so as well, they can improve their lot. Instead the solution is to change the context of scarcity and the economic system that is causing it, so as to make gift giving viable for all.

The conflicts of values, which many people, both women and men, have regarding patriarchal capitalism, are usually seen as individual propensities, not as the values of a different hidden vestigial or incipient system. By giving positive attention to unilateral gift giving we can begin to recognize its general social importance.

One result of the predominance of the exchange paradigm is that needs have become invisible unless their satisfaction is backed by the money required to pay for them, as 'effective demand'. Looking beyond the exchange paradigm to a theory of gift giving as need-satisfaction would also require an expanded visibility of needs to include those needs for which the people who experience them do not have the wherewithal and those needs, which are not part of the monetized economy. Marx's discussion of consumptive production and productive consumption could be used as the basis for such a theory since it suggests how needs can become specific and diversify according to the means by which they are satisfied (Marx 1973 p 90-94). New needs arise on the basis of the satisfaction of the old in a dynamic way. For example, a child who first needs only milk begins to need solid foods, prepared with specific cultural procedures etc. A child who was dependent begins to need to be independent.

The gift process in coexistence with exchange gives rise to many needs. As adults living in the exchange paradigm we also have complex social and psychological needs having to do with power relations. For example the need to be respected may be more important than the need to receive a gift. Much damage has been done by givers who paternalistically ignore the variety of needs and the sensitivity and creativity of the receiver.

The concealment of the gift paradigm has extended to our terminology, rendering the gifts we are already giving invisible. For example we place the neutral term 'activity' over the loaded term 'gift' in many aspects of life. At the same time we have taken away the

loaded terms 'satisfaction of need' and replaced it with the term 'effect'. For example building (or taking care of) a house can be considered satisfying a complex combination of needs by as many activities. The dishes need to be washed, the broken window needs to be repaired. I propose that in order to reveal the gift paradigm we reconsider even such practical activities according to the theme of unilateral gift giving and receiving

Aspects of the gift logic

The process of unilateral gift giving as evidenced in nurturing has its own logic with consequences and implications. I will list some of the aspects of this logic as I see it.

One: The gift interaction requires the giver's ability to recognize needs of others and to procure or fashion something to satisfy them. The satisfaction of needs is not done by humans ahistorically, but always takes place at a certain cultural and historical level with the means and methods that are present in the society at a certain degree of development of productive forces, and within some mode of production. Thus whatever is received in satisfaction of a need is formed with some degree of cultural specificity, which also educates further needs.

Two: The gift interaction has three parts, the giver, the gift or service, and the receiver with her/his need. Leaving out the receiver as an important element in this process would make us look at gift giving as an ego based process, done for the good of the giver, as happens in exchange. The transitivity of the gift process depends upon the reception and use of the gift by the receiver.

Three: A dynamic change of state occurs in which the giver is in possession of the gift, s/he gives it, and the gift comes to rest in the possession of, or incorporated into the body of, the receiver. This is a transitive interaction.

Four: The purpose of the gift is the satisfaction of the need and well being of the receiver. The interaction is other-oriented.

Five: Giving a gift to satisfy another's need gives value to that person because the implication is that if that person were not valuable to the giver s/he would not have given the gift. This has the effect that attention goes to the (valuable) receiver rather than the giver. The giver can satisfy a receiver's need to be valued by giving to her and can modify and intensify that value by self effacing (or self sacrificing). A further variation is that the receiver can refuse to recognize the giver as the source of the gift as if the value and the gift came from himself or herself through 'deserving'. Note that I am not recommending these variations but am simply acknowledging them as possible aspects of the process.

Six: The receiver is not passive but creative. The gift must be used in order for the transaction to be complete.

Seven: Gift giving creates a bond between giver and receiver. The giver recognizes the need and the existence of the other, fashions or provides something specific to satisfy the need. She is assured of the reception of the gift by the well being of the other. The receiver finds that her need has been satisfied in a specific way by another, with something, which she did not procure herself. These two poles can be seen as the basis of interpersonal bonds. The receiver can recognize the positive existence of the other. Potentially she can also experience gratitude, a response by which she affirms the gift she has received as well as the giver. She can also become a giver in her turn.

Eight: Turn-taking occurs when individuals each give unilateral gifts sequentially without making their gifts contingent upon equivalent gifts given by the receivers.

Nine: These gift processes also construct the psychological and physiological subject as a giver and/or creative receiver. The body itself is both a product and a source of gifts. The subject as giver and/or receiver is different from the subject of exchange where debt and reciprocity are necessary.

Ten: There is logical consequence in gift giving as in 'If A gives to B and B gives to C then A gives to C'. (B is then mediator between A and C).

This list is not meant to be comprehensive but only to bring forward several aspects of unilateral gift giving: the relation-making capacity of unilateral other-oriented gift giving; the informative capacity of satisfying needs and thus of educating them; the implication of the value of the other; the creativity of the receiver etc. No debt or obligation to reciprocate is necessary for the formation of these interpersonal bonds through gift giving. In fact I believe that there are several reasons why we have focused so much on the relations created by the obligations of reciprocity. For now I will mention two. As I said above we are looking from the perspective of capitalism where reciprocity is enforced as the mechanism of market exchange and debt is a salient factor of the economy. Secondly, gift giving is labile, mercurial, and can easily switch before our eyes from unilateral to bilateral. An other-oriented gift can transform into an ego-oriented one simply by instrumentalizing the gift to satisfy the needs of the manipulative giver. When this happens we sometimes summon our cynicism and decide that the free gift was an illusion.

Manipulation through gift giving is always possible, through leveraging gifts, giving competitively and withholding gifts. The exchange paradigm continually pushes us in that direction. We use this tendency of gift giving to transform itself as evidence that unilateral gift giving does not exist. Mothers, and other people who have done a lot of gift giving on a daily basis, know that it does. Despite this unfortunate tendency the unilateral gift continues to function in the area of mothering, and it has also many developments which have been attributed to other aspects of life and given other

names. By restoring the name 'gift' to these developments, we can see that unilateral gift giving is one of the load-bearing structures of society and not just wishful thinking or a good intention often transformed into its opposite.

Material Communication

If we consider the movement of goods and services provided by care givers to needs of children and other family members to be unilateral gift giving, we can also see that gift giving in large part forms the material bodies of the people in the community. I would call this 'material non-sign communication'. It is a transfer of gifts from one person to another by which the bodies and minds of persons grow and become specific, due to the fact that needs become specified or are educated by what satisfies them. It is no wonder that the words '*co-muni-cation*' and '*co-muni-ty*' remind us of the process of giving gifts together. By giving unilaterally and receiving gifts from others we mutually include each other with regard to all the parts of our environment.

It is only because maternal material communication, i.e., nurturing, has been so misunderstood and problematized in our own society that we have not been able to see the processes it provides as having a continuity with the rest of life. Denied this continuity, nurturing appears to be, and becomes, even more specialistic and limited, carrying the 'domestic sphere' into some unconscious never never land upon which consumerism and advertising nevertheless feed. Exchange is self-reflecting and self-validating, difficult to oppose. However if we look at unilateral gift giving as the core process from which mothering, symbolic gift exchange and commodity exchange all derive, we can re-integrate nurturing into the rest of life and childhood along with it. We can find the continuity between capitalistic and pre-capitalistic societies. By giving value to the gift giving process we will also be able to recognize the non-metaphorical aspects of the idea of Gaia, our Mother Earth. If we can reactivate the attitudes of creative receiving that we used as children in our experience of gift-receiving-and-giving, rather than covering

them with a neutrality deriving from the exchange paradigm, we can rebirth our gratitude for life and for the abundant planet on which we live and which we are now destroying, because we are caught in the egocentrism and solipsism of the exchange paradigm.

Exchange relations

Exchange is giving-in-order-to-receive an equivalent. It requires a return 'gift', which is determined by the value of what has been given. The exchange of commodities requires measurement, quantification, and assessment in money. Exchange is ego-oriented. The need, which is satisfied by exchange is the exchangers' own need. Therefore satisfying it does not attribute value to the other but only to the self. Commodity exchange for money mediates generalized private property, where all property is owned in a mutually exclusive way by private owners. Exchange is adversarial in that in each transaction each person is trying to get more and give less. Exchange establishes mainly human relations of mutual equality as exchangers. (In fact we will see that this equality is an illusion because many exchangers are receiving free gifts disguised by the equality of the exchange and many others are giving free gifts because the 'just' price covers a source of free gifts).*

As a template or deep metaphor for other interactions, exchange is very powerful. The self-reflecting aspect in the equation of value (x commodity $a = y$ quantity of money) creates an artificial standard for what humans are and what their relations should be. We think of consciousness as self-reflection, and we appeal to relations of equality, balance, and justice. These seemingly positive qualities function in the mode of exchange but by accepting them our way is blocked to the higher goods of unilateral gift giving: celebrating qualitative difference, caring, mutual imbalance towards the other, attention to needs, and kindness.

* Debt and obligation do constitute human relations, making the exchange long term and carrying a penalty for non compliance. The relation of debt centers around dominance and submission.

Psychological origins of exchange and patriarchy

Nancy Chodorow ⁽¹⁹⁷⁸⁾ discusses the plight of the boy child who finds he has to learn or invent an identity that is not like that of his nurturing mother. The boy begins life without knowing he is different. Then he discovers that he has a different gender name, and thus belongs to a different category. If the fundamental unilateral gift giving that is his daily experience through which he is also bonding with his mother is interpreted as a female characteristic only, where does that leave the boy? What can his identity be? Society has interpreted our physiological differences to mean that we must construct different gender identities, and it has unfortunately seized upon gift giving as the central characteristic of the mother, from which he must deviate. But if the unilateral gift giving way is the basic human process, what other identity can there be for the boy?

I believe naming has a lot to do with this identity, that the word 'male' itself (in its binary opposition to 'female') categorizes the boy and provides a model of categorization and alienation, which has widespread repercussions. By taking the father or other important male as the model or prototype of the human, the boy is consoled for his departure from the nurturing category. The mother is then seen as not the prototype for 'human', her nurturing appears to be of little value, and her status appears to be inferior to the boy's. In fact she often chooses or is forced to nurture males *more* because they are *not* nurturers. Males then vie with each other to be the prototype (male) human while women are in a category which nurtures them and which is considered 'inferior' because women do not vie to be the prototype. The 'essence' of women appears to be that they are not even in the running. The fact that the contest is artificial and unnecessary does not diminish its social significance for everyone.

If almost everything that little children have is or seems to be a gift from their mothers, the penis would also seem to be a gift, given to boys but not given to girls. It may appear that the boy has been put in the non-nurturing superior category because he has it. Yet because the identity constructed through giving and receiving with the mother is necessarily more satisfying than an identity of similarity

with the father—where he has to compete to be the prototype—the child still longs for participation in the gift mode. Unfortunately, since the mother doesn't have a penis and the boy's gender appears to be determined by his having one, castration would seem to be the way to return to the nurturing identity and he would therefore desire it. At the same time he would necessarily fear castration, making the whole issue confusing and traumatic.

The fact that the boy will never have breasts though he may envy them as the gift of nurturing, would enter into this psychological pattern as well. Thus it seems that the basic category is male and the mother is in the opposite and inferior category because she has the gift of breasts for nurturing, which the boy will never have. The boy therefore puts himself out of 'dependent' receivership of the care of the mother and begins to feel that he deserves such care because of the gift of his penis and his name. He sees himself as 'made' or 'engendered' by the father who traveled the same psychological itinerary himself as a child.

I believe this childhood pattern repeats itself in many areas of social life in the creation of privileged categories by naming, based on the naming of gender. The privilege involved is the direction of gifts and services by others 'upwards' *towards* the person who is in the superior category, and the giving of names and commands 'downwards' *by* the person in the superior category. In this way hierarchies are created and those with important titles in top places, prototype positions, rule with their phallic symbols in hand. From the scepter to the mitre to the missile and the gun our leaders are *made* male again and again. The division into genders due to our physiological differences is an easy mistake for cultures to make. In fact we put things that look different into different categories. The problem is that humans are so sensitive and intelligent they take up their categories and use them as self-fulfilling prophecies. This very capacity however would give us a way out, an ability to create ourselves differently, undoing the categories, changing gender expectations.

The transfer of category away from nurturing and into a relation of similarity and competition with the father is remarkably similar to the transformation of a product from a use value into an exchange

value. The product is taken away from the production process (which itself could be viewed as a combination of need-satisfying ‘activities’) placed on the market (the binary opposite of gift giving), compared to the monetary norm and given a ‘money name’ (a price). (Marx makes a comparison between price and proper names and adds “We know nothing of a man simply because he is called ‘James’”(Marx [1868] 1930). I have to differ with Marx. We do know that if he is called ‘James’ he is male.)

Girls travel more slowly, remaining like their mothers in the gift realm, but they too are given up at last in marriage, re named and placed in a new family category with its ‘exemplar’ male, the husband towards whom they will direct their gift giving. Commodity exchange, which cancels the gift, requiring an equivalent, seems to do the trick of nurturing while not nurturing, satisfying needs while competing to have more, making it an apparently ungendered area more appropriate for masculine endeavor.

Manhood script

According to David Gilmore in his book *Manhood in the Making*, (Gilmore. 1990) the values, which males embrace for the formation of their identities can be seen as having to do with a ‘manhood script’, which is relatively similar cross culturally. Such values as independence, competitiveness, performative excellence, courage, large size, form the parameters of this script, which is embraced and constructed by males so as to distinguish themselves from the nurturing mother. I think that we can recognize that these values are similar to the values of capitalism: autonomy, competitiveness, performative excellence, risk taking and high status due to social ‘size’: having more wealth or power.

Having given up unilateral gift giving both as a gender and as a mode of production and distribution it appears that it is only through the rule of law or the strictures of morality and religion that men (and women living in capitalism) can be convinced to pay attention to others’ needs. Yet self-interest is a psychological dead end. People find their lives without ‘meaning’. Searching for meaning

individually is an almost impossible task since both in language and in life, meaning has to do with communication, with orientation towards the other. We seize upon the law of the male prototype as the measure of our behavior but this does not bring us back to the gift way, which seems an impossible, unrealistic Eden. Meanwhile the economic way of the manhood script continues to make an anti-Eden creating poverty where abundance should be, rewarding the few with ever-greater havings while penalizing the many, erecting a wall behind which the gift giving garden is no longer visible.

One advantage that capitalism has had, the silver lining of its cloud, is that by institutionalizing the values of the manhood script and bringing women into the monetized labor force, it has shown that those supposedly 'male' values were not biologically based, given that women can also embrace them successfully. A society based on unilateral gift giving, institutionalizing the script of nurturing, would demonstrate that those processes and values are not limited to biological females either.

Language as a gift economy

One attempt that we can make to institutionalize nurturing is to reveal it in areas of life where it has been canceled and made invisible by the paradigm of exchange. I believe that we need to re-vision language itself as an ideal gift economy. As such it can function as the missing link between mothering, symbolic gift exchanges and commodity exchange. In my book *For-Giving, a Feminist Criticism of Exchange* (1997) I suggest that language can be conceived of as a construction of unilateral gift processes taking its communicative power from the ability gift giving has to create relations. Words could thus be seen as verbal gifts, which substitute for co-municative gifts, which humans give to one another to satisfy communicative needs. Communicative needs are needs for relations and for the means for creating those relations regarding something. Unmotivated phonemes¹⁹ and morphemes are combined to make up word-gifts,

¹⁹ That is sounds which do not have a meaning on their own.

which become common possessions of a community. Word-gifts are made on purpose to create relations, to satisfy communicative needs, not direct material needs. They are put by individuals into contingent so called 'rule governed' combinations, creating momentary present-time common relations among interlocutors regarding the many aspects of the human and natural environment. Even the 'rules of syntax' by which word gifts are combined with each other can be viewed as transposed gift processes.

If it is possible to create a mutually inclusive relation with someone by satisfying her need with a material object, we can also give that gift in order to create that relation.²⁰ However, need satisfying objects are not always available and there are many parts of the world, which we cannot use to satisfy needs directly. Thus we use words, verbal gifts, to satisfy other's communicative needs for a means to create a relation to something. The speaker or giver recognizes the listener's lack of a relation to something in the present and speaks or gives the word, which has become the general social substitute gift for that kind of thing in her culture. By combining constant word-gifts she is able to make a contingent word gift—a sentence or group of sentences, which expresses the specific relevance of the kind of things in the moment. By satisfying the other's need for a means to a relation, the speaker has satisfied her own need for a common relation with the listener in the present. The listener's relation to the means of communication, which the speaker has given to h/er is at the same time the speaker's own shared relation with the listener. S/he has created a mutually inclusive relation with another person regarding a thing or kind of thing by means of combined word-gifts. The listener or receiver has to be able to creatively use what has been given to h/er—or the relation is not established. According to Marx's idea from the *German Ideology*, language is 'practical consciousness that exists for others and therefore really for me as well'.^(1964:21) What the word-gift is for the speaker is determined by what it is for the listener. The use of the gift by the receiver is as important to the transaction as the giving of the gift by the giver. In

²⁰ See below 'Communication and exchange' .

fact if we want to communicate we have to speak in a language the listener understands. If even one word is unknown to h/er we have to define it or give her a different one.

I think that even syntax can be viewed as transposed gift giving. I started out by saying that the unilateral gift process has at least three parts, a giver, a gift or service and a receiver with a need. In old fashioned grammar terms, these would correspond to subject, predicate and object. In more current terms we would say that the relation 'noun phrase + verb phrase' is a gift relation. The plus sign stands for a unity between the two created by a transposed gift relation. In 'The blonde girl hit the ball', we give the word 'blonde' to the word 'girl' because the girl is seen as having that property. She has it because it was 'given' to her on the reality plane and we are able to say it because we are giving one word to the other word on the verbal plane. The word 'the' is an article, which can be given to the word 'girl' because 'girl' is a noun, the kind of word that can receive and use the gift of the article 'the'. The adjective 'blonde' is also the kind of word-gift that can be given to a noun. In fact on the reality plane, only certain kinds of gifts can be given and received by certain people. 'The blonde girl' constitutes the subject of the sentence, the transposed giver. The verb 'hit' is the transposed gift' and 'the ball' the transposed receiver. When the sentence is made passive, the emphasis is on the reception of the gift: 'The ball was hit by the blonde girl'. I can only briefly sketch here what could be an alternative feminist approach to the understanding of language. What I want to suggest however, is the deep information-bearing capacity of the gift relation. In fact I believe it would be possible to translate language analysis back into gift terms.

I think there are two aspects of language corresponding very roughly to Saussure's *langue-parole* distinction. The *langue* side comes from naming and the definition while the *parole* side comes from the use of the words we have gained through naming, definition, and through participating in speech interactions. I think that exchange corresponds to the naming and definition (*langue*) side of this distinction, while unilateral gift giving corresponds to the use of words, sentences, discourses (*parole*). We usually tend to confuse

the two, not realizing that the definition has a structure and implications, which are different from non definitional sentences. Thus we believe that by putting things in categories, seeing what they are like or unlike, what the categories include or exclude, we understand them. By concentrating on categorization we are leaving out the gift motivation and communicative power, which could explain how language is connected to the extra linguistic world, how words are connected to each other and how people communicate. The definition is actually a meta-linguistic gift while language in context functions as a linguistic gift satisfying ongoing and contingent communicative needs.

Communicative needs arise with regard to all parts of our environment and with regard to some parts more often and more constantly than others. Thus we have socially invented some means which arise as constants (but each of which is a variable regarding the others) and we combine them in a contingent and fleeting relation to each other, to which we relate parts of the environment in the moment. Our inter personal relations acquire a specificity regarding each kind of thing as mediated by the constants, which are assembled in ever new combinations according to the relevance to each other of things to which we respond in our ongoing experience. We can also consider the verbal gifts we are giving as having value and we can construct other gift combinations in the present, forming still other relations with the listener in their regard. The listener can in turn contribute her gifts.

In language the lexicon constitutes a basic abundant supply of word gifts (the constants), a competence which members of a community all possess (specialistic and elite languages of course exist but I am trying to describe the basic case). This supply provides people with a situation of common possession of linguistic means of production. Due to the facility with which we speak we are in the position of having a limitless supply of gifts to give. We are also in the position of producing for others what they could potentially rather easily produce for themselves. This abundance and ease contrasts with the scarcity and the difficulty of procuring and giving gifts in the extra linguistic world. Communicative needs may appear much less

stringent and compelling than material needs. Nevertheless verbal communication can have a use value regarding the satisfaction of material needs because humans can use the gifts they receive from it as information upon which to base their behavior. Verbal communication thus has a gift value which creates human relations with regard to things and a use value—which arises from our ability to use these relations as the premise upon which to base further behavior, relations, and interactions. For example if I say ‘The book is on the table’ your communicative needs are satisfied for the moment and I have satisfied your need to know where the book is. I may have saved you an hour of time looking for the book. Whether or not you asked me, I have unilaterally satisfying your need. My sentence has a use value and also a gift value—because I use it to satisfy your communicative need and your extra linguistic need for finding the book, both of which give value to you by implication.

In the definition we are taking words out of context and looking at them as constants. The process in the definition is much like that of exchange in that it is based on the substitution of equivalents. In the definition, the definiens is substituted by the definiendum. The gift of a ‘new’ word, the definiendum, is given to the listener. Similarly in exchange the commodity is substituted by money, which can be used again to take the place of another commodity of similar value. There are important differences of course. Because money mediates the exchange of mutually exclusive private property and it is not infinitely reproducible like words, it is given up as property in exchange for the commodity. Word-gifts can be used again and again and they mediate human relations of mutual inclusion and community rather than the relations of mutual exclusion and the market. They provide an infinite qualitative variety of relations to the world while money only mediates one relation, the exchange of property, in quantitative variety according to its standard.

The infinite variety of qualitatively different relations that humans create with each other through language regarding things has had an important gift value for the human community. The cultural environment which humans have made for themselves has been deeply

altered by the contributions of verbal communication. Straw mats and tables, gardens and factories would not be there if humans had not had language. The natural environment has acquired new gift characteristics which depend in part upon the ability of the collective to respond to the environment with their verbal gifts and their verbally mediated interactions. Even more distant parts of nature become gifts to us because we alter our response in their regard and this alteration requires the use of language. While the moon remains relatively untouched by humans, the kind of gift it is for us has changed over the centuries and cross culturally because we alter our response to it through ritual and through science, through astrology and through astronomy. In all of these endeavors language has contributed a use value in that it has served to create human interpersonal, individual and collective relations to the world and it has had a gift value, implying the value of people and cultures.

Unilateral gift giving is transitive. By satisfying a need we give value to the other, to the need and to its object. In so doing we create ourselves as giving and receiving subjectivities. In speaking to someone about something we also give value to that person, to the part of the environment with regard to which we have satisfied her communicative need and to the means of communication we have used. In this way we also create ourselves as subjects, linguistic givers and receivers of verbal gifts and implications of value. We continue to give and receive verbally even when we are not giving gifts materially. We can create our subjectivities as linguistic givers and receivers even when we are mainly subjects immersed in commodity production and exchange, exploitation, violence and war. Language can be used to dominate and manipulate others just as material gift giving can. However the basic transitive logics of both language and material gift giving function because they create positive *co-muni-tary* human relations and the material and psychological subjectivities of the members of the community.

There are some aspects of language that seem to be reincarnated in gift exchange. For example giving the return gift of the 'same thing' in gift exchange, a practice discussed by Godelier (1996) and many others, could be interpreted as functionally analogous to language

where speakers of the same language possess and are able to combine, give and receive normatively identical words, demonstrating that they belong to the same (linguistic) community. Moreover the practice in gift 'exchange' of reciprocating with something more than the original gift shows that at least that *extra* portion of the return gift is unilateral and free. In fact the exchange of gifts could be seen as material dialogue (with some of the same competitive potential as verbal dialogue when patriarchal values come to the fore).

The process of substitution of one gift for another itself creates a new area of gift giving with new consequences. It has been said that gift exchange is different from language because gifts are not referential. Substitute gifts however, can be referential. They can bring us back (re-fer) to the gifts they have taken the place of. In gift exchange not only are the respective human interactions structured in a similar way, with the second gift transaction reversing the first but the relation between the two gifts is affirmed by their similarity so that the act of giving the return gift refers to the original gift (by repeating it either as a similar gift—a gift of the same thing—or as a similar value). Beyond this reference the addition of 'more' places the return giver in the position of giving unilaterally again. Thus gift exchanges might be seen as occupying a communicative position somewhere *between* unilateral gift giving and language proper. I believe this may have happened because language itself is functioning as a deep metaphor upon which humans base other behaviors, not only regarding structures deriving from the relations in Saussure's *langue*, as Levi Strauss showed, but also regarding a *parole*, which is based on satisfying communicative needs through gift giving and from which *langue*, which is after all an abstraction, derives.

As I have been saying, I believe that living in a society based on the exchange paradigm prevents us from seeing the gift giving that is before us. Exchange value appears to be the most important kind of value, different from other kinds of moral, linguistic, and spiritual values. Indeed, exchange value can be seen as a transformation of (unilateral) gift value canceling and hiding it. In fact it is the single-minded concentration on the need of the giver rather than

the receiver that cancels the transitivity (and the inclusiveness and creativity, which would accompany the transmission of a variety of qualitative values) of the gift transformed by exchange. Exchange value is the value of the need-satisfying product—the ex-gift or would-be gift—for others in the system of alienated mutually exclusive co-muni-cation, which is exchange of private property. After the commodity has passed through the market, its use value has had gift value deleted from it because in fact the gift value was transitive (implying the value of the other). The product, which has been exchanged on the market does not give value to the buyer beyond what she or he originally gave. In fact in a mediated way the seller has given it to her or himself.

There are many other characteristics that separate language as a verbal gift economy from material gift giving. I will not go in to them here. I just want to mention though that I think it is possible that if we were living in material abundance and doing generalized unilateral gift giving, new unexpected results would arise from those relations, social epiphenomena by which our communities would be empowered and our collective artistic and spiritual abilities enhanced. The fact that gifts-in-exchange have been used competitively or in status-conferring ways has more to do with different modes of Patriarchy than with the logic of unilateral gift giving itself. The patriarchal exchange paradigm (and the ‘manhood script’) have blocked the development of the gift paradigm in many different ways and thereby have deeply alienated and altered our human potential, preventing the spiritual, economic and cultural evolution of both women and men.

Marx’s semiotics of the market gives us the clue for a semiotics of the unilateral gift, of language, and of gift exchange. All of these areas have to do with human value-conferring activity, activity ‘for others and therefore for me’ (again according to Marx’s dialectic of linguistic inclusion from the *German Ideology*), the activity of satisfying needs at different levels. If we consider the process of commodity exchange as a descendant of language (in its aspects of definition and naming) and language itself as a descendant of gift giving we can understand different kinds of value as variations upon

a single theme of need satisfying gift activity. In this case we can see that exchange value is the value of abstract labor, labor which is “for others” that is, gift labor, in a situation of private property, which is not “for others.” Only the labor, which is for others, but private property, i.e., a commodity (not a gift), is counted as having value. That is, the mutually exclusive aspect of private property and the accompanying process of exchange cause the abstraction of labor (for others), ‘homogenizing it’ and as the common quality of commodities, which has its exemplar in money, leaving aside gifts as apparently irrelevant. In fact the market thus appears as a gigantic sorting mechanism, sorting gifts *out*. Nevertheless portions of the abstract labor are given free and constitute surplus value, the part of the value of labor not covered by the workers’ salary. These portions are actually free gifts, which are taken by the capitalist and constitute profit. Surplus value can thus be considered a (leveraged) gift from the worker to the capitalist.

Commodity exchange, gift exchange, language and unilateral gift giving continue to co exist, and reciprocally influence each other.²¹ They are difficult to disentangle. By giving attention to unilateral gift giving we can uncover it in many areas where it is called something else or where it is mixed in with exchange. Recognizing the gift aspect of profit reveals that the gift is the motivating element of the whole market system. The exchange economy is sustained by gifts in other ways. The housewife’s free labor, which was once called ‘leisure’, is a gift to the market system. It has been calculated that if housework were monetized 40% would have to be added to the GNP in the US, more in some other countries (Waring 1988). This unilateral gift is transitive, passing through the household and the salaried worker to the profit of the capitalist, and giving value and validation to the system itself.

Free gifts travel upwards in hierarchies bearing with them the implication of value and power of those above over those below, while

²¹ Marx said that the “anatomy of man gives a clue to the anatomy of the ape.” In this case though, if we think of man as exchange and the ape as language, the ape is holding the man in her arms, taking care of him with her sweet mothering ways.

those at the top use some of the gifts they receive to pay for the creation of other hierarchies of constraint such as police or military so that the direction of the flows of gifts upwards can be maintained. Countries of the Global South give and give way to the countries of the North nurturing them with hidden gifts of all kinds. The flow of gifts goes away from those with the needs towards those in the hierarchies in the South and thence towards those in the hierarchies in the North who have invested there for their so called 'just profit'. The flow of gifts goes upwards also from the earth into the hands of the few, away from the needs of the many in the present and in the future who will not be able to sustain themselves and their children with the toxic soil and polluted air we are presently creating.

Those of us who are to any extent the beneficiaries of this transfer of abundance should creatively receive it to try to devise ways to peacefully change the system of exploitation. We can begin by creating a 'translation', which will re validate unilateral gift giving as the basis of communication and community, and stop validating the universalization of the practice, categories and values of Patriarchy and exchange. Communication and economics appear to be completely different things because they are located in different categories. Yet the enigma of the gift and the enigma of the commodity form can both be unraveled by studying economics as co-muni-cation. Language, gender, gift giving and exchange all continue to be *made* enigmatic by the cancellation of unilateral gift giving and the mother.

Looking at the world through women's eyes would mean resolving these enigmas, approaching our lives with the sure knowledge that the kind of unilateral gift logic we learned from our own mothers is not an isolated propensity to nurture, secondary in importance to the values of the manhood script, but the basis of the way we all form ourselves and each other as human. It is exchange, the doubling back of the gift upon the giver that obscures the truth and creates the many problems to be solved. We are living in a pathological system. The solutions that the system proposes only aggravate the problems. We need to base a new cure on a new diagnosis.

I believe the disease is Patriarchal Capitalism. The cure can begin by giving value to unilateral gift giving.

In the following pages I have tried to weave together excerpts from articles and presentations in Semiotics that I have given over the last years. Because the gift economy is a new topic, I have had to present it over and over in many different venues, making my presentations somewhat repetitious. Here I have tried to delete the repetitions and create a continuity among the more interesting parts. I have also added a few excerpts from unpublished manuscripts.

Women and Signs*

Gender and economics

In Western society at this time two social factors alter our view of the world and therefore also of semiosis and of semiotics. One of these is socially constructed gender and the other is our economic system. The idea that these two factors are intimately united and intertwined allows us to view Patriarchal Capitalism as an economic system in which the values of the masculinist agenda are the driving force.

Our constructions of gender and our economic patterns are entwined around an invisible center, which is constituted by unilateral gift giving. My hypothesis is that unilateral gift giving contains a logic that gives rise to many important human processes, but it has been rendered invisible or inferior by the construction of the male identity of boy children in contrast to their nurturing mothers. Then gift giving has been rendered invisible or inferior for a second time by our use of the exchange of commodities for money in the market. In fact we will be looking at the market as a derivative of the construction of masculinity. Both gender and the market influence our perspectives profoundly.²²

* The following is taken from a presentation at the International Association of Semiotic Studies conference on Women and Signs in Imatra, Finland, 1999.

²² Attempts to derive the market from gift giving (MAUSS review) are incomplete because they lack a discussion of the market and gift giving in terms of concept formation/communication and gender construction. That is what we are attempting to supply here.

By recognizing that there are deep distortions of our gaze upon the world we can attempt to find out what we would see if we were we to correct for them. If we can achieve a different vision, not only will we do better semiotics but perhaps we can create a different and more peaceful world. In the United States young boys are shooting their schoolmates in order to achieve a masculine identity, while the leader of the country asserts his manhood through bombing another country (Serbia) into submission in order to stop another leader from asserting his manhood by mass killings.²³ Economic policies of so called “Free” Trade cause a flow of wealth from poor countries to rich countries, further impoverishing poor people while concentrating stratospheric wealth in the hands of the very few. The environment is degrading rapidly due to toxic waste of all kinds produced by a system based on the maximization of profit. In these conditions of crisis, it is supremely important to attempt to find the causes of the problems. No discipline is exempt. Such grave social maladies must necessarily show up everywhere and we can address them everywhere. I believe that the alterations of our perspective, which occur because of our constructions of gender and the market actually hide a way out of our philosophical, political and personal difficulties, a way which is an open door that we neither see nor believe in.

it is gift giving, not exchange which is comparable to and actually the basis of communication. Exchange is a distortion of this more basic economic mode. Both gift giving and exchange may be considered *material communication* and for that reason we need to study them within the perspective of semiotics. Moreover, comparing these two modes of material communication to verbal (and other non verbal) sign communication gives us a new united view of three kinds of communication, gift giving, exchange, and language, which have usually been seen as separate and independent. Then we must add the construction of the male gender to these areas of communication as a distorting factor, which has been as powerful and as forgotten as a meteor slamming into a planet, influencing individual

²³We can recognize here the exemplar-to-many constructions we found above.

males, the cultures in which they live, and the women who have had to adapt to them.

The Paradigms

As a result of the construction of gender, there are two paradigms with which we interpret the world, one based on unilateral gift giving and the other based on exchange. The gift paradigm is usually invisible and devalued while the exchange paradigm is visible and overvalued. Gift giving, which is transitive, and bestows value on the receiver by implication, is need directed and it creates a syllogism: if a gives to b and b gives to c then a gives to c. By identifying a good or product as satisfying a need, the gift process places the focus on something as directed towards others, and so involves the subject of the action in other-orientation. Thus it also brings in information about others and the world. Its completion is in the use of the gift by others, so it confirms one's own usefulness through the satisfaction of another's need. Gift giving is cooperative rather than competitive. It transmits value to the other by implication, since it is probable that the giver would not satisfy the receiver's need if s/he were not important to h/er in some way. This very transfer of value has the paradoxical consequence of hiding the value of the giver. The attention is focused on the receiver, not on the giver or the giving of the gift. In fact if the giver insists on recognition the transaction may paradoxically appear to be, or actually transform into, an exchange.

Exchange, which may be described as giving in order to receive an equivalent, requires the quantification and measurement of the products that are given and received. Commodity exchange requires an assessment in money, which is determined by the wider context of production for the market in that society. Exchange is ego-oriented, because the motivation of the transaction is the need of the giver, not primarily the need of the receiver. It is adversarial because each party is trying to get the most and give the least. Exchange does not establish human relations beyond mutual equality as exchangers. It promotes indifference to one another's needs be-

yond those, which may be pertinent to the exchange. The equation of value between products or between products and money creates a moment of assessment and mirroring which repeats itself endlessly in countless daily interactions in the society.

Exchange serves as a metaphor or deep magnetic template for many other areas of life and it hides gift relations by mis-explaining them in its own terms. From self-reflecting consciousness to 'military exchanges' the relations of exchange broadcast their patterns throughout society. Exchanges of glances, of ideas, of information, of verbal and nonverbal messages, seem to provide the explanatory key for understanding society. Often, I believe, we interpret gifts as exchange.

Gift giving may seem uninformative with respect to exchange, or unconscious or only semi-conscious because it is not explicitly self reflecting. It may also seem to be just an incomplete exchange.

The problematic place of mothering in many cultures and especially in our own, has to do with the conflictual relation between the gift paradigm and the exchange paradigm. Because mothering is usually identified with women, misogyny can also be seen as an element of the paradigm conflict and as an attack upon gift giving. For example, women are paid less than men for similar work in order to keep them in a *disempowered* gift giving position.

Patriarchal religions and moral codes discredit gift giving by overemphasizing it, sentimentalizing it, making it saintly (and thus beyond the capacity of ordinary people) or imposing it by law. Economists (and co dependence therapists) discredit gift giving by considering it irrelevant or pathological. Instead I believe it is an organizing principle of many aspects of our lives, aspects that we usually take "for granted" or interpret in other, more neutral, 'intransitive' ways.

Our blindness to gift giving makes us keep drawing distinctions in the wrong places. The dividing line should be drawn between the unilateral gift and exchange, not just between barter and exchange for money or barter and so called 'symbolic gift exchanges'. When we talk about gift *exchange*, unilateral gift giving and its connection with mothering become invisible. Instead unilateral gift giving has its own logic and creative process. One proviso: turn taking is different from

exchange because the return gift is not the motive of the original gift initiative. Those who have received from others can give in turn to others or to the original giver without interposing the logic of exchange or obligatory reciprocity. Gift circulations can be created within groups where the gift is passed on or 'given forward' unilaterally without requiring a counterpart. Such gift giving creates social cohesion (Hyde 1979:3-109). Unfortunately most authors who have written about gift giving from Marcel Mauss to the equipe of the journal MAUSS continue to emphasize the obligation of reciprocity as the relation-creating factor of the gift. Thus they remain within the exchange paradigm. Instead the simpler movement, satisfying another's need in an other-oriented way without requiring reciprocity from the receiver, already creates a relation between giver and receiver, and this is at the same time a common or shared relation to the thing given as a gift. Moreover if we understand that the relation varies qualitatively with the kinds of gifts given, we can see that there will be as many kinds of relations as there are kinds of gifts. Giving, receiving and using similar gifts, creates similar relations among people regarding each other and the environment. Unilateral gift giving has more in common with the transmission of messages than does exchange. Messages do not depend on reciprocity to be received and understood, though a reply is often welcome.

From this viewpoint, words can be seen as broad scale and long-term substitute gifts, which are put together in short term, contingent gift sentences, creating shared human relations to the material or cultural gifts they take the place of. One specific area of language, comprised of naming and the "equational statement" (Jakobson 1990) or definition, provides the mechanism by which the word-gifts are given by definers—persons performing that service—to learners. This process is different from the process involved in the *use* of words as gifts in ongoing communication. The definition provides layers of substitution by which a new word-gift is transmitted. It is this aspect of language that is transformed into exchange while gift giving remains both at the material and at the linguistic level as the active principle of communication, understood as the creation of communitary subjects and the transmission of values,

messages and information. Exchange, which is a constrained double gift, is thus distorted communication. It creates distorted communitary subjects and transmits only material exchange value. Exchange does not transitively transmit value, messages and information to people. That is not to say that we cannot buy and sell messages and information, but that if they are bought and sold, they are not transmitted basically as gifts, as they are in linguistic and other sign communication. In fact, the level of linguistic gift giving, communication is very much more basic than exchange.²⁴ We can sell a book (or a few sentences) at one level, which at a more basic level continues to convey information by using the logic of the gift.²⁵

It is my hypothesis that language is a transposition of unilateral gift giving onto the verbal plane, while exchange, especially the exchange of commodities for money is a derivative, a kind of second incarnation, of the definition and naming. The logical progression is: first, material nurturing and gift giving, then verbal gift giving, then the transposition of the part of language that is the definition process, back onto the material plane in the evaluation and exchange of commodities for money. The unilateral gift process is a common thread, which underlies the different, more complex processes woven from it. Even the doubling-back of the gift in exchange derives its relation-making-and-breaking capacity from the gift and the variations it imposes upon gift giving. The simpler process can be used to explain

²⁴ I believe the main way we create human relations is through gift giving and receiving. This basic level can be elaborated upon in many ways. There are many variations, which specify human relations, while maintaining the continuity with mothering. Thus for example though traditions of reciprocity in indigenous cultures may look like exchange to European eyes, it is the basic relation-creating capacity of gift giving and the duty of emulation of the mother-gift-giver that creates the bonds. Language continues to weave and be woven by its mediation of human relations at the same time, and we may wonder whether the human groups who have not renounced the model of the mother may not be emulating linguistic processes as well.

²⁵ Advertising, which is financed by the purchase of the very products it promotes, and thus by its success in manipulating the buyers, also functions on the basic need satisfying free gift character of the words and other signs it uses.

the more complex one (and vice versa), if we can detach ourselves from the altered perspective and values of the more complex one and look through it or around it to see the unilateral gift thread.

Let us look not only at what happens in gift giving in mothering but also in unilateral giving among adults. The process is similar though adults have many more levels of needs than children: complex psychological, social, political, economic, spiritual, artistic needs etc. Adults' needs are often linguistically mediated while young children's—at least from their point of view—are not. The adult giver has to recognize the need of the other and devise or procure something that will satisfy the need, giving something to the other in a way in which she can receive it. The receiver is not passive but must creatively use what has been given to her. For the giver the other exists as someone who can receive and be benefited by the gift or service she has given. She knows the other person is really 'out there' because she has satisfied her need appropriately. For the receiver, someone outside her self has satisfied her need with something appropriate to it. In a successful gift transaction a bond is established of mutual inclusion regarding the gift, the self and the other.²⁶ The giver transfers value to the receiver by implication.

The receiver's needs are educated by their satisfaction and they diversify accordingly. A child who has been nurtured with milk begins to need solid food. When s/he gets older and begins to walk s/he needs both independence and protection, and the mother has to satisfy those needs as well. Sometimes, as in the need for developing independence, the child needs for the mother not to intervene. The mother's gift is then to refrain from giving.

²⁶ It is interesting that Chomsky's *Cartesian Linguistics* begins with the question of whether other people exist. The question is resolved by Chomsky through the idea of linguistic creativity. Such creativity is an abstraction from the need-satisfying activity of gift giving. The listener's (receiver's) needs are not considered, rather the speakers' need for self-expression is the salient factor. This ego orientation fits with the logic of exchange. It is not the ability to produce a lot that is the proof of the existence of others but the use of that production to satisfy their needs and vice versa, of their production to satisfy our own. In many ways we are 'made' by receiving the gifts of others, which proves they exist, and by giving gifts to them, a second proof.

Among adults as well there are many times when it is more important to be independent than to receive a gift, and the would-be giver can give the greater gift by not giving, respecting—and thus satisfying—the other’s need for independence. Givers also acquire a specificity as givers of particular kinds of gifts. A giver’s interactions with others make h/er who s/he is. It is not that women are better at relationships than men as the truism goes, but that because they are so often required to do the social practice of gift giving, they have more concrete experience of using its logic, which does indeed create relations.

The logic of gift giving is other oriented, inclusive and transitive. It creates bonds with the other directly—not by imposing a debt or pay back, but by satisfying needs. Each person is at least momentarily oriented towards the other and towards the need-satisfying good. Each can potentially recognize the other-directed existence of the other for the moment. The relation between the two (or more) is mutually inclusive and results in a common construction of the world as shared. This shared relation contrasts with the mutually exclusive relation of private property, which is mediated by exchange for money.

We can distinguish three kinds of value: Exchange value is value by definition—it locates the product on the market with respect to all the other products it is not, according to its assessment in money with respect to the assessment of all other products. Gift value is the value of the other implied by giving to satisfy her or his need. Use value is the utility value of the product with the exchange value removed, after the gift value has already been removed by exchange. The motivation of self-interest of the exchangers cancels the value that would have been given to the other by implication, because in exchange the implication is that the needs of the ‘giver’ are more important than those of the ‘receiver’. After the exchange is complete, the product, which is no longer seen as an exchange value because it is no longer on the market, is seen as a use value and may be put in new gift processes, but the continuity with the source of its production is broken. Recently ‘First World’ social change activists have begun to publicize sweat-shop conditions in ‘Third World’ countries, allowing ‘First World’ consumers to see the source of some

of the goods they buy. NIKE tennis shoes are a good example, but there are many others. The gifts of activism have revealed many of the leveraged unilateral gifts that are being given by poor workers to rich corporations.

Withholding recognition from the original source of the good derives somewhat automatically from the logic of exchange, and a similar thing has happened with mothering. Value is denied to gift giving and to mothering in order to focus value on the market and the values of masculinity. It is a gift of feminist activism to focus attention on gift giving and the mother while it is a ploy of patriarchy and exchange to deny the source—in favor of the so called ‘freedoms’ of exchange. Gift giving is a practice that is performed according to a fundamental logic, which is the logic of communication. It is not a pre existing essential behavior though its practice produces value and values, which are in opposition to the value(s) that are produced by and necessary for exchange. (For more on this issue, see the chapter on essentialism here below).

Market exchange itself pushes gift giving out of the focus, making it seem irrelevant, though gift giving is sometimes re introduced as an adjunct to exchange as in sales and gimmicks. Even the unrecognized free labor of shopping is a gift to the market system. The paradigm and practice of exchange become parasitic upon the paradigm and practice of the gift. The powerful force the weak to give to them, then blame their victims for their weakness.

The many exploitative variations on the theme of gift giving have discredited it in practice. Yet gift giving actually threatens the paradigm of exchange by making it unnecessary. There would be no need to exchange if needs were being satisfied in other ways in an economy of abundance. Exchange, and the market economy built upon it, require scarcity while gift giving requires abundance if it is not to become self-sacrificial. If abundance accrues, exchange is no longer necessary for the satisfaction of needs. When the supply is too great, prices go down and products are destroyed in order to keep them from being given away. Excess is a problem for a society based on the exchange paradigm—not for a society based on the gift paradigm. Abundance makes a society based on the gift paradigm not only

possible but delightful, not for the few but for everyone. Arms production and other kinds of waste and luxury spending allow the exchange paradigm and the hierarchies built upon it, to achieve two goals: to funnel wealth to the few and to create a context of scarcity in which the gift paradigm is almost impossible to put into practice.

A narrow foregrounding focus occurs with exchange and consequently many of us do not recognize what is happening in the bigger picture. The gifts that are given by the South to the North or by the poor to the rich are seen as a 'deserved' return on investment. The free gift labor that is done in the home by women is still read as women's non economic 'duty'. The 60% of agricultural work that is done by women world-wide is invisible, at least to Euro-Americans, because so much of it is unmonetized.

These factors and many others have impaired our view of gift giving in practical life but they have also kept us from looking at it as a basis of language and of other sign systems. The neutrality proposed by the relation of equal exchange hides the privileged position and exploitative function of exchange and discredits the gift giving that is actually going on. From the cashier's smile to the worker's extra hours, from the housewife's ironed shirt to third world farmers' diminished access to land, innumerable gifts are continually being given to the system, which is based on exchange. The market seems to be the answer to our problems not their cause. Our narrow focus keeps us looking at it with admiration, considering it an abstract construction of equal relations and the source of all our good(s). We look at language and other sign systems as ruled by similarly abstract principles²⁷ to which gift processes are irrelevant. By restoring gift giving to language we can restore language to mothering and mothering to our idea of the human norm. In fact if language is based on gift giving, even those people who have renounced the nurturing maternal identity are still practicing nurturing at the linguistic level.

²⁷ The body is included here not as a giver and receiver of gifts but as the hard wiring of the brain which is the substratum of the abstract principles. The 'rules' of syntax are more abstract than linguistic gift relations while the 'underlying' brain functions are more concrete than material gift giving.

The physiological difference of males from females has been interpreted by most societies in a binary way, aided by the linguistic opposition between 'male' and 'female', to imply that males must have an identity different from their mothers, a non nurturing identity. If in contrast to this social (mis)construction, we can restore unilateral gift giving to our interpretation of a variety of human activities, we can consider all humans as nurturing beings. Unfortunately nurturing or gift giving has been deleted from the construction of the male identity and from our interpretation of the world as well, with the consequence that we interpret the world as being constructed according to a male norm.

Similarly the discipline of neo classical economics has excluded nurturing from its purview: The satisfaction of needs is considered pertinent only if it is understood as driven by 'effective demand'. Yet satisfying all needs is a necessary activity for a society to continue as such and large amounts of free labor continue to be performed everywhere, housework being an important example. Such free labor is economic in the wide sense, and it is this wide sense that could be the basis for a woman-led alternative economic mode of distribution (and production for that distribution), which could provide for the needs of all.

The gift paradigm, which values cooperation, mortally threatens the exchange paradigm by making it unnecessary. Consequently, the exchange paradigm competes with the gift paradigm... and wins. One of the ways it wins is by hiding the gift giving that is actually happening, while it is actually taking from it, another is by relegating gift giving to an inferior status and making monetized exchange 'superior'. Psychologically, this ploy makes gift givers feel like failures and exchangers feel like successes. The definition of gift giving as 'non economic' skews the discourse of economics towards the viewpoint of 'economic man' and justifies the values of self-interest and economic domination as the functional motivation of a 'free' market society.

In a way which is similar to the construction of the male identity in opposition to the nurturing mother, what *homo economicus* calls 'economic' is constructed in opposition to what he calls non-economic, to gift giving. Actually 'economics' originally meant 'care of the home'

but that care has become marked as opposed to the market, which is unmarked. (The word ‘market’ gives us instructions about what to do: we should make market exchange much less important than gift giving—i.e., we should ‘mark it’.)²⁸

Considering gift giving as a mode of distribution which is already being practiced in the home and could be extended to the rest of society, allows us to look at it as an economic structure-in-formation, which would have its corresponding superstructure-in-formation in women’s caring values. Thus what we see as the female gender and ‘women’s values’ do not depend upon some feminine ‘essence’ but are the result of a necessary economic practice of care. The mistaken social interpretation of physiological sexual differences has caused males to be socialized away from that economic way and the market has been created through various transmutations which are made in the image of the process of the artificial construction of (the male and consequently also of the female) gender

That process at this time expresses itself as globalizing Patriarchal Capitalism. The exchange mode of distribution is embedded in the giftgiving mode and vice versa, but even more harmfully, the exchange mode of distribution and production is asymmetrically parasitic upon the gift mode, which gives to it.

The “manhood script” again

The imposition of the mistaken social interpretation of physiological sexual differences makes the male identity oppositional and artificial almost from the beginning. In fact boys are removed from the category of their mothers by the gender term ‘male’ in opposition to ‘female’, though until they understand language and categorization they have usually been intimately identified with the mother because she is the person who is nurturing them. The father or other significant male is proposed as the new model or exemplar upon which they should base their gender identity.

²⁸ See the discussion of marked and unmarked terms in *For-Giving* and in Jakobson(1990).

Thus boys have to switch exemplars for their identities, from mother to father, at a time when they are still dependant on the mother's care. Then *being* the exemplar not only of 'male' but also of 'human' becomes the goal of the male identity while the female identity seems to be that of those who cannot compete to become the human exemplar.

The construction of a female identity is less artificial in the beginning because the model of nurturing is immediately at hand in the person of the mother. However, later, women find they are almost not members of the category 'human' because they are not male. The (male) human norm appears to be non-nurturing and females differ from that because they are socialized to nurture. They seem to be a secondary kind of human being. Replacing the female norm by the male, has the effect of unmarking what was before a marked category. This unmarking of a marked (male) category has also had the effect of hiding and discrediting nurturing as *a* human or, as we have been saying, perhaps *the* human process. Similarly, as we just saw, the economic market is unmarked while gift giving appears marked as non economic.

Males are placed in a superior category because of their physiological difference from their mothers, thus any desire they have to return to that category (or to the state of their understanding before they recognize that they are required to be different from their mothers) is stymied by the seeming requirement of losing the physiological difference: that is, fear of castration. At the same time they desire to return to the gift giving way so...they desire what they fear and fear what they desire. The opposition to the nurturing or unilateral gift giving mode is thus not just philosophical, sociological and economic but it is psychologically invested and distressed. Of course, if gender is indeed constructed through socialization, physiological changes such as castration would not create a return to the nurturing category anyway. The solution to the problem lies not in castration (as it may appear to children, and deeply buried in the unconscious, to adults) but in socialization. If we socialize both males and females towards gift giving, by emulating the model of the mother, we can create a society of *homo donans* . Of course we must

also change the many social institutions that are based upon the process of becoming male, which I call ‘mascultation’.

As mentioned above, David Gilmore (1990) describes the male identity, as created according to a ‘manhood script’ and thus as being a performance in a way that being a woman is not. The girl child is typically encouraged to continue nurturing like her mother while the boy is encouraged to perform according to a ‘script’. Other recent books, *Real Boys* by William Pollack and *Boys will be Boys* by Miriam Miedzian show the difficulties of adolescent boys trying to adapt and to perform according to a gender identity script constructed around values of ‘manhood’. These values: independence, competitiveness, aggression, risk taking, and rationality, are very similar to the values of capitalism and while they undoubtedly have some positive aspects and many men (and women) and some institutions succeed in tempering them with kindness or do not embrace them, they often degenerate into isolation, fighting, aggression, carelessness, egotism and authoritarianism.²⁹

The ‘manhood script’ together with the exchange economy cancel and neutralize gifts, by (mis) interpreting behavior as merely based on stimulus and response, cause and effect, transmission of energy and of information etc. or even just egotistical motivations which do not transfer value or cause human bonds of mutual inclusion. This neutrality however can degenerate into violence. ‘Hitting’ takes the place of giving as one person tries to ‘make an impression’ on another, or control the other by force. This transposed ‘gift’ might also be considered as a form of material communication, creating a hierarchical community.

Needs, expressed and unexpressed

We have created a manipulative society in which every action anticipates and is contingent upon the reaction towards us that it

²⁹ Considering these capitalist values is interesting in that boys have a hard time adapting to them. That is Patriarchal Capitalism is harmful not only to girls but to boys as well, even privileged white boys.

will cause, rather than a society in which we can simply receive from others and the universe and give to them as well in a communitary circulation of gifts. Exchange has taken the place of turn taking. (It has taken a turn and has never given it up). The best we can do seems to be to take responsibility for some of the negative consequences of these manipulations. Yet the main reason why gift giving seems dysfunctional is that the context around it has been made so hostile to it. Scarcity has been created where abundance should be. The exchange paradigm with its competitive and hierarchical manhood values, has won the competition and is the model upon which the context is interpreted (and based), while gift giving in its non competitive and nurturing way, has given way and seems to have lost the competition. Exchange does not take responsibility for the scarcity it creates or for its battle with gift giving but rather conceals these issues, considering the scarcity 'natural' and gift giving 'instinctual' while making survival of the fittest the principle of evolution and of economics.

In patriarchy not only do we diminish the givers of gifts, but we also diminish the receivers, believing that receiving is passive and inferior. (Similarly women have been considered passive receivers for centuries though they have been active both as givers and receivers.) We all need to revive the attitudes we had as mothered children and turn our creative receptivity towards the world to which we are (or were) perfectly adapted, to understand it in terms of gift giving—and receiving.

No matter how many messages we may be giving and receiving in the sea of infinite semiosis there is a level of perception and interpretation of the world at which *things* are given and received—a level having to do with intentionally nurturing one another, with material communication. At this level we must be able to distinguish between signs and things. We must plant and harvest, cook food and feed children, supplying them and adults with the material goods without which their bodies and therefore also their minds would not exist. We must be able to distinguish between communicative needs and material needs, between word gifts and material gifts, for survival purposes. This ability gives us an evolutionary advantage. The

alternative is simply non adaptive. Value is transmitted first at this level of life—the gift value of things for people who are giving and receiving, nurturing each other with them.

I believe it must be at this level that, as cultures of mothered children, we learn the gift patterns that are transferred into language. However, because in Patriarchy and Capitalism, boys are required to give up their nurturing identities, and the economic mode in which everyone lives is based on exchange, these gift patterns have been interpreted as cause and effect, and as far as language is concerned they are regarded as a genetic ‘inheritance’ (a gift word) or as *sui generis* abstract patterns of signs, usually originating directly in the brain.

Needs have been looked at narrowly and unkindly because they are part of the gift transaction and because of the imposition of the market category of ‘effective demand’ as we said above. Similarly communicative needs that are unexpressed seem not to exist because explicit questions draw to themselves all of the attention regarding need-satisfaction. Instead I believe communication actually functions by guessing and satisfying the *unexpressed* communicative needs of the other. That is, when we speak, we satisfy the need of the other for a relation to something, which we have recognized, but which we guess that s/he for the moment has not. We do this by giving h/er the words, which we think she knows and which are the social gift means for creating such relations, which s/he could also use if s/he were the speaker. Questions actually put the listener in relation to what the speaker says s/he doesn’t know. Answers to questions are formed by satisfying both the expressed and unexpressed communicative needs of the questioner. To the question “Where is my hat?” the answerer can respond “Your hat is in the closet in the other room,” putting the questioner in relation to the closet, satisfying h/er communicative need in that regard with the word ‘closet’, and guessing that s/he needs to know which closet is the one in question. An extended and revisited idea of needs is a corollary of the gift paradigm. It could hardly be otherwise, if gifts are seen as the satisfaction of needs at all levels and not simply an impulse of the giver, which does not even require a receiver.

Economic needs have usually been seen as individualistic, the needs of *homo economicus*, whose internal marginal priority list is manipulated by advertising and the media to the advantage of the corporations. Instead needs should be honored as necessary for the well being of humans in their development and for the completion of the gift transaction. Needs are educated by their satisfaction and each of us arrives at the specificity of h/er experience as the result of all the ways h/er needs have been satisfied, together with the ways s/he has satisfied the needs of others. It is the manhood script that denies the emotions that are necessary for identifying and responding to needs, and therefore denies the needs themselves along with the process of giving to satisfy them. Moreover the (artificially constructed) need for status comes from a society in which male dominance is replayed in many different areas. By owning a superior consumer object, for example, a person succeeds in being put into a superior category, that is, he or she is made 'male' again and again—and then seems to deserve even more nurturing by others. The greed that motivates our society is largely based on this kind of constructed desire which is all the stronger because the relations which would have been constructed through gift giving are absent or distorted. The values of the manhood script have been projected into Capitalism, and the powerful can now vie for supremacy, not only physically, psychologically and politically but also economically. Women can embrace these transposed manhood values as well as men since they are no longer specifically identified with biological gender. Meanwhile the condition of desperate need for life-sustaining goods in which billions of people now find themselves is a direct result of an economy based on the (patriarchal) hegemony of the exchange paradigm.

The values of dominance are dominant. The paradigm of exchange exchanges itself for all the others and thus achieves its hegemony carrying to the top a few of the individuals who embrace it. Those individuals are thus rewarded for their beliefs and expertise in practicing the ego-oriented logic while the many who have to practice the other oriented gift logic whether they want to or not, are penalized. The individuals who succeed in Capitalism then become the exemplars of the human, especially for those who embrace the

exchange paradigm and hope to succeed in the market but often also for the gift givers who appear to be 'failed' exchangers, even in their own estimation. The paradigm of exchange also infiltrates gift giving in businesses of charity and aid, which have huge overheads and little output, thus further discrediting gift giving and masking its everyday creative character.

Co-muni-cation

I call adults' nurturing behavior 'gift giving' in order to connect it with gift economies of indigenous peoples (where mother-centered societies were/are common) as well as with the celebratory gift giving that is still done individually probably everywhere.³⁰ The unilateral gift giving, which adults do for children actually forms the bodies and life experience of the children and to some extent also of the adults who are doing the nurturing. The word 'co-muni-cation' is a clue that language gives us, telling us that giving gifts together is what forms the bodies and minds of the co-muni-ty. Displacing the area of communication beyond signs allows a view of signs that avoids some philosophical problems, which can be attributed to the construction of the male gender and the ideology of exchange. In fact, as we have been saying, human signs and sign-interpretation are not primary and *sui generis* but are infused with the logic of gift giving and receiving. Reconnecting with the gift-giving-and-receiving way has advantages both on a theoretical and on a practical plane.

A description of signs as gifts of gifts allows us to locate them in (allocate them to, give them to) the same context as their referents (the same background with regard to which their referents have been foregrounded), since gift giving is something that maintains its logical form on a variety of levels. Whether something is a sign depends upon the ability of the receiver to receive it and its referent as gifts. Thus the odor of the flower is a sign of nectar to the bee, the gift of a

³⁰ There are other examples of gift giving, for example internet open source soft ware production is often seen as a gift economy. The exchange of 'recognition' for software gifts is an extension of the patriarchal exchange economy ideology over this new area of giving however.

gift, but it is not a sign of nectar to the human who cannot eat or receive the nectar. (Though we can watch the bee doing it, and receive the gift of its receiving). Spots are a sign of measles, which are not themselves a gift—but seeing them gives us the gift of warning us to stay away, if we can receive it, i.e., interpret it as such. Among humans, signs are usually used to create, alter, or maintain communitary relations of some kind. Thus they have a gift character regarding human relations even when their referents are not given or are not seen as positive.

The bonds that are created by gift giving and receiving become particularly important for us, because they aid us in forming our subjectivities as human individuals and as members of groups. Consequently a need arises for establishing those relations, which can be called a communicative need. We use verbal and non verbal signs to satisfy one another's communicative needs. We also use material gifts to establish those bonds in non sign communicatio.³¹ Unfortunately the scarcity of material goods, which is being created in order to maintain exchange as the dominant economic mode, alters the area of non-sign co-muni-cation making it difficult to recognize and understand as such. This is not the case for the gifts of language. Verbal and nonverbal signs are almost infinitely produceable and therefore almost infinitely abundant. If we can say that words and syntax are the means of production of sentences, (Rossi-Landi:1969) language can be seen as an ideal gift economy where the means of production are shared, and we satisfy one another's communicative needs, in abundance. There are of course specialis-tic languages, advertising, copyrights, and many other ways of using language according to the logic of the exchange economy. At an abstract level, however, gift giving continues to provide the logical structure, which creates mutually inclusive relations. In fact whenever mutual inclusion is evident and we need to explain it we can look for the presence of the gift logic.

³¹ Its importance derives from its materiality even if in order to interpret this kind of communication we have to be able to paradoxically recognize the sign of the non sign.

Language functions as a sort of ideal gift economy. The effect of this is that each of us can give to the others what they could potentially also make for themselves or for others. The speaker/giver recognizes before the hearer/receiver does that the hearer has a need for the means to a relation regarding something in the world. The speaker satisfies the need for a means to that relation by giving her a word-product regarding it. The hearer is thus related to that word-gift, and the speaker is related to it as well because indeed, she has just given it to her. Since the word-gift is the common substitute gift for a kind of thing in a culture, the word-gift brings forward this common relation. That is, there is a common relation between the interlocutors, which is specified by the relation of the word gift to a kind of thing as a gift for many other speakers and listeners in a society. In fact that word has been given to us by others, constructing a relation to them, implying our own value as recipients of the cultural legacy of words and things while as we give our word-gifts to others, we imply their value as well. The thread of unilateral gift giving is woven into a linguistic tapestry of infinite variations because verbal gifts can be given and combined in many ways, giving a great variety of tones, tempos, and intensities to the human relations mediated by them.

There are many reasons why material gifts are not given in communication much or most of the time. They may be too large or too small, too faraway or too complex. The only thing that we know about all of them is that they are valuable to human beings in some way, and that communicative needs arise regarding them. There are also many cultural elements that arise as gifts, from unicorns to justice, which cannot be physically handed over but can be substituted by word-gifts. Communicative needs can arise with regard to them and we can communicate about them. (We have common access to their cultural value—though not to their use value). In market exchange material gifts are not (usually) given, because indeed they are private property. A communicative need arises regarding them as private property. (We have to include each other regarding them if we are to exchange them to our mutual satisfaction). That material communicative need is satisfied by a specified quantity of money—also a substitute gift, now functioning within

the realm of the doubled or contradicted gift, which is exchange.

Access to another's material good is obtainable only through the substitution of the equivalent amount of money for it, because it is the giving or transfer of money that alters the relation of ownership of the two persons involved. ((This process maintains the common relation of mutual exclusion by allowing the mutual exclusion and substitution of the money and the commodity together with a relation of mutual inclusion regarding their quantitative value) The money actually physically takes the place of the commodity. Similarly the word (or sign) gives *common* access to something it substitutes, by altering the human relations regarding it from mutual disengagement and indifference to specific relations of attention and mutual inclusion (which also vary qualitatively according to the type of gifts involved). The word is the substitute gift on the plane of verbal communication, while what is substituted may be present or not, existent or not. One of the many reasons why a particular extra linguistic gift is not being used at some particular moment to create material non sign communication may just be that we are talking or writing about it. That is, talking (or writing) about things has created its own realm of verbal mediation of human relations, which carries on independently of the presence or absence or even the existence of the gifts on the extra linguistic plane that are being talked about.

By satisfying the needs of others and receiving the satisfaction of our own needs both verbally and materially, we develop our own and each others' subjectivities creatively in a wide variety of ways. On the other hand, subjectivities based on the market lack the variety and interconnectedness that is made possible through gift giving. Placing the market between us cancels our other-orientation and the transitivity or implication of value that we would otherwise give to each other. In our quantitatively 'equal' exchange, each of us gives value through the other to her or himself. Categorization of goods according to a monetary exemplar (leaving out gift giving) pervades our lives and establishes a pattern that is repeated in the over-emphasis on categorization and on exemplars in other areas. Moreover assessing the value of abstract labor in terms of a money-

exemplar imposes a process by which the value of other aspects of human beings is wrongly assessed.

The relation of the material or cultural gift and the word-gift to others-in-general can be seen in another area by looking at the way we give a price or an exchange value to commodities in relation to all the other commodities on the market, and most specifically in relation to products of the same kind, in a particular branch of production. The totality of each branch of production and of all production for the market is related to all the others-in-general, who constitute effective demand in that they have a quantity of money they can spend to buy commodities with which to satisfy their needs. The quantity of money embodying the specific price is used as the exchange value of the commodity in any particular exchange. Prices are like a quantitative *langue* allowing the determination of the value of one commodity with regard to all the commodities on the market. (Alternatively words are qualitative 'prices', which, with the aid of syntax, allow the determination of any cultural item in the society with regard to all the others.) The idea that numbers are mutually exclusive is not as obvious as the idea that qualitatively different words are mutually exclusive, however, numbers are, or are expressed by, qualitatively different (mutually exclusive) words in a quantitative sequence. Perhaps we could say they express the gift of the human capacity to quantify (which is anyway necessary in the identification of one and many, singular and plural.)

The verbal commons

We have been taking the market as a point of comparison for language, considering it as alienated non-sign communication where money functions as an incarnated word-gift-exemplar, bridging the relation of mutual exclusion of the owners of private property. The shadows cast by the market put into relief some aspects of linguistic communication we may not have seen so clearly before. Among these are the relations of mutual inclusion which language creates among us regarding the immense variety of gifts of perception, of emotions, of sensations, of objects and ideas, all the internal and

external, natural and cultural items that make up our environment. Shedding light on these relations can be used in turn to illuminate aspects of the market, which have not been altogether visible.

Human relations of inclusion are formed not just in regard to words and sentences but in regard to extra linguistic shared 'reality': the perceptual and material gifts, which are held in common as such. In this regard a gift-based theory of language can enhance our understanding of the world as 'commons', by showing how it is not only collectively used but collectively created as shared reality. Our perceptions and experience can always be mediated through language, so our reality has a common gift character for us in so far as we can speak about it (form inclusive human relations regarding it), even when we do not share any actual property.

Words function as substitute gifts for forming human relations-in-common to the world. These relations construct and imply a world as a shared ground or 'territory', from which goods flow to satisfy our material and perceptual needs.³² These linguistically mediated, human relations are thus the opposite of the relations of private property mediated by money. Exchangers use money to alter their relations to their products and to each other much as speakers use words to alter their relations to their physical and social environment and to each other. However, money mediates among the owners of mutually exclusive private property, providing inclusiveness regarding only the one area of abstract value, while words mediate among communicators altering their relations to all the aspects of the world, moving them away from mutual indifference and towards mutual inclusion and a shared focus. Language provides us with the world as a perceptual and relational commons at one level and is itself a commons at another level in that the means of production of linguistic gifts are shared. Indeed both language, and the world as mediated by it, provide need-satisfying abundance in a way that is similar to that of the creative and abundant mother. These maternal aspects are rendered invisible to our thinking by the logic of the exchange paradigm and because private property and the market

³² As sensory deprivation experiments show, we do actually need to perceive.

negate and commodify the commons at the level of material reality. At the level of language, words and sentences in the form of product names, trademarks and advertising slogans are enclosed as corporate property by means of copyrights and patents and used for exchange and manipulation. Lies are ego-oriented like exchange, while the truth is useful to the other like a gift. Lies and propaganda are important tools of Patriarchal Capitalism and its governments. They help to feed those who propagate them.

On the other hand, even the topics that we construct, upon which we draw, and to which we contribute as we converse, are momentary commons. Our fleeting as well as our repeated and constant common topics form a common ground for the creation of our subjectivities. What we say, what we give verbally, regarding this ground identifies us as the kinds of givers we are, that is, who we are, to others who receive from us and give again. We could consider our physical topoi, common grounds, homes and homelands, in a similar light. Their seizure and enclosure have deprived the community of its ability to access material gifts, and thus to communicate materially using them however. The connection between common topics and common topoi, linguistic gift constructions and shared reality has therefore been lost.

The relation between the earth and humans is like a relation in common with a great giftgiving mother, a gift source shared by a family, a group, a people. When the land of a people is taken over by foreign powers and free, collectively or tribally owned land is privatized, a polarity is set up in which the gift aspect is made secondary to the aspect of control and domination. Sometimes a people finds that its whole basis of livelihood is being taken away, and they therefore also try to assert control and fight to defend it. In fact a gift basis is necessary for prosperity, which the market itself cannot provide. Moreover, gift giving, and the long term presence of gift sources are the basis of love and identity, beyond the exchange identity, transcending it. The handing down of the land from generation to generation creates a diachronic community, which is interrupted by war, occupation, colonialism. Palestine is now in that situation while Israel is trying to assert ownership and its own common ground. Indig-

enous people have been dispossessed again and again by Patriarchal Capitalist colonial powers because their gift-based ways were vulnerable to groups that had the collective masculated purpose of domination, seizure and accumulation of what had been common land.

The land base of a culture is like the mother, a source of gifts and identity, which is necessary to make any of our human gifts bear fruit, a repository for our culture, and the place of memory of the ancestors. But this land base is also similar to our commonality as (gift giving, mothered) humans that we construct through communication, which is enhanced by our having the same common ground, as a content of our communication: similar topics, topoi and territory as well as a common language. Perhaps under the view of the exchange economy the land is just a commodity to buy or sell, or to conquer or defend. However as our physical environment, it is really what much of our consciousness regards, and thus is the basis of our character, and the source of a gift economy that could be.

Now, so many live in the cities, in an unfree territory and artificial perceptual commons, where gifts are all human made, and enclosed as private, where there is an estranged commonality made through exchange, through the lack of communication, and according to the adversarial values of separation, competition, power over. Nevertheless there is often a sense of a shared gift among the population even though concrete (created by abstract labor) does not allow any free gifts to grow from the land.

The topics that are constructed linguistically function as common ground to which speakers can contribute in turn and from which they can gather information together, as they construct their relations as (linguistically) giving and receiving subjects. A common focus allows the sharing of something as a gift source. The gift syllogism is appropriate here because if B has received perceptions from A and tells C about it, C also receives from A. That is, if B goes on a trip to country A and tells C about it, C has received some perceptions from that source, country A. S/he shares that common ground as a topic even if s/he hasn't been there.

The common ground of the topic is being undermined, commodified and privatized by advertising. The body especially is

the place of shared and frustrated desires, which are brought into focus in order to sell commodities. The presentation of a sexually engaging woman's body on television uses the common focus to stimulate the acquisition of products or pornographic arousal. Manipulation of political topics covered in the media, narrowing the field of information, keeps the public from making many aspects of the government's behavior their true common ground. For example the recent 'embedding' of US journalists with the troops in Iraq effectively made their troops' actions the topic of their news reports, not the effects of those actions on the population. Both advertising and propaganda enclose and commodify the common ground of information, restricting the givers who have access to contribute to it, narrowing the focus and using the resulting artificial construction to feed the public with lies, to sell commodities or a war or a political program. They function according to the logic of the lie and exchange, in that they contribute to a common ground in order to satisfy the needs of the 'givers' not of the receivers.

Where do words and money come from?

I believe that the answer to this question is that when any aspect of the world becomes important enough (enough of a gift) for people to create inclusive relations regarding it, it becomes a topic and a communicative need arises which can at first be satisfied by sentences (using words to which aspects of the topic have been previously related). Sometimes the communicative need arises often enough that it develops into a shared (common) need for a word-gift, for a specific mediator with which to construct human relations regarding that kind of thing.³³ Word-gifts are themselves combined in sentences by using syntax, which is also constructed according to the logic of gift giving as we said above.

Looking back at the market from this point of view, the aspect of the world that we are mutually excluding each other regarding

³³ There is more on this topic in the chapter below, Communication and exchange

property, is important enough for us to develop a shared communicative need and a material 'word' (money) which we give each other to fill that need. We do not have a common topic or topos except for the mutual exclusion itself so the material word is unique and holophrastic. We are able to bridge (and re establish) our mutual exclusion by a repeated mutual substitution of the money-word for commodities. In the market this substitution is contingent upon quantitative equivalence. The quality of which the items exchanged are quantities is, according to Marx, the value of abstract labor. In this light, abstract labor value is the *gift* of the labor which is *not* for giving—but for exchanging—that is, production 'for others' in a mutually exclusive market-based society where everyone produces primarily for him or herself.

Word-gifts can be substituted for things, events, cultural items, etc. as we have been saying, because there is a shared gift character at the extra linguistic and at the linguistic level. Apart from some cases of onomatopoeia, words and their referents do not 'sound like' or 'look like' each other, that is, they are not perceptual equivalents. Nor is money physically like commodities. I believe that in spite of what one might expect, the shared gift character still holds in the realm of money. Money is equal to commodities on the basis of the gift (social utility) of not-gifts. In a way language does already mediate not-gifts by the fact that words and sentences have their own kind of materiality and cannot be produced and consumed to directly enhance biological processes. That is they are not material gifts but gifts at another level, a level, which creates mutual inclusion, as the communicators give them to one another and 'consume' them in common.

In contrast to the gifts of language, the substitution of a commodity by a quantity of money creates a relation of mutual inclusion only with regard to the relation of mutual exclusion. The money-word-gift, which functions by being physically given by one person to another, expresses the one thing all the products on the market have in common—exchange value. Actually exchange value as gift value turned back on itself, answers the question 'What is the value of others for others in a society in which each one gives

value only to him or her self?' Any quantity of abstract labor value is a quota part of the total gift value of production for others in the society, which has gone through the filter of exchange, returning to the 'giver' who gives so as not to give. It is the value given to others that returns to the self in another form, in order not to be given, in the form of the commodity, or in the form of money. Indeed exchange value is the value of the commodity not of the person who receives or gives it. Value is not transmitted from one person to another because the interaction is actually intransitive.

The seller gives up the commodity so that (like a language learner) s/he will get its money name.³⁴ Value is given only to the social total of all the labor that has been abstracted from concrete other-oriented gift-giving processes and passed through to the individual commodities. If we look at this process from the point of view of concept formation, we can see that as the common quality of value is being found in commodities in relation to the general equivalent, a polarity is being set up between their aspects of exchange value and use value. This polarization takes place on the background of another invisible or 'unnoticed' polarity, the polarity between relevant exchange value and irrelevant gift value or more broadly, between the market as valued and gift giving as unvalued. Because of the polarity between gift giving and exchange, and the fact that exchange in this moment is in the foreground, unseen gifts are actually given and received beyond the intransitive interaction, and obtaining them motivates the whole process.

Money has the complex job of creating a relation of mutual inclusion for exchangers regarding their mutual exclusion as private property owners. Like a gift or like a word, money functions by being given to others. It satisfies a communicative need, a need to create mutual inclusion, but here the inclusion regards mutual exclusion. The one is re established every time the other occurs, through the assertion of the equality of the value of the commodities and therefore

³⁴ Like one of the subjects in a Vygotskyian experiment, she takes her item to compare it to the exemplar, and takes the exemplar in its place, but s/he doesn't really want something of that category, but something of another category for which the money exemplar also functions as equivalent.

of the exchangers as proprietors and givers (who give not to give), creating a balance between opposing relations on two planes, between humans and between commodities.

In commodity exchange, there is only one common need and that is the communicative need for the means of communication by which the relation of all can be altered to their own and others' property. That means of communication is money. Money functions as a single but quantitatively divided material exemplar/word. It is a relational tool, the means for altering our relations to each other regarding our property.

Words proper are also relational tools for altering our relations to each other to our common topoi, from relations of mutual indifference (before we speak), to gift-based relations of mutual inclusion. Language is made of a large collection of qualitatively different words with which we mediate, that is, with which we change, our relations to each other in regard to all parts of the world. As money is exchanged for commodities as their substitute gift, it expresses their value regarding each other (in all of the other exchanges that particular one is not). Words too function according to a qualitative differentiation and a 'value' regarding all the other words they are not. They are embedded in a system of qualitative differences (de Saussure 1966) much as prices are embedded in a system of quantitative differences.³⁵

Private property is a mutually exclusive relation in which each person's property is what it is because it is not the property of any of the others. It is as if in the market, the mutually exclusive relation of words to each other in the *langue* has been transposed onto the mutually exclusive ownership of private property (or perhaps we should also say vice versa, that the mutually exclusive relation of private property has been projected into linguistics, into the idea of

³⁵ The value of words is their potential gift value (for others and therefore for oneself.) By giving words to others (speaking) we give value to those others, treating them as human. (Withholding communication, or the 'silent treatment' demonstrate the opposite.) By giving words to each other—creating gift relations in syntax, we give words syntactic value(s). That is, we give them importance in specific ways which becomes part of their value 'for others'.

langue, and exchange has been projected into the relation between signifier and signified (Ponzio 2006 [1973])) Money is the substitute gift, which quantitatively expresses the not-gift (exchange) value for others of each of the exchangers' products in turn, with respect to all the others. (it substitutes for the direct act of substitution of one product for another in barter, functioning like the verb 'to be' in equational statements. (See *For-Giving* Ch. 9.)³⁶

The exchange metaform

In the market there is one communicative need regarding all the life sustaining production of the society taken as mutually exclusive private property. This human relation of mutual exclusion is widespread and totalizing and can be bridged by the one substitute gift in which everything in that relation is expressed and is therefore 'linguistically' shareable, money. Money causes an alteration of a person's relation to h/er private property but only by substituting for the commodity so that a new private property relation can be established. Money is a sort of meta linguistic or meta communicative device that is not allowed to go to the level of language. Actually it is meta economic, meta gift, regarding the contradictory labor value 'gift' but not the actual free gift, while language regards and is made up of free gifts. This meta economic device of money is harnessed to market economics and cannot function as a collective gift, which would say 'share!': this is 'ours together', which is what language does, thereby creating a common ground, a shareable reality. But with private property, reality is not shareable—though we do share that fact. There are innumerable experiences of

³⁶Money seems able to pass from hand to hand infinitely in an endless *renvoi* like the process of infinite semiosis as Charles Sanders Peirce sees it. This capacity of money for circulation may be seen as a vestige of material gift circulation merged with word-gift circulation. Perhaps that is the reason why Peirce's idea of semiosis seems convincing, though it does not explicitly include gift giving as part of the structure of semiosis. Unfortunately because exchange for money has taken the place of gift giving as the social nexus, it also takes the place of gift giving as the metaform for semiotics.

other people's property that we will not have. Though our senses would be ready to receive those gifts, they are hidden behind many insurmountable walls and fences.

We have been reading language like everything else through the eyeglasses of exchange, according to the exchange 'metaform' (Sebeok and Danesi 2000). The reason this reading is convincing is that exchange itself is so similar to the definition of the form ('a' is 'b') and we are used to thinking in that way. Mutual substitution appears to be what constitutes the moving parts of this equation, whether the contents are things *or* words, things *and* words or commodities and money (or money and other money as in making change or foreign currency exchange). The equation apparently changes little when money is added to barter. However with money, the important polarity of the general equivalent is added to one side of the transaction (much as a more general *definiendum* is substituted for a more particular *definiens* in the definition.) Indeed money is a kind of material *definiendum*, the name of the value of commodities. It is constant while they are variable, the one while they are the many, the standard and signifier while they are the signifieds.

Linguists, semioticians and even native speakers who use market exchange as the unconscious 'metaform' for linguistic signs are made to concentrate too much on the definitional and 'correspondence' aspects of language which look like exchange: equality, substitution, and categorization. Not only do they leave aside gift giving as an alternative and more appropriate metaform, but by concentrating on the forms of exchange they validate its deep principles and worldview as real and right.

Exchange does not give value to the other exchanger but uses the satisfaction of h/er need to satisfy the need of the 'giver'. Self-interest cancels the other-interest. The value of the product, not the person, is not only implied but is necessarily made explicit by 'objective' quantification based on the product's relation to all the other products on the market. Gift giving is seen as inferior or as an incomplete exchange, yet as the principle of material and verbal communication, it brings with it all the qualitative variety, which exchange is forced to eliminate in favor of its single relevant quality. That single quality

is exchange value, based on the one relation of mutual inclusion that takes place regarding mutual exclusion. Exchange is the common ground made of no common ground. Money is a 'language' that regards a single relevant useful cultural item—abstract economic value (i.e., the 'gift' of exchange value).

Exchange effectively neutralizes and neuterizes the gift. Masculated males (and females who have embraced the market) can participate in exchange without being accused of nurturing. An immense area of life, the market, is made appropriate to the values, which males need to express and embody as part of their socially imposed gender identity. In fact the values of the manhood script—dominance, lack of emotional identification with the other (lack of empathy), independence (atomism), aggressiveness, growth to a large size etc. are also those which allow a privileged few to become successful in Patriarchal Capitalism.³⁷

Commodities are not gifts. They are the members of a special category of products with a common 'essence' of exchange value, grasped in the moment of naming or definition. They have value as gifts that are not-gifts, circulating among not-givers and not-receivers. Like males, commodities are named as members of a special category. We have filled up our shared reality with them, a reality that is no longer overflowing with immanent gifts but only with the gifts of not-gifts, the not-sharing of which we share.

Thus the market and patriarchy come together on the basis of concept formation and language to determine what is valuable in our society. It is not surprising that they influence us so profoundly, since they unite the way we think with what we think about, how we interact with each other and how we form our individual and social identities. The 'channels' through which the market and patriarchy 'broadcast' their values to us are *derived* from and are therefore *part* of the very way we think and communicate.³⁸

³⁷Perhaps we can add luck to this list. Being a member of the category 'male' can be attributed to luck and so can success in Capitalism. Males, like Capitalists are thus rightly rewarded for the risks they have taken: the risk that they might have been born female, or might lose their 'wherewithal'.

When we talk about Capitalist Patriarchy or Patriarchal Capitalism, we are talking about one system in which the supremacy of the exemplar over the many is acted out at different levels and in different areas. First it is embodied in the relation of the male one to the many, competition to be the one, and force to maintain the one position. These structures are prevalent in the home but also in public life divided from the home. Gifts flow upward in this system. Second, the one-to-many polarity is set up between money and commodities, and this concept relation among things, the market, is used for the purposes of patriarchy: the accumulation of capital is repeatedly reinvested, in order to create ever greater havings, which function within the patriarchal script to mark stages in the race to the top. Ambition and greed, which derive from the masculated attempt to *become* the exemplar, provide capitalism with the motivation it needs to spread and “grow” and capitalism itself becomes the exemplar economic system and the standard for human relations. This is not just a casual merging of two separate systems but a growth of both from the concept formation process. Each is a sort of variation of the other, and they fit together. Two thorny vines that have sprung from the same root and twisted around each other to form one plant, together they make up the same system, capitalist patriarchy-patriarchal capitalism. People in the capitalist system can oppose patriarchy and patriarchal people can oppose capitalism, but until both oppose both together, the changes cannot come.

The gift metaform

There is a distinction that must be made between turn taking, where the giving remains unilateral, and exchange where one gift is made contingent upon an equivalent return. When people take turns they are able to experience and practice the different roles involved

³⁸This influences the way the government monopolizes and manipulates information broadcast through corporate owned media channels, manipulating us to make us want that government, those corporations, that ideology. One more example of the way life imitates the mind.

in unilateral giving and receiving and develop their subjectivities both as givers and as receivers. Material giving and receiving create a kind of material non- or proto- sign communication, which precedes both exchange and conscious human communication by means of signs. Though material giving and receiving begin in earliest childhood, and even in the womb, they continue throughout life when sign communication is already well established. In the light of this idea we can look at the market as distorted gift giving and receiving, where the equation of value and the requirement of an equivalent in return create an altered community of atomistic mutually exclusive individuals who compete for profit rather than giving, receiving and cooperating materially, psychologically and linguistically.

The interaction of exchange forms a very strong magnetic template according to which we interpret our lives, and it clouds our view, making us see everything in its image, including gift giving.³⁹ I believe that many interactions, which should be interpreted along a spectrum of gifts from the most unilateral to the most manipulative and finally doubling back into exchange itself are all called 'exchange' without distinction. Along this spectrum lies the symbolic gift giving that is called 'gift exchange' by anthropologists, who I believe are projecting the market back into interactions that actually had material and linguistic gift giving as their original model or metaform, not economic exchange. Similarly, philosophers and other investigators of language and the mind, project the exchange model even further by abstracting it and extrapolating its aspects of categorization, substitution and identity, using them as their most important interpretative keys.

³⁹ Interestingly the postal metaphor directly recalls the sending of a gift. Packaging, sending, receiving and unpacking a message maintains the unidirectionality of unilateral gift giving, though it is mechanical because of the deletion of nurturing and need. In fact, unilateral gift giving leaps over the distance between self and the other both materially and verbally with its qualitative variety intact, conferring value upon the receiver. The important aspects of why the sender sends the message and what the receiver does with it are left out of the postal metaphor.

It is not distinguishing in order to categorize or generating according to rules but giving free gifts in order to satisfy needs that is the operational part (the dynamic) of the relation-creating communicative interaction. Gift giving creates relations at many different levels. Using the perspective of the gift paradigm we can re vision language in a way that will help us revision society. This revisioning allows us to understand the human being not in a way which justifies or is merely neutral and indifferent to patriarchy, domination, exploitation and war, but in a way which is antithetical to them.

Needs, whether at the material level or at the level of communication, are not static. They change, expand, become more specific and diversify according to the ways they have been satisfied. Each different gift creates a different relation to the means of satisfaction of the need, a relation to the extra linguistic gift, which has been substituted by the verbal gift, and a relation between the giver and receiver or speaker and listener(s). Words have been given as names to kinds of things collectively and over time by groups of language users. Things of a kind have received a name from the group and are related to their name together as its receivers. The name is a sort of 'straw' or virtual gift through which things, seen as the source of perceptions, can pass their gift-quality on to the people who are establishing relations with each other in regard to them through co-muni-cation.

The kinds of relations that words are used to establish are shared relations of community, the opposite of private property. With regard to communication, things *have* properties and names, in an open handed way that allows them to give, to be given to and to be shared by humans. Because anyone can potentially produce an unlimited quantity of word gifts, the kinds of human relations we construct with them do not require, as relations of exchange do, that we lose or give up anything.

Things 'have' a name though it is not their private property.⁴⁰ Because in our exchange-based society we are used to looking at

⁴⁰ As we said above, it is perhaps the relation of word, exemplar and items within a category in relation to the context of mutually exclusive words in the

everything as bound within a mutually exclusive property relation, we misunderstand any relation of ‘having’ which is not based on private property. In Patriarchal Capitalism, private property is the deep metaphor or pattern for ‘having’⁴¹ so the difficulty in understanding the sense of ‘having a name’ or ‘having a property’, comes in part from the fact that both the name and the property (the perceivable characteristic) are basically free. In our investigations of language, consistently with a self-reflecting exchange mentality, our emphasis is usually on ourselves as the ‘transmitters’ or speakers, and not on the receivers’ satisfiable communicative needs. (These are needs, which we are actually satisfying without realizing that we are doing so). The key to understanding the gift aspects of language is to consider the receiver or listener as the one whose needs are being satisfied, not the giver or speaker. If we believe, according to the exchange model, that the speakers are satisfying only their own needs, we blind ourselves the transitive, relation-creating aspects of language.

The names philosophers of give to sentences, such as ‘proposition’ or ‘assertion’ leave aside any sense of the satisfaction of others’ needs. In fact there can be no proposition nor can we assert anything unless we create a linguistic product that will satisfy the communicative needs of the (actual or possible) receiver regarding the aspects of the world that the sentence is being used to propose or assert. It is clear that considering sentences in terms of the needs they and their elements satisfy, would give us a radically different kind of philosophy of language. Proposing and especially asserting are more consonant with the masculated identity because they omit the consideration of the satisfaction of needs, like staircases that

langue that forms the original template for the relation of ownership of private property—actually more like one of Vygotsky’s complexes than the abstract concept. Subsequently that influence could “bleed back” in that the patterns of mutually exclusive ownership of private property vice versa influence the ideas we form of language as made up of a *langue* of mutually exclusive words put into operation in speech or *parole*.

⁴¹ There is a phallic aspect of having as well.

lead nowhere.⁴² Instead sentences are unilateral gift packages made of embedded gifts and gifts to gifts, and they are consonant with the human being as *homo donans*. Moreover our subjectivity as gift givers in part derives from and is confirmed by our first person sentences where “I” is the giver and expresses the agency of the individual who is speaking (giving those words) at the same time that it is in the syntactic position of giver as the subject of the sentence. Moreover, “I” is the subject—the giver—in all my first person sentences, and that is who I am. We identify with our gift giving subjectivity even though we don’t recognize it as such.

⁴² It is typical of the market to privilege new objective knowledge whatsoever because it becomes a pool from which new profit making enterprise can develop. Gift giving is left out of this new knowledge except as a potential source of profit. See below in section on Masculation and Categorization.