

## Introduction

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### A Radically Different Worldview is Possible

The conference, “A Radically Different Worldview is Possible: The Gift Economy Inside and Outside Patriarchal Capitalism,” was held in Las Vegas, Nevada in November 2004. The conference took place just after the U.S. presidential elections had left people of good will reeling from the re-election of George W. Bush, an event, which some believe was his second theft of the presidency. Even if Bush II had not won however, Patriarchal Capitalism<sup>1</sup> would have continued in its life-threatening course. The conference and now this book are attempts to respond to the need for deep and lasting social change in an epoch of dangerous crisis for all humans, cultures, and the planet. This goal cannot be achieved without a new perspective, a change in paradigm, which brings with it a radically different vision of the nature of the problems, and of the alternatives.

I have been working on the change of paradigms toward a gift economy for many years, both as an independent researcher and as the founder of the feminist Foundation for a Compassionate Society, which had an international scope but was based in Austin, Texas, from 1987-1998, and then functioned in a reduced mode from 1998-2005. When it became clear that the work of the foundation could not continue for lack of funds, we decided to hold two conferences as the last two major projects. This book about the worldview of the gift economy, presents the first of these conferences. The second conference, which was devoted to Matriarchal studies, under the direction of Heide Goettner-Abendroth (her second international conference on the subject) took place in September-October 2005.

I believe that in discussing the gift economy we are naming something that we are already doing but which is hidden under a variety of other names, and is disrespected as well as misconstrued. It is thus an important step to begin to restore its name and acknowledge its presence in many different areas of life. It is also important to re-create the connections, which have been severed, between the gift economy, women, and the economies of Indigenous peoples, and to bring forward the gift paradigm as an approach, which can help to liberate us from the worldview of the market that is destroying life on our beautiful planet.

Over the years as I have participated in the international women's movement I have met many, many wonderful women. Most of those invited to speak came from those encounters. I have been honoured to get to know a number of Indigenous

women in this way and thus was able to invite them to speak at the conference, which indeed could not have been held without their participation. All of the speakers, academics, and activists, are gift givers in their own ways. Some had thought deeply about the gift economy, others were new to the idea. I believe that all of them found it enlightening to hear the gift economy being discussed in so many different contexts. Some 35 women from 20 different countries gave presentations. Women and men from across the United States attended the weekend conference, which was held in Las Vegas, Nevada at the Municipal Library Auditorium. The choice of location came both from the desire to take advantage of cheap airfare, and to have access to the goddess Temple of Sekhmet, a Foundation project in the desert near the U.S. government's nuclear test site. Perhaps Mililani Trask gave the best rationale for the venue, however, when she commented, "What better place than Las Vegas to offer an alternative to casino capitalism!"

The conference and this book are attempts to justify the unity of the feminist movement and claim leadership for the values and the work of women in the mixed movement, which opposes patriarchal capitalism. An analysis that links different levels and areas of life on the basis of an alternative paradigm can suggest that much of what patriarchy has put into place is artificial and unnecessary. An alternative paradigm that sees women as the model of the human, and patriarchy as founded on males' rejection of their own (female) humanity, can provide the basis of a political program beyond present divisions. A radically different frame would make different strategies possible, and eliminate some solutions that would otherwise bring us all (women and men) back under patriarchal control in different forms.

In order to make this analysis we make a basic distinction between gift giving on the one hand and exchange on the other as two distinct logics. In the logic of exchange, a good is given in order to receive its equivalent in return. There is an equation of value, quantification, and measurement. In gift giving, one gives to satisfy the need of another and the creativity of the receiver in using the gifts is as important as the creativity of the giver. The gift interaction is transitive and the product passes from one person to the other, creating a relation of inclusion between the giver and the receiver with regard to what is given. Gift giving implies the value of the other while the exchange transaction, which is made to satisfy one's own need, is reflexive and implies the value only of oneself. Gift giving is qualitative rather than quantitative, other-oriented rather than ego-oriented, inclusive rather than exclusive. Gift giving can be used for many purposes. Its relation-creating capacity creates community, while exchange is an adversarial interaction that creates atomistic individuals.

Our society has based distribution upon exchange, and the ideology of exchange permeates our thinking. For example, we consider ourselves human "capital," choose our mates on the "marriage market," base justice on "paying for crimes," motivate wars through "reprisal," and teeter on the brink of nuclear "exchanges." However, Indigenous and Matriarchal cultures, based more on gift giving, had

and have very different worldviews that honour and sustain life, create lasting community and foster abundance for all.

### Introducing the Gift Economy

In the Americas, before colonization, there were 300 million people, more people than there were in all of Europe at the time (Mann, C. 2005).<sup>2</sup> Although Europeans tended to interpret the Indigenous economies in the light of their own exchange-based mentality, gift economies were still widespread when the colonizers arrived. Women's leadership was important in these so-called "pre"-market economies. For example the Iroquois Confederation, where women farmers controlled the production and distribution of agriculture, practiced gift giving in local groups and participated in long distance gifting circles among groups. (Mann 2000) Though wampum, made of shells, was seen as a form of currency by the Europeans, Indigenous researchers like Barbara Mann (1995) consider it not to have been money at all but a form of character writing in beads based on metaphoric relations of Earth and Sky. Gift economies are typical of Matriarchies. In Africa and Asia as well as the Americas, various kinds of woman centered-peaceful societies existed and continue to exist today. (Goettner-Abendroth 1980, 1991, 2000; Sanday 1981, 1998, 2002).

My hypothesis is that not only were there and are there societies that function according to the direct distribution of goods to needs, non-market gift economies, but that the underlying logic of this kind of economy is the basic human logic, which has been overtaken and made invisible by the logic of the market economy. In spite of this cancellation, gift giving continues to permeate human life in many ways, though it is unseen and has been misnamed and obscured. The worldview of the peoples of the Americas was indeed radically different from that of the Europeans, so much so that the two groups had difficulty understanding one another. Europeans consistently misinterpreted what the Native people were saying and doing, their spirituality, their customs, their intentions.<sup>3</sup>

Colonization by the Europeans destroyed the civilizations of the Americas because the mechanisms of Patriarchal Capitalism, which were developing in Europe throughout the preceding centuries, needed sources of free gifts, which could be transformed into capital. We live in the aftermath of this genocidal invasion, but this should not blind us to the fact that alternative peaceful ways for organizing the economy and social life did exist before colonization. I am not suggesting that we directly imitate those societies now. However, I believe that if we can identify the logic of gift giving and receiving, and see it where it continues to exist within our own societies, we can reapply it in the present to liberate a worldview that corresponds to it, as well as to create new/old ways of peaceful interaction.

At the same time that we begin to see the light of the alternative, we need to use it to illuminate the problem. That is, we have to see how Patriarchy and Capitalism work together to dominate and de-nature the direct distribution of goods to needs and how they turn the gifts toward an artificial system of exchange,

not-giving, and property for the few. The radically different worldview that we need now is not the worldview of the gift economy as practiced by Indigenous peoples only, but a worldview that recognizes and derives from the gift economy both in Indigenous societies and, though hidden and misnamed, inside Patriarchal Capitalism itself; we might even say, inside every human being.

In 1484 The Papal Bull of Innocence VIII was published, marking the beginning of the Inquisition, during which, by some estimates as many as 9,000,000 witches, most of whom were women, were killed over a period of 250 years. It is perhaps not coincidental that these two genocides, of Native Americans and of European women, happened simultaneously. (See Mies 1998 [1986]) By finding the connection between European misogyny and European/American oppression of Indigenous peoples, perhaps we can identify the link that will allow us to create the common platform that is crucial for social change.

One of the reasons why a common collective platform does not presently exist is that approaches that are alternative to the status quo appear to have to do only with self-interest, individual penchants, or personal morality. For feminists the critique of essentialism does not allow the construction of such a platform on the basis of a common identity, yet curiously, even if the identity is not common, the problems are, and links among individuals and groups are made on the basis of shared issues and responses to oppression.

In fact, if we look at the way identity is formed through oppositional categorization and how collective identity functions in “democracy” as the competition of self-interested groups, we could see the assertion of group identity as just one more way of dividing and conquering the power of the broader collective. However, perhaps it is not from identity anyway that we should try to derive a common perspective, but rather we should trace such a perspective to an economic practice, gift giving, which women everywhere (and non-patriarchal men and cultures) engage in, often without realizing it. This practice is positive but it makes those who engage in it similarly vulnerable to oppression by market economies. It would be important not only to unite on issues sporadically to oppose the oppression in its various manifestations but to link positively and long-term on the basis of the hidden alternative economy and its perspective. In Capitalist Patriarchy the practice of the gift economy has been assigned especially to women though it has been misrecognized specifically under the names of “mothering,” “nurturing” and “care-giving.” This assignment should at least qualify women as the (non-patriarchal) leaders of a gift economy movement.

A recent re-visioning of Matriarchies sees these societies as having gift economies and power structures different from those of Patriarchy (Allen 1986; Goettner-Abendroth 1991, 2002; Sanday 1981, 1998, 2002). They are not women-dominated societies but rather women-centered societies. They are not mirror images of Patriarchy, but are egalitarian and consensus-based. A number of examples of these Indigenous Matriarchal societies continue to exist worldwide.<sup>4</sup>

With this re-definition in mind, we can look at most societies now existing as a combination of two modes, one of which is a distortion of the other and is

parasitically embedded in it. Capitalist Patriarchy, with its drive toward competition and domination, takes its sustenance from the gifts of the many, which are still being given according to the gift giving values and patterns of so-called “pre” Capitalist Matriarchal societies. Claudia von Werlhof’s article in this book, discusses the drive of Patriarchy to negate Matriarchal aspects altogether. We can also look at our present societies as the coexistence of two kinds of economies: a gift economy and an exchange, or market, economy. Two value systems come from the two economies. The exchange economy fosters competition while the gift economy fosters cooperation. Moreover, the exchange economy competes with the gift economy in order to dominate it.

The paradox of competition between a competitive and a non-competitive behaviour carries within it the victory of the competitive behaviour unless it is possible to move to a higher logical level and weigh the two as general principles for organizing life.<sup>5</sup> At this higher level it is clear that cooperation, as a better principle, “wins” the competition. The question is how to understand the interrelatedness of the two behaviours well enough to collectively move from one of them to the other. In order to achieve this understanding we need to look at the underlying logics of the two behaviours and the economies in which they are embedded, and at the paradigms or worldviews these economies give rise to.

My proposal for this task draws not only on the idea of economic structures that determine superstructures of ideas and values (Marx 1904 [1859]), but also on the simple consideration that what we do over and over in daily life influences the way we think. The economy of exchange, on which the Patriarchal Capitalist market is built, functions according to the self-reflecting logic of exchange: giving in order to receive an equivalent. It requires an equation of value, quantification, and measurement according to a standard. Gift giving, directly satisfying the needs of the other, functions according to a logical movement of its own but has usually been considered instinctual or illogical. The action (A gives X to B) already carries with it implications, which are not contingent upon an equivalent return: (B gives Y to A). The elementary gesture of gift giving is transitive and it gives value to the receiver by implication. On different scales, from the small to the large, from the family to the nation, when the gift economy and the exchange economy behaviours coexist, the gift economy, consistent with its principle, gives to the exchange economy, satisfying its needs, giving it value and thereby colluding with its own oppression. On the other hand, exchange—giving in order to receive an equivalent in return—cancels gift giving. It is ego-oriented and gives value to the “giver” by implication rather than to the receiver. It is competitive, positions the exchangers as adversaries (Hyde 1979), and creates a relation between products rather than between persons.

Competing with gift giving while coexisting with it, the economy based on exchange exploits and discredits gift giving, often denying its very existence so that exchange seems to be the source of the gifts it has received or taken. In carrying out this cancellation, the logic of exchange, which is self-reflecting and self confirming identity logic, places gift giving in a non category with which (as

a category) it does not have to compete. Thus, the two fit together as parasite and host. In spite of this collusion (and all of its variations), I believe the host is much more extensive than the parasite and gift giving remains as a deep hidden alternative, permeating Capitalist Patriarchy at all levels.

Mothering, which is usually socially identified with women, is an example of gift giving in which goods are distributed to needs in a very detailed and continuous way. We can consider this distribution as an example of an economic structure, which as such, has the capacity to give rise to the values of care as its superstructure. By considering maternal practice as instinctive or natural, the ideology of Capitalist Patriarchy has not only fettered women through essentialism, it has blocked the consideration of mothering as economic. By looking at gift giving as a hidden economy, a mode of distribution, which is the host of the economy based on exchange, we can see women's commonality as *economic*, having to do with a way of distributing goods to needs, a practice and a process which are part of a socially determined role, not an essence. Moreover, in societies based on gift economies, men remain mothering. To be a leader for the Minangkabau, a man must be like a good mother (Sanday 2002). Thus, women and men who are not patriarchal have in common not an essence but the practice of a gift giving mode of distribution.

The coexistence of gift giving and exchange is detrimental to gift giving but advantageous to the market system. Many free gifts are fed into the Capitalist machine, which re names the gifts as "profit" and channels them from the many to the few. The 40 percent that would have to be added on to the gross national product in the U.S. and elsewhere if women's free work were counted (Waring 1988) constitutes a gift that women are giving to the system of Patriarchal Capitalism, which does not have to pay for those services. Surplus value, which according to Marx is created by that part of the labour of the worker, which is not covered by the salary, can also be considered as a gift, leveraged or forced from the worker, but free to the capitalist.<sup>6</sup>

Both genders can practice both economies. Men can practice the gift giving mode of distribution and women can practice the mode of distribution of exchange. Mothering requires direct gift giving to children, however and since mothering is socially assigned to women, many women practice the gift mode of distribution during the time they are caring for children, and continue to do so even when they are not (and often practice it even if they never have children). The boy child's male gender identity in Patriarchy is usually constructed in opposition to the nurturing mother, so he has to reject the gift giving mode on which he is actually dependent. Thus, gift giving is usually identified with women (who are socialized to be mothers) while independence and self-assertion or aggression appear to be male behaviours. The male gender identity finds an area of life, the market, in which gift giving (nurturing) does not predominate; indeed it is cancelled and denied. The market is thus open as a field for other "masculine" behaviours of competition and hierarchy.

The values of care can be seen as the superstructure of the hidden economic

structure of the gift economy. The values of self-interest can be seen as a superstructure deriving from the economic structure of exchange,<sup>7</sup> especially as combined with Patriarchy. Much ideological confusion arises from the fact that the economic structures of exchange and gift giving taken together are also the structure of a parasitic relation in which one economy gives to the other, while the other economy actively takes from it. Thus the superstructures also reflect this parasitic relation and are difficult to disentangle.

The above considerations suggest that we should take four basic steps to begin to move from the exchange to the gift paradigm:

First: Distinguish gift giving from exchange.

Second: See gift giving as containing a basic transitive logic while exchange functions according to a self-reflecting identity logic of exclusive and inclusive categories.

Third: Look at maternal practice as gift giving.

Fourth: Consider gift giving (and therefore mothering) as economic, a mode of distribution of goods and services to needs.

Summarizing, we can say that the logic of gift giving is a maternal economic logic, the logic of the distribution of goods and services directly to needs. Using this description we can identify this maternal economic logic as expressed in Indigenous societies, especially in matriarchies, where goods and services are distributed to needs, and motherliness and care have a high social value for everyone. By considering mothering as a particularly intense moment of a more widespread gift economy from which Patriarchal Capitalism now parasitically draws its sustenance, we can begin to change the familiar coordinates by which we understand the liberation of women and other oppressed groups as achievable through their more equal participation in the market economy. Indeed in what follows, I hope to show that the market itself is the problem, not the solution and that the gift economy and its values can be liberated *from* the exchange economy, which is unnecessary and pernicious.

## I. Extending Mothering

This approach in which mothering is seen as one example of an alternative mode of distribution breaks the mold of maternity as limited to the relation between mothers and children only. In fact gift economies, which embody many variations of gift giving beyond exchange, use maternity as a general social principle, for both women and men, for women who are not mothers as well as for men who are not fathers. Breaking the mold of mothering as relating only to women and small children also opens the way for considering gift economies as economies of extended or generalized mothering.

Although much has been written in the twentieth century about gift giving, mostly by men, its connection with mothering has rarely been made.<sup>8</sup> Moreover,

the fear of essentialism has thrown the mother out with the bathwater for many feminists. Instead we need to consider mothering/gift giving as a basic economic logic and process, not an essence, for all humans. The gift economy gives not only mothers but men (and everyone who does not have a small child) a chance to continue to distribute goods to needs socially as well as individually (and without nursing infants at the breast).

On the other hand, women as well as men can and do practice the logic of exchange and participate successfully in the social system based on the market. Capitalist Patriarchy is not exclusive to males, and women can participate in it in roles of the oppressor as well as of the oppressed. Groups and even global hemispheres also take up the roles of parasite and host. For example, the global North takes the gifts of the global South (the gifts of the South are co-opted and redirected toward the North). This takes place even if people in the North may themselves be individually or collectively exploited as members of groups from which wealth is being siphoned.

The colonial conquest of Indigenous territories and cultures may be seen as motivated by the competition of market economies with gift economies, and the extension of Patriarchal Capitalist parasitism over gift sources. Moreover the struggles for territory among nations can be seen as the attempts of one Patriarchal Capitalist parasite to control the gift sources of another.

Abundance is necessary for the successful practice of gift giving. Exchange competes with gift giving by capturing the abundance, channeling it into the hands of the few or wasting it, thus creating scarcity for the many. Gift giving, which is easy and delightful in abundance becomes difficult and even self-sacrificial in scarcity. Women have been read as “masochistic” when they sacrifice themselves for others. In terms of the gift paradigm we can see that they are actually continuing to practice the gift logic in spite of a context of scarcity, which is usually a product of the market and the exchange paradigm.

Looking at exploitation as the capture of free gifts—of surplus value, of cheap resources, gifts of the environment, land, water, traditional knowledges and seeds, connects these captured gifts with the gift labour of housewives and mothers, and thus connects again the women’s movement with movements of workers, and peasants, as well as peace, environmental, Indigenous and antiglobalization activists.<sup>9</sup>

## II. Disbelieving in the Market

Direct giving-and-receiving has many derivatives and elaborations, which have been misunderstood and divided and conquered by Patriarchal Capitalist ideology. As we have been saying, they have been hidden to avoid competition with exchange. We can bring these gift derivatives back to light by identifying them in the many different areas where they continue to exist. For example, gift giving has been excluded from academic disciplines as an interpretative key for centuries because it threatens academic control over knowledge. In fact, the gift paradigm illuminates



many questions that remain opaque for academia. Moreover, the maternal logic and mode of distribution as elaborated and extended in Indigenous gift economies worldwide, give rise to values and spiritual traditions, which are antithetical to those of Patriarchal Capitalist institutions.<sup>10</sup> Indigenous epistemes, as described by Rauna Kuokkanen in this book, can be seen as arising from the practice of the gift economy. As Kuokkanen states, the gift of Indigenous epistemes has not been accepted by academia. However, neither has the gift-based perspective of women who are often living in the very families of these academics—and caring for them—or of the women academics who are bearing double burdens of family care and teaching. It is important to see both the care and the perspectives as gifts and to receive them with celebration rather than ignominy.

Gift giving permeates the social life of both women and men. It can be considered (Vaughan 1997) the cause of communication and community, and can be found at all levels from the biological to the linguistic. Exchange itself is only one variation on gift giving, a gift constrained, turned back upon itself and made reflexive. As the dominant mode of distribution, market exchange necessitates common quantitative assessment, which requires a process of measurement according to a standard. Western economics textbooks identify economics with the market but we are extending the category “economic” to include both the practice of mothering and gift economies. This change in categorization helps to bring forward gift giving as a pan-human behaviour. Moreover, it can help to clarify the relation between exchange and gift giving at the family level, at the level of the colonization of Indigenous peoples’ gift economies by market economies, and at the “new” level of globalization in which the gifts of nature and culture, which were previously free for all (such as water, Indigenous plant species, and traditional knowledges), are being commodified. The two logics also often coexist internally to the individual. While it is clear that all of us practice both logics to some extent, we may also hypothesize that the unconscious may function according to gift giving and the conscious more according to exchange.

Rather than seeing the market as natural or as a prime achievement of humanity, we need to look at it as problematic and unnecessary, a mechanism by which we create scarcity rather than abundance by directing the flow of gifts from the many to the few. The market gives gifts a single way of becoming visible, and that is by transforming them into commodities, i.e., ceasing to be gifts. The globalizing market is Capitalism in a stage in which, on a very large scale, it is performing this transformation. By a sleight of hand it is showing that water, air, knowledge, even genes should be considered commodities “by nature.”

We need to take a leap of imagination, which allows us to look at the market from the outside or better, from the inside, but taking a position of total skepticism. With the defeat of Patriarchal Communism, it would seem that Patriarchal Capitalism is the only possible economy. However, the perspective of the gift economy allows us to consider the Capitalist economy as unnecessary, transient, harmful. Feminist economists usually work on creating changes for women inside the market. The gift economy perspective sees the market itself as the obstacle,

not as something that can be fixed by allowing fuller participation. Nevertheless, it is possible that changes in the market<sup>11</sup> can help create the conditions for a non-violent transition, which will allow us to start over again on a different basis.

It is not just the Patriarchal Capitalist market that is the cause of so many of our problems but the market itself. This is because its logic stands in contradiction to the panhuman logic of direct giving and receiving. The market is parasitic because it absorbs gifts into a relational structure in which gifts are blocked and cancelled though they continue to be given. Since gift giving is denied—not acknowledged or even seen—the flow of gifts toward the market, as profit, is understood as “deserved” or perhaps stolen—but not given. The “host” does not recognize that it is nurturing the parasite. Historically, this relation between gift and exchange can be materialized in different ways, but the market itself is a mechanism for the extraction and accumulation of profit (gifts), whether of the surplus value of salaried labour or of “housewifeized” (Mies 1986, Benholdt-Thomson and Mies 1999) labour, of the low cost natural resources of the Global South or the ecological inheritance of all the children of the future, whether of women or of slaves, of Indigenous peoples or of immigrants, locally and globally. Now the market also extracts the gifts of corporate profits paid by the money coming from the salaries of the many, whose needs have been manipulated by inventions and advertising.

By making the two economico-logical gestures—gift and exchange—and their interactions the starting point of analysis, we can provide a picture that is very different from that painted by economics proper. In fact we might say that the society we live in is founded on a fundamental polar opposition, one pole of which is not recognized as such. The invisibility of gift giving is the result of the hegemony of exchange, while at the same time it is a tool for the maintenance of its patriarchal power. By obliterating the gift or distracting attention from it by naming it something else, by breaking its common thread, or by considering its examples “primitive,” infantile or instinctual, the market and with it Patriarchy, keep control over the gifts of all for the provisioning of life. In order to understand and address the immense problems that come from Patriarchal Capitalism, we need to restore the pole of the gift to visibility. I have been working on this project for many years and the conference, which gave rise to this book, was an important move in this direction.

### III. A Self-Replicating Logic

Patriarchy and Capitalism have grown up together, twined around each other like two thorny plants with their roots in the humus of gift giving. Capitalism provides the economic system and Patriarchy provides the motivation toward ever-greater phallic<sup>12</sup> possessions of money, knowledge and power. The logic of exchange is self-validating and creates a consensus around its values, while gift giving, in its shadow, appears only as a feeble appeal to morality. Exchange works like a deep magnetic template to influence all our thinking. The logic of exchange

can be seen in rewards and punishments, in guilt (psychologically preparing to pay back) and reprisal. Even justice, seen as payment for crimes, is framed according to the exchange paradigm, while identifying and satisfying the needs that give rise to the crimes would be a gift-based approach. The logic of war is the logic of exchange, attack and equal or greater counter-attack. Using exchange as the basic key for the interpretation of the world around us casts exchanges of ideas, of opinions, of love, of glances, (among many others) as events that might better be understood as gift transactions. On the other hand many activities that are framed as gifts are actually exchanges, such as, for example, donor-driven charity and U.S. aid to other countries.

It is important to describe Patriarchal Capitalism negatively on the basis of the gift alternative. Patriarchal Capitalist academia ignores the explanatory power of the gift and thus obscures the parasitic character of the economy and the ideology of which academia is an integral part.

Moreover sexism, racism, classism, xenophobia, and homophobia have issued from the exchange logic that functions according to the standard of the phallus and the phallic standard of the standard, creating categories based on the logic of identity, self-interest, and the exclusion of the gift giving other. This exclusion is a moment of the process of turning the flow of gifts of the “other” toward the standard. Thus the category of the market excludes the non-category of the gift which reappears as profit; the category “male” excludes the gift giving female who gives especially to males; the category “white race” excludes the other races, which are expected to take gift giving “female” positions toward white people.<sup>13</sup> In spite of the immense tragedies Patriarchal Capitalism and the market continue to perpetrate, they have maintained control of the paradigm through which most people see the world, and continue to define reality while disqualifying the gift economy and its perspective. The answers given within the market paradigm to the question of why such tragedies continue to occur do not provide an understanding that would permit radical change.

With the hegemony of exchange, the transitive and inclusive character of gift giving has been lost and the phenomena to which it gives rise have remained mysterious or have been given false explanations that coincide with the ideology of exchange. Bringing forward the paradigm based on gift giving while showing the negative aspects of exchange, the market, and Patriarchal Capitalism, allows us to see that a Radically Different Worldview is Possible. This in turn is a necessary step for showing not only that, as the World Social Forum motto states, Another World is Possible, but for showing that another possible world already exists in the here and now. Then by bringing it forward and giving it value, we can make gift giving define reality and reverse the polarity with exchange, non-violently liberating this other world, which is the world of the gift economy, into the present.

#### IV: The Implication of Value

In order to look closely at gift giving it is a good idea to see it first in detailed slow

motion. Making, procuring, and providing something that satisfies the needs of others is part of a dynamic, which gives not only material satisfaction to needs but also gives value to the other by implication. The receiver is as important as the giver in the gift transaction because s/he must be able to use the gift to bring it to fruition. If the gift is not used, it is wasted, no longer a gift, and contradicts the value of the work of the giver. The recognition of the giver as the source of the gift by the receiver is not a necessary but is a common aspect of the process. By itself this recognition does not constitute an exchange but is simply a response, and is a sign of the completion of the transaction.

The fact that the giver gives to the receiver implies that the receiver is valuable to h/er because s/he does not let the need go unmet, neglect h/er, or give the good to someone else instead. This implication of value can be drawn by the giver, the receiver, or by any onlooker and thus it appears to be not just anyone's subjective evaluation, but a fact. In exchange, using similar reasoning, the opposite implication is the case. One gives in order to procure the satisfaction of one's own need, and therefore gives value to oneself above the other, implying one's own value. In fact, in exchange, the satisfaction of the need of the other is an instrument for the satisfaction of one's own need.

Many have questioned even the possibility of unilateral gift giving.<sup>14</sup> Exchange appears ubiquitous and more real and rational. Western anthropologists read reciprocity in the light of market exchange, rather than in the light of turn-taking, the repetition of a model, as happens when children imitate their gift giving mothers. Giving, receiving and giving back appear very different in the light of the market and in Indigenous gift economy and Matriarchal contexts. While the logic of market exchange, like God, makes everything in its own image, in so-called "pre"-market Indigenous societies the unilateral gift continues to inform reciprocity. In market exchange the unilateral gift is cancelled, so every act of reciprocity is understood as an exchange.

Even if there were no examples of pure, completely unilateral, giving (Caille 1998),<sup>15</sup>—and I believe that such gifts are actually quite commonplace—the logic of the unilateral gift would, nevertheless, continue to carry the implication of value of the receiver and this even when in practice the gift is mixed with exchange. When people insist on the truism "there is no free lunch," I counter that at least part of most lunches is indeed free in that women have been cooking them without payment for centuries. At the same time, the reception of the unilateral gift stimulates a probable appreciative response of the receiver and thus the gift can occasion mutual recognition of value as a basis of positive bonding.<sup>16</sup> In this interaction the gift itself becomes invested with positive value and functions as a vehicle of the value of the other and a mediator of the relation of mutuality. Gift giving, which is not assimilated to exchange, produces a reciprocity in which this relation of mutuality is not cancelled by the return gift, but is maintained and enhanced. Sometimes an additional gift is given, not as "interest," as happens with debts in the exchange mode, but as another unilateral gift, demonstrating that the return gift was not a cancellation but a

turn-taking “imitation” or follow-up of the first, by adding more.

The value that is given to the receiver along with the gift may appear to be inherent in the receiver—a mother gives to her child because the child has value—but her giving and giving value to her also maintain the value of the child by allowing h/er to survive. Giving transfers value to the receiver along with the gift, and the value is passed on along with the gift to others. In fact there is a kind of gift syllogism—If A gives X to B and B gives X to C then A gives X to C. Gift circulation allows this transitivity in which the original source participates in the giving process even to the final receiver, and the implication of value flows from person to person as well.

## V. Exchange Value

According to Marx, a commodity is made of use value and exchange value. As we have been saying, in the market, gift value is erased. Exchange, and especially the process of exchange for money in the market, alters the character of value in that it is no longer given as gift value to people other than oneself by implication, but it is attributed as exchange value to commodities as expressed in money. The binary process of exchange in which there is a symmetrical interaction of two ego-oriented exchangers also takes attention away from the original source of the goods. (Thus it is easy to deny the importance of mothering or women’s work in the home for example, or on another level it is easy for multinational corporations to hide the sweatshop conditions in which their expensive consumer items are made.)<sup>17</sup> Each of the interactors in exchange is implying h/er own value by using the satisfaction of the need of the other as means, and at the same time is evaluating the value of the commodity relative to all other commodities on the market by using money, so that the exchange will be “equal.” The value of the other is no longer implied by the satisfaction of his or her need, but at most, a value of identity of the two exchangers is attested by the identity of value of their products. In other words the identity of value of the products (or products and money) implies the identity of the exchangers, their belonging to the same category because of their common “property” of a quantity of exchange value. However this value depends on the logic of identity, on what they have, and therefore what category they belong to, not on an implication of value transmitted by or to them as human givers and receivers of need-satisfying goods.

The value of the other is transmitted by implication in gift giving; as value, it creates and depends upon a dynamic of transitivity between giver and receiver. The value of the other is cancelled in the exchange transaction, and both of the exchangers are taken as equal in their ego orientation, while their commodities are also judged as equal through comparison with money. Thus, exchange value is a kind of transformation of gift value.<sup>18</sup>

The gift transaction and the exchange transaction both confer value through the transmission of goods, though they function in different ways with different results for human relations and psychology. Where unilateral gift giving creates

other orientation, bonding, trust and mutuality, exchange creates ego-orientation and adversarial positions, suspicion, and hostility or detachment as each exchanger tries to surreptitiously make the other give more in the supposedly equal exchange. For example, in cheating, the gift reappears in a negative sense and gives value to the ego of someone who has forced or tricked free gifts from the other—for example, by selling h/er overpriced items.<sup>19</sup> This confrontation creates two levels, a purportedly equal exchange and a private agenda of each exchanger to leverage, force or extort unilateral gifts from the other. Moreover, the categorial identity of the exchangers gives rise to their indifference to each other, in that anyone can substitute for anyone else in their roles.

In gift giving, however, the interactors give and receive in a personal way not just according to an accepted capitalist level of production but according to their individual capacities and needs. Thus gift giving-and-receiving is creative and informative while exchange can become repetitive and standardized. The attention of givers to needs creates sensitivity to the other. Emotional responses are necessary to map the needs. Exchange, which instrumentalizes needs, promotes desensitization, and emotional detachment.

In a context of scarcity, hierarchy, competition, and exchange it is easy for gift giving to become manipulative. This possibility causes receivers to become cautious and defensive and makes exchange appear to be a clearer interaction. Sometimes the receiver has more need for respect, and for independence, than for the gift itself, and the giver has to recognize and satisfy that need by not giving. Marketing is manipulative in that it uses the investigation of needs and the stimulation of desires to determine what products people will buy. Although advertisers themselves probably do not realize it, they are selling exchange itself to us as more valuable than gift giving.

Though exchange is a variation on gift giving, it follows a very different logical pattern, which makes the two really “apples and oranges” to each other. Moreover, exchange has become the main basic logical pattern that we see, so that all human reasoning seems to depend upon categorization, identity and evaluation—not on the transmission of value. The equation of exchange even informs our idea of self-reflecting consciousness, which we believe makes us members of a valued category, “human,” while in other-directedness we become opaque to ourselves. At the same time needs are ignored in favor of “effective demand,” the needs relevant to the market for which the money already exists in the pockets of the buyers. That is, the fulfillment of these needs can already be categorized as pertinent to exchange when they are identified. Needs which are not pertinent to exchange are not categorized as effective demand and are thus ignored. They do not “exist” for the market except possibly as they influence the raising or lowering of prices.

Without a multi-level shifting of attention toward needs as such, the transitivity that comes through the *free* satisfaction of needs cannot be seen. Nor can the wide range of gifts and the implications of value that these gifts confer be recognized. Gift giving is the interpretative key that unlocks the mysteries of transitivity, interactivity, value and community. For example inclusiveness comes through giving

to the other, attending to h/er needs, not primarily through categorization—and it is not primarily by being classified as similar to or different from each other that we create community—but by giving and receiving gifts at all levels.<sup>20</sup>

Many new areas of needs are created by human interaction and this is also the case for the interactions of the market. New needs arise according to the ways society is arranged, and thus the possibility for new kinds of gift giving also arises. In fact the gift is such a fertile and creative principle that it can never be completely dominated by exchange and it re-presents itself again and again in different ways. In a market-based society, the need for money also provides the possibility for the gift of money. The need for jobs allows one to think of the job as a gift given by the employer. The needs created by the exploitation of the global South open the possibility for immigrants to send home billions of dollars as gift-remittances. Each of these examples demonstrates gift giving within a market situation and there are many others. These gifts would not be needed of course and therefore would not be gifts, without the market. Many other kinds of gifts exist before, beyond and around the market. In fact the market floats in a sea of gifts.

## VI. Mothering and Masculation

Communication, which is an important human capability, begins in each life between mother (or other primary care-giver) and child, and is deeply connected to gift giving. Indeed, giving goods to needs without an exchange can be considered *material communication* in the sense that the bodies (and therefore also the minds) of the receivers are created through this interaction and they become the actual community members. Givers, who are also receivers, are altered and specified by their giving. The receivers are nurtured and brought into social life in specific ways, becoming givers in their turn. The vulnerability and dependence of human children requires others to give unilaterally to them in order to ensure their survival. Mothering, usually done by women, is thus a prime example of gift giving behaviour, readily available to be perceived by all, which is also a necessary (though always historically located) social constant.

Gift giving functions in mothering to imply the value of the child, but it also functions in reverse mode to encourage the mother to give to the child *because* s/he is valuable. In fact, the child may be considered inherently valuable, even if the implication actually comes from the gifts of the mother to h/er. At the same time the mothers, the source of this potential implication of value—and the rest of society as well—do not give value to mothering and to gift giving by women. They do give value to and nurture males. Identity logic regarding gender can thus exclude girls from the category of those to whom the mother will transitively give value by satisfying their needs.<sup>21</sup> Since the mothers are in the same category as their daughters, they devalue both themselves and the gift giving which is the source of the implication of value.

In Patriarchy it appears that in order to achieve their masculine identity, boys must not have the same behaviour as their mothers. When children are small, the

free satisfaction of their needs by their mothers is a very large part of their existence. Thus the mandate to be unlike their mothers turns little boys away from a behaviour, which is crucial for them at the time and which carries the logic of the gift. They are required to be non-mothering, non-gift giving in order to fulfill the gender identity, which is imposed upon them by the society at large, the language, the father, other boys and even the mother herself. “Male” becomes a privileged category with the father as its “prototype”<sup>22</sup> or model with respect to “female,” which is identified with the gift giving mother. The father, who went through this process himself as a child, replaces the mother as the prototype of the human for the boy child. Then as the child grows up, *becoming* the prototype, taking over the father’s position, becomes the agenda for masculine identity. I call this process “masculation” and I believe it is the psychological root of Patriarchy.<sup>23</sup>

In Indigenous cultures, especially matriarchies, which have gift economies, the process of becoming male can be very different from the process in Patriarchal cultures. This is because there is no clean break between the gift giving, which occurs in childhood and the larger scale gift giving that takes place in the society. The transitive logic of the gift is not seen as limited to the relationship between mothers and infants or pushed into the subconscious mind, but it is expressed consciously and explicitly in the social relations within the community. Therefore the boy child does not have to give up gift giving in order to create his masculine identity.

Such circulations of gifts as potlatch (Mauss 1923)<sup>24</sup> or the Kula of the Trobriand Islanders (Malinowsky 1922) can be seen as a kind of social *bricolage*, a way of collectively and ceremonially thinking through the logic of the gift and exploring its implications. Different kinds of gifts and giving create different kinds of bonds between givers and receivers, and value is implied and passed around from person to person or from one group to another, through gift circulation. Giving to and receiving from nature is practiced as sacred communication.

When there is no market based on exchange, but the society as a whole functions by direct giving and receiving, there is a continuity for both males and females with the caregiving-and-receiving that they learn from their mothers from infancy on up. The mothering model of economics—the gift mode of distribution (and distribution also elicits a mode of production (see Marx “Introduction” to *Grundrisse* 1973 [1859])—functions for both genders. The kinds of behaviours and qualities (cooperation, sensitivity, and respectfulness) appropriate to gift economies therefore have a survival value in those economies.

Conversely, the combination of patriarchy and the market creates an altered and alienated world, which is antithetical to mothering/gift giving, de-classifies and exploits it, making it the behaviour of an unvalued or non-category. (Though this non-category is identified especially with women, who give to the privileged category and also give value to it by implication.) The kinds of behaviours and qualities (competition, domination, and greediness) fomented by Patriarchal Capitalism have survival value in market economies. Traditions of food sharing and hospitality that continue to exist inside market economies maintain some of



the qualities of the gift mode and provide a sense of significance and community in spite of the general context of exchange.

Gift giving can be enlisted in the service of patriarchy, hierarchy, and the market, and power itself can be understood as the ability to control gifts to one's own advantage. For example controlling the flow of gifts functions in a similar way, whether it takes place in a family, a community, a business, a government agency, a religious or academic institution, or between the Global South and the North. The market mechanism itself is a kind of pump siphoning gifts from one area to another. This pump works because it is invested with the motives of Patriarchy, which promote the masculated agenda of striving to have the most in order to be the prototype, the one at the top. (Like pistons, some go up only because others go down.) The possibilities for achieving this top position vary historically, but typically involve violence, which in Patriarchal Capitalism becomes systemic economic violence. Wars on the large historical scale, cultural violence on the level of class and race (and internationally), and violence against women and children on the intimate interpersonal scale uphold the flow of gifts to the top and impose the market mechanisms.

The interaction of exchange and the use of money as the prototype of exchange value are taken as standards for "right" human behaviour. While equal exchange appears to be a principle of the highest order in our society, it is not only the "cover" for the extortion of gifts, but it is the model for negative interactions like revenge and retribution, which are used as the justification for violence and war. In fact, war is really the replay of the market on another plane. The purpose of war appears to be not only to create the most killing "exchanges" so that more people of other nations will have to "give" their lives for their country, but the reward for winning is to capture the largest amount of resources, including the money standard, and actually to *become* the standard, the prototype country, the Father of the nations.

Other more "civilized" methods for controlling the flow of gifts include art and monumental architecture, as seen for example in ancient Rome or Egypt, where size seems to demonstrate superiority and obelisks show the phallic deserving of tithes and taxes. Skyscrapers in the modern metropolis have a similar function. With Capitalism the rewards for success include the possibility of becoming the masculated human prototype by accumulating stratospheric wealth or by stardom of various other kinds. Hypervisibility of the few is opposed to the invisibility of the many. The position at the top is given by the gifts of the many, whether economic gifts or simply gifts of the groups' admiring attention (which often translates into money).

Human history in the West has not really begun because from the beginning of Patriarchy until now it has been only the history of an artificial parasitic male gender construction, which leaves out the agency of the rest of humanity. In fact, it is the history of patriarchal (and/or market) mechanisms fighting each other for dominance. Perhaps we could say it is the history of a disease, which infects or destroys all the healthy cultures it meets. Western history on the basis of the

gift economy will have to begin over again, and try to link with the gift cultures, which have preserved a memory of what came before and an example of what could be. Women mothered by women do not go through masculation and, though they can succeed in the Patriarchal Capitalist system, their capacity for gift practice usually remains more or less intact because it is not nipped in the bud as happens in masculation. Women should therefore be the non-patriarchal leaders of a movement to dismantle Patriarchal Capitalism and replace it with a gift economy.

We may be forced to begin history on a gift basis by a traumatic crash of the market, by environmental devastation or nuclear war. If we start now however, we can try to extricate society from this perilous situation, methodically and carefully like a person climbing down from a tree—instead of falling. We can avoid the impending devastation, satisfying the needs of the future by stepping back from present conditions. It is not enough to consume less in the North however. We have to change the market mechanisms that take advantage of this consumption and of the gifts that feed it.

## VII: Controlling the Gifts

By severing the connections between the many instances of the gift logic Capitalist Patriarchy has clouded the picture of what may be done as an alternative, making the gift paradigm unavailable to conscious choice and elaboration as the basis of a social project. It has achieved this also by considering gift giving instinctual, as opposed to the rationality of exchange, or super human, the province of saints and madonnas, while denying its presence in the rest of life. In this way the gift logic appears special, something not for the common people, something that religions can seize as their own. Authority regarding gift giving is turned over to male priests and Patriarchs, who legislate it, and who judge whether people—women (actual gift sources)—are acting in an altruistic way. (This altruism includes giving gifts of obedience and of money to the religious institutions.)

A theory of gift giving that sees it as an economic logic, not a morality of sacrifice or as an other worldly behaviour, can serve to protect this logic and its carriers from cooptation and colonization by religions and right-wing ideologies. Unfortunately, lacking such a theory, this cooptation has already happened extensively and Patriarchal religions' and governments' versions of gift giving are widely imposed. They thus discredit the gift paradigm for many feminists who rightly fear their dominance, the hypocrisy of their motives, and the power of their hierarchies. Because of this justifiably negative assessment however, feminists risk ceding the whole field of other-orientation to religions and right wing ideologies instead of claiming it for women—and for all humans—with the basis in the gift economy and the values of care.

In this book, Paola Melchiori asserts that we have to distinguish between the gift economy and the nurturing role that then Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, attributes to women. I would counter that

authority about gift giving should not be turned over to Patriarchal religions at all, but should be reclaimed by women. If feminists reject other-orientation they fall into the trap of relinquishing its practice and its values to those who have given up the gift economy as part of the construction of their gender identities. Women, who have the social role and experience of gift giving personally and as mothers should be the authorities on this important aspect of human life. It is not by giving up our claim to other-orientation that women can end exploitation or liberate ourselves and others from the authority and control of Patriarchal religions or right-wing governments. Indeed, by rejecting other-orientation we simply fall back into that opposite of gift giving that Patriarchy has invented, the market with its ideology of self-interest, which is the rationale of Capitalist Patriarchy. Even if this is the self-interest of a group, a gender, an ethnicity, a class or a sexual orientation and even if in practice it promotes solidarity—and thus practical gift giving—within the group, it does not raise the logic of gift giving to the meta level at which it may be used as a guideline for creating a radical and far-reaching alternative.

It is not self-interest that needs to be liberated but other-interest and the process of other-interest—the gift process. We get stuck in the formulation: A gives X to B, and do not add a parenthesis. According to the transmission of gift value, we look at B as having value and probably more value than A. But if we put the parenthesis around the transaction itself (A gives X to B), we can pay attention and give value to the process itself, not to say A is more valuable because s/he gives or B is more valuable because s/he is given to, but the process itself (A gives X to B) is more valuable than the process of exchange, which is (A gives X to B if and only if B gives Y to A).

The ego-orientation of Patriarchy and Capitalism has been extended to women by their participation in the market. This has had a positive effect for many women, especially in the North, who have been liberated to some extent from poverty, domestic slavery and psychological servility. However, it is not primarily the claiming of self-interest that will allow women to create deep and widespread social change but the claiming of control over other-interest.<sup>25</sup> Patriarchy takes the values of motherliness, as imperfectly understood and practiced by masculated men, and recasts these values as morality to mitigate the cruelty of its behaviour, to offset the possibility of revolution and to pay for some of the costs the cruelty incurs. By looking at gift giving as an economic structure with an ideological superstructure, we can see the values of motherliness not as morality but as the traces of this hidden economy, of a better world which is not only possible but already exists.

Generalizing exchange-based self-interest creates a collection of isolated individuals. Generalizing gift-based other-interest creates community. Generalizing other-interest not just for personal conduct but for social change, and giving the control of it to women (Give the land to those who cultivate it!) is a necessary step in creating a radically different worldview and therefore making another world possible.

### VIII. Gifts and Communication

Those who talk about a moral economy are accessing the idea of the gift economy without discerning the thread of the gift, which unites so many different disciplines and activities. I believe that the logic of gift giving is also the logic of communication and thus of our becoming human. Recognizing this possibility also contributes to breaking the mold of mothering as only concerned with mother-child relations by extending it to a pan-human capacity in an area considered by linguists to be autonomous and biologically-based.

I have been working personally for years to show that language can be considered as a virtual verbal gift economy, the transposition of gift giving onto the vocal/auditory (or visual) plane where words, sentences, and texts function as verbal gifts given by speakers (or writers) to listeners (or readers), satisfying communicative needs. Syntax is not just the governance of rules but a system of gift transactions among words, transferred from the interpersonal to the interverbal plane. Words combine or “stick together” by being given to and received by each other. For example, the word “red” modifies the word “ball” because it is given to the word “ball,” which receives it. The two words taken together satisfy the need of the listener for a human relation-creating device (gift) regarding something (the red ball) on the non-linguistic plane. It is not only the creativity of our language capacity that defines our humanity, but our ability to give language gifts that others can receive, and to receive language gifts that others give, using them to satisfy as well as to stimulate and elicit communicative needs. In other words, language is a kind of individual, and collective, nurturing on the verbal level. The practice of a verbal gift economy, which satisfies communicative needs using word-gifts given by the collectivity and by individuals, creating gifts which are not lost but are enhanced by the giving, humanizes us while at the same time we are becoming de-humanized by the processes of exchange. This conception of language puts it back into the women’s camp, from which it seemed to have been removed by biologism, Phallogocentrism, and the symbolic order of the Father.<sup>26</sup> Meaning comes from the assertion of gift giving and the recognition of gifts at different levels, the verbal/syntactic level, the material/nurturing and community level as well as the perceptual level, where we receive/perceive the gifts of our experience and environment. By projecting the mother onto nature, considering nature as actively satisfying our needs (though in fact we have become adapted through evolution and culture to the use of the perceptual and material gifts we are given), we can persist in an attitude of gratitude, which will allow us to respond to and therefore know our surroundings as sacred and treat them with respect. In this, the theory of knowledge of the gift paradigm is consistent with the Indigenous epistemes Rauna Kuokkanen describes in her article in this book.

### VIII. The Gift of Social Change

Gift giving continues now inside “advanced” Patriarchal Capitalism though it

does not have that name. It continues in the U.S. and internationally, inside families and in community groups, groups with a common purpose, feminist, environmental, peace, ethnic solidarity and other activist groups, AA, spiritual and religious groups, therapy groups, social and art groups of various kinds, in the free software and free information movement, in such initiatives as Wikipedia, in movements against privatization and patenting, in online gifting circles, in solidarity economics, in progressive philanthropy, in immigrants' remittances and in alternative communities. Each group grapples with the control of gift giving and the context of exchange and scarcity that surrounds their attempts to give. Their struggle is more difficult because most of them are presently operating without a conscious grasp of gift giving at a meta-level, which would allow them to see the situation in terms of the relation between two paradigms. They frame what they are doing as morality, as cooperation, as family values, as independence or co-dependence, as right livelihood or grace or political commitment—even as revolution. Viewing the difficulties that arise as caused by the conflict of paradigms makes the big picture easier to understand and it also provides the possibility of intervening in different ways, creating feminist leadership and alternative strategies, which do not turn over the gift paradigm to the authority of religions or right- or left-wing Patriarchal politicians.<sup>27</sup>

There are many initiatives now of people trying to find ways of living beyond Capitalism, even in the Global North. For example there is the movement for alternative currencies such as Interest-and-Inflation-Free Money, LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems), and mutual credit Time Banks, which I believe could constitute a step along the way to a moneyless gift economy, though these currencies are mostly still based on exchange in one form or another.(see also Raddon 2003). Some, like the Toronto Dollar, where a local dollar is traded for a Canadian dollar but a percentage is given to social projects combine giving for social change with alternative local currency. I would like to mention that these and similar initiatives are themselves social gifts in that they are attempts to fill the need for change and they should be understood as such. Some of them come close to viewing gift giving at a meta-level but they do not usually have an understanding of the negativity of the logic of exchange itself. Without a critique of exchange some initiatives, such as micro-credit for example, try to give the gift of social change by extending market participation. While the desire to satisfy needs is certainly operative in this kind of initiative, it is not surprising that extending poor people's participation in the market is not a long-term solution for social change and that it also brings with it many other negative consequences. The same can be said about debt-for-nature swaps, where countries of the South give up ecologically endangered areas in exchange for debt reduction. These initiatives have been discussed critically by Ana Isla (2004) and in her article in the present volume.

The open source technology movement, which provides collaborative development of software (See Andrea Alvarado's paper in this volume) and publishes the source code of new programs, defines itself as a gift economy, but it embraces

the reward of recognition, which sets up a dynamic of exchange and Big Man patriarchal privileged categories. Moreover, the exchange economy, which has been put out through the door comes back in through the window, as some of those who have gained recognition for their free software are now being offered, and are accepting, high paying jobs in corporations.

Then there are entire experimental communities where people try to live according to the gift economy. Burning Man is a short-term experiment of this sort (see Renea Robert's article in this volume). Functioning as a week-long festival once a year, it has grown exponentially in many different locations around the world. Based on the work of Lewis Hyde, this festival revolves around the gifts of artistic expression. I believe that the other-orientation that goes with the gift logic requires that we not use it just as an end in itself, to enjoy or improve ourselves or to save our consciences but to create social change for everyone, especially in these apocalyptic times. Therefore, communities that want to be gift economies should find ways to further social change. They can do this to some extent by proposing themselves as models for others but they need to look at the multiplier effects of their actions and also actively work for change. In each case people have to think their initiatives through and figure out how to connect their immediate realities with the wider context.

All of these groups and movements would benefit by looking at the gift economy at as a maternal economy engaged in a paradigmatic struggle with exchange and Patriarchal Capitalism. Reconnecting gift giving and mothering so that we see gift behaviour as motherliness, whether it is performed by males or females—or by groups or governments—can supercede the masculated gender construction and the valuing of hyper-masculinity that has caused and is presently exacerbating so many of our problems.

Gift giving has been discussed a lot in the last 30 years though the connections between mothering and gift giving have seldom been made, nor have they been made between gift giving and language, nor between gift giving and the construction of Western gender. Most writers, as they have described the gift, have not seen the logic of exchange itself<sup>28</sup> as a major problem nor have they made the connection between Patriarchy and Capitalism. In fact most of them are male and they have once again succeeded in occupying a field of research and practice, which by rights would belong to women.

It is important not to allow the confusion arising from the competition between a patriarchal and a gift giving mode to once more eliminate women's non-Patriarchal leadership of the gift economy movement. Men who are conscious of the negativity of Patriarchal Capitalism can acknowledge and support women in their non-Patriarchal leadership. Rather than competing with them, men can follow the mothering model and give authority to women. Women can do this as well, rejecting Patriarchal Capitalism.

In this way the international women's movement together with all the other movements for social change can put together a project for shifting the paradigm, a project to end wars by altering the construction of gender, to heal the economy

by restoring and extending the mothering model, to save the environment by revising our epistemology to recognize knowledge as the creative reception/perception of gifts of all kinds coming to us from our environment, thus enhancing our capacity to treat Mother Earth with gratitude rather than with nonchalance or attempts at domination. By shifting the paradigm we can realize that humanity is not an evil self-destructive species but a species that is creating its own devastating problems because parts of it are misconstruing their gender and are acting out this misconstruction on a wide social scale. We can begin to heal ourselves and the planet by recognizing that we all create our common humanity through giving and receiving material and linguistic gifts, co-munitating. The gift economy gives us a rationale for radical social change under the non-Patriarchal leadership of women. By giving value to gift giving, we can dismantle Patriarchy and resolve the paradoxes that have been keeping it in place, so that it will not recreate itself or come again.

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The conference, "A Radically Different Worldview is Possible," was held at the beautiful semi-circular auditorium of the Las Vegas Public Library. The audience was composed of women and men who had traveled from many places in the U.S. and around the world to attend. From the comments afterwards, it was a groundbreaking experience for many.

Because mothering is an important example of gift giving and women's voices have rarely been given prominence in the present discussions of the subject, we decided to claim a space for women in the discourse on the gift by inviting only women to speak at the conference. Some of the speakers were well versed in the ideas of the gift economy, especially the speakers coming from Indigenous societies. The African, Hawaiian, Native American, and Sami contributions to this volume demonstrate the life experience of traditional and present day gift economies, and their survival in spite of the context of scarcity and deprivation imposed by the market economy. For Indigenous women, the struggle between the two paradigms is no mere theory. They have experienced gift economies and have been forced to experience and participate in exchange economies, by the gradual or violent encroachment of Patriarchal Capitalism upon their territories and traditions. It is a tribute to the possibility of women's solidarity that they accepted the invitation to speak at this conference, and for that I particularly thank them.

There were many presenters at the conference who did not know about the work of the others, and a few of the speakers had not thought about the gift perspective in the areas of their competence before. Nevertheless even those relatively new to gift economy thinking found the approach useful in describing what they were doing as gift giving and thus finding their commonality with one another in very different fields.

The conference gave evidence of a variety of points of view regarding gift giv-

ing, each of which can be used to frame the others. Each is strengthened because, taken together, the many points of view provide a wider context, and a continuity, which has been lacking for each instance of gift giving taken singly. In fact gift giving may be seen as a widespread phenomenon, which (in the West) has been deprived of its meta-level. Gift giving has been given many names that bring it into the Patriarchal Capitalist fold, names like “profit,” “housework,” “morality,” “charity,” “remittances,” “solidarity,” “political commitment,” even “love.” By bringing forward the presence of the gift in many different fields, describing it and naming it as such, we can restore it to the primacy in our thinking that is necessary to create deep social change.

Is everything gift giving then, at least everything that is not exchange? (And I have been saying that exchange itself is just a doubled and contingent gift). And doesn't this make it uninformative? I think it may be indeed that everything is gift giving at different levels, in different tempos, transposed, material, virtual, rematerialized, natural and cultural, microscopic and macroscopic, at the atomic level and at the level of galaxies. Obviously only a few of these levels are based on what humans do, except for the fact that what humans do makes up or should make up the lens with which we look at them. The objectivity of the market has broken these lenses and we have tried to look at the universe without the mother. Although this view helps us make more bombs and missiles, more new profit-making products, more genetically modified organisms, more clones, it takes away our view of all the gift aspects that we would otherwise have seen. We become color blind to the gift-color. We lose our understanding, our caregiving and our respect for human mothers and for the mothering environment, which is all around us, even in the ungiving cities—because our perceptive apparatus evolved to receive the gifts of nature and culture, which surround us. The Indigenous people's idea of Mother Nature and Mother Earth, is true. That is because it is as mothered children that our perception and perspectives are developed. Unfortunately, as Claudia von Werlhof says, Patriarchy is trying to take over the power to give birth. It is also altering our conception of mothering/gift giving, so that it appears as if all our interactions were disengaged, heartless, ego oriented. It has taken nurture out of our nature, so that we cannot see it in nature outside ourselves or in culture. It is replacing nurture with indifference and violence. What a different sense it has to say, “light hits the retina” rather than “light is ‘given’ to the retina,” which creatively receives it. Why do we say, “Nature abhors a vacuum” instead of “Nature rushes to fill a lack?” We are stuck in the wrong metaphor, and continue to construct a worldview from which gift giving has been deleted.

Thus it is important to take the hypothesis that everything is gift giving and try to put back what has been taken away over the centuries. This means reworking our lens so that we can see the gift again, healing our gift-color blindness. In doing this we may make some mistakes, overgeneralize, see gift giving where it is not there. However, once the point of view is established the mistakes can be corrected.

This volume is divided into four sections according to general themes. All of



the presentations necessarily address the themes of the other sections, however because gift giving as we now know it coexists with exchange, which, as part of the dominant paradigm and the paradigm of dominance, necessarily conditions gift-giving and fractures its continuities. Nevertheless, the first section, "The Gift Economy, Past and Present," attempts to provide a glimpse of gift giving beyond and before the context of Patriarchal Capitalism. It includes articles that give us an idea of what living in a gift economy is actually like and what perspectives emerge from gift-based thinking. These presentations give a sense of community life and worldview in the present and the past where Patriarchy and Capitalism were/are not the central focus of society but instead the gift logic orients human beings towards others, the community at large and nature. They help us see the gift economy as the basic human mode of distribution of which exchange is only a (harmful) variation. Unfortunately the worldview based on exchange has made most Euro/Americans distort our perception of gift giving, so that we have rejected out of hand the important model it provides for organizing society. This section presents the gift as it exists not only among Indigenous people but also as part of the European heritage, and as a perspective that can be used in disciplines as distant from each other as semiotics and biology. Wherever Patriarchal explanations have worn thin, malfunction, or do not exist, the logic of the gift shines through as an ever-present life-giving alternative.

In the first article, Jeanette Armstrong (Canada) gives us a brief but clear description of what life in a gift economy feels like and how it can be organized for collective survival, given that her people, the Okanagan Synyx are presently living in a desert environment. Her sense of the importance of the land and the community comes from a way of life that avoids the pitfalls of Capitalism because it is egalitarian and has gift giving as its core principle. She provides examples from her language of conceptual nuances, which are radically different from those to which Euro/Americans are accustomed.

Kaarina Kailo's (Finland) article discusses the ancient European cross cultural imaginary, which is visible in myths based on non masculated life-centered values, prior to the take-over by the master imaginary. Tracing back the roots of the gift to the epochs preceding patriarchy in the West can allow Euro-Americans to recognize their commonality with Indigenous peoples beyond the divide-and-conquer categories of the master narrative.

Rauna Kuokkanen (Samiland/Canada) speaks of the gifts of Indigenous epistemes, which, like the gift paradigm generally, have appeared incomprehensible or even threatening to the academia of Western Patriarchal Capitalism because of their emphasis on non-productive expenditure. She makes explicit the spiritual traditions of the Northern European Indigenous Sami people in which giving to the land is the way of communicating with and honouring nature. She emphasizes the importance of recognition of gifts as part of a network of relations, which are built upon responsibility towards the other and sees this gift-based worldview as an urgently needed alternative to patriarchal global capitalist paradigms.

Vicki Noble (USA) tells us that “the central icon of matriarchal agricultural societies was the Goddess—the abundant and generous Mother of All Things—whose centrality begs to be re-established today along with women in leadership as her ministers.” Noble traces the image of the life giving Goddess from prehistoric cave drawings of vulvas through the venus figurines and ceramic vessels discussed by Marija Gimbutas. Ancient Asian women leaders functioned as Dakinis and Yoginis, female shamans in Mongolia and the bakers of bread in ancient Greece were connected with rituals around pregnancy, healing and birthing, while, contrary to patriarchal interpretations, female communal agriculture provided an early model of a peaceful society without private property. Modern witches belong to a long line of powerful women of many cultures who have threatened patriarchy and borne the brunt of its reprisals.

Patricia Pearlman (USA) is the Priestess emeritus of the Temple of the Goddess Sekhmet in the Nevada desert, a project of the Foundation for a Compassionate Society based on the gift economy. Patricia, a modern witch, describes the project, which has had thousands of visitors over the 15 years of its existence, and gives us the gifts of her wit and her will.

With Heide Goettner-Abendroth’s work on Matriarchies, the Gift Economy finds its wider context. Goettner-Abendroth (Germany) tells us that matriarchies are not, as European patriarchal scholars have defined them, based on women’s rule. Rather, these societies, many of which still exist worldwide, are egalitarian and consensus based. Products of the experience of millennia, they function according to the principles of motherliness and gift giving. We do not have to invent an abstract utopia but can turn to these societies that function according to the most intelligent patterns of social organization for a radically different perspective. A professor of philosophy who gave up her position in order to concentrate on the study of matriarchies, Goettner-Abendroth demonstrates the gifts of dedication that have been necessary to start her own Akademie Hagia outside patriarchal academia.

Susan Petrilli (Australia/Italy) brings to the women’s movement the gift of her work on the semiotician, Lady Victoria Welby (1837-1912), who was an important predecessor for thinking about language and gift giving. “With Welby and beyond Welby,” Petrilli sees the direction towards the other, beyond identity logic as “the logic of humanism, the humanism of otherness,” Her discussion of global capitalism as communication-production, -exchange, -consumption denounces the present phase of capitalism as alienated from the humanism of otherness and proposes a semioethics as an antidote to this alienation.

Evolution biologist Elizabet Sahtouris (USA) expands the term “business” to include cooperative as well as competitive economic practices, which she finds in the natural as well as the human social world. Darwin’s ideas were influenced by Malthus’ belief in competition for survival in scarcity, which as Hazel Henderson has said, were projected into social Darwinist interpretations of economic behavior and are still part of the rationale of the institutions of globalization. Instead from Sahtouris’ point of view, throughout Earth’s history, competition in evolution has

been superseded repeatedly by negotiated cooperation at a higher level. Organizing cooperatively and “glocally” can transform corporations away from competitive behaviour and towards collaborative maturity.

At present Patriarchy and Capitalism weigh heavily upon gift giving of which they form the context and from which they draw their sustenance. Other-oriented gift giving is the ground and complement of self interested exchange, which takes from it, exploiting the gifts of the many. This second section, “Gifts Exploited by Exchange,” addresses the context in which gift giving is presently embedded, and gives examples of some of its destructive effects, which are legion. Lies and propaganda follow the ego-oriented model of the exchange economy, while the truth is a gift to the receiver. By revealing the truth about Patriarchal Capitalism, the speakers follow the gift model and satisfy the needs of everyone to know.

Claudia von Werlhof (Austria) tells us that “patriarchy is much more than just a word for polemical purposes. It can instead be understood as a concept that explains the character of the whole social order in which we are living today, socialism included.” Patriarchy, she says, is a war system based on the negation of matriarchy, which still exists within patriarchies as a second culture. Von Werlhof gives a deep analysis of how Patriarchy crystallizes into Capitalism and advises us how to move towards an alternative.

Louise Benally, Dineh, Navajo (USA), talks about the difficulty of living in a gift economy while the gifts of the community are being taken by the market. The coal from Big Mountain, where her tribe lives, is used to supply the electricity to Las Vegas where the conference was being held. In fact, the waste of electricity on the neon lights of the city of gambling is notorious. In Big Mountain there is nothing—no electricity, no running water.

Ana Isla (Peru) demonstrates the importance of not accepting the false gifts of Patriarchal Capitalism, which are hidden exchanges, Trojan horses of the market. Her analysis shows that micro credit projects and debt-for-nature swaps can be deadly in spite of what may appear to be good intentions. In supporting the gift economy it is important to recognize what is not a gift, as well as what is.

Condemning the glorification of virtual technobodies in corporate cyberspace and the extraction of the life out of real flesh and blood, Mechthild Hart (Germany/USA) describes the parasitism of Capitalist Patriarchy on the gift-giving bodies of women in international sex trafficking and immigrant domestic work. She places hope in the web of reciprocal obligations of care that develop bonds across great distances.

Sizani Ngubane, is a South African HIV/AIDS activist. Before colonization, she tells us, food was produced by individual families but it was not individualized. There was food for all in the great grandmother’s house and Mother Earth was regarded as a sacred gift. Colonization took 87 percent of the land for the whites. Now there is widespread poverty, a break down of the community, and a widespread AIDS epidemic.

Margaret Randall (USA) denounces the Orwellian double speak with which

the right-wing and the market are raping our language, while “speech that is truthful and beautiful is the currency of the gift economy.” She gives us the gift of two true stories—one of the propaganda attempts of the US government and the other a story of human constancy and rebirth in the face of the paramilitary of Argentina.

Carol Brouillet (USA) reveals the background of 9/11, asks us to look at the dark side of U.S. government and question the official story. The Big Lie cannot stand; researchers from all over the world are trying to bring us the truth.

Genevieve Vaughan (USA/Italy) attempts to understand the logical and psychological connections between heteronormativity and the market. The Western construction of gender as heterosexual brings with it the construction of a non-nurturing mode of distribution based on exchange. The norm of heterosexuality, which privileges the “masculated” male engenders the gigantic sorting process of the market and incarnates the value norm, money. The gift economy provides an alternative for living and thinking beyond the norm of normativity.

“Gifts in the Shadow of Exchange,” the third section of this book, provides examples of gift giving that sustain and strengthen community in spite of the exploitation and poverty imposed by the system based on exchange. Survival and even thrival are fostered by gift giving at new levels, not only beyond but within and around the market.

Yvette Abrahams (South Africa) speaks of the gifts of the African Khoekhoe stories, which satisfied the community’s needs to know and to follow the telling together. She describes the present scarcity imposed by the system and the continuation of gift giving and sharing in spite of the widespread poverty. Sixty-six percent of food is produced by the gift labour of women’s subsistence farming in Africa. The “compassion economy,” where everyone chips in to help someone in need, survived slavery and colonialism but unfortunately is not surviving the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Khoekhoe spirituality is based on gift giving; hospitality, and ceremonial giving are a spiritual necessity. Abrahams’ description of how her people living in abundance in the past, without private property, related to each other is a key for looking at gift giving as communication. Says Abrahams, “When you have enough and I have enough our giving can taken on a symbolic character.”

Scarcity in the Global South, already a result of exploitation by the North, has been intensified by globalization. Thus migrants have been driven from their home countries by poverty, and forced to go to work in the North to provide the necessary sustenance to their families. These individual contributions cumulatively form a huge monetary gift to the economies of the South. According to immigration activist Maria Jimenez (Mexico/USA), women and men of the “two-thirds” world have been engaged in gift giving through the one hundred billion dollars per year that they collectively send home in remittances of \$100 to \$300 every month or two, gleaned from the salaries they earn in the North. Strong networks based on family bonds facilitate this gift giving and maintain community in spite of distance. The migrants transform the experience of exclusion and exploitation

into one of liberation for themselves and their families.

As Peggy Antrobus (Barbados) says, there is a community-building solidarity of gifts between those who have emigrated from the “Creole” culture of the Caribbean, who take or send home useful products from the North, and those at home; bonds are maintained in this way over great distances. At the time of the conference, Grenada, the island of her birth, had been devastated by a hurricane, and Antrobus knew that much gift giving would be necessary by the people of the Diaspora to restore the resources upon which the local economy was based. She believes that the gift economy needs to be recognized and affirmed or it will die, negated by the values of neo liberal, capitalist globalization.

The youngest speaker at the conference, Madeline Assetou Auditore, (Ivory Coast/Italy), eleven years old at the time of the conference, gives an impassioned plea for support for the poor children of the world who are suffering due to the selfishness of the rich.

Rabia Abdelkarim (Algeria/Senegal) describes women’s economic solidarity networks in Senegal where “the heart of the economy of women is relationship and they don’t want to lose the capacity of the circulation of the gift.” Calling upon traditional gift-based rituals and relationships of mutuality, women are trying to create an economy for life, in which values other than money, such as dignity, are primary.

The non-profit sector in the U.S. now counts for more than fifteen percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Tracy Gary (USA) talks from the point of view of a donor and philanthropic organizer. She tells the story of her decades of work in the women’s philanthropy movement and describes how she helped to create an exponential leap in women’s giving by empowering wealthy women to donate for social change.

Andrea Alvarado (Costa Rica) talks about FIRE, Feminist International Radio Endeavor, which is a women’s internet radio station and began as a project of the Foundation for a Compassionate Society. She discusses open source technology as a gift and gives an example of the way FIRE is sharing it with women.

Erella Shadmi (Israel) discusses the importance of forgiving, that is, shifting into a mode that is not one of retaliation/exchange/paying-back. The mode of for-giving concentrates attention on the unmet needs behind the offense, and attempts to satisfy them. Gift giving re-presents itself at many levels, shifting from theory to practice and vice versa. This presentation was given in tandem with a presentation by Palestinian Sylvia Shihadeh, which was not revised in time to be included in this volume. Together the two activists gave an example of peaceful collaboration and mutual respect, which was a much needed gift to all.

Linda Christiansen-Ruffman from Nova Scotia (Canada) looks at the gift economy features of women’s community work. She realizes there are millions of unseen gifts that women give to each other and to the women’s movement beyond Patriarchal Capitalism’s economic fundamentalism and its appropriation of the commons. However she wonders if recognizing these gifts will not make them more vulnerable to appropriation.

The articles in the fourth section, "Gift Giving for Social Transformation," present conscious strategic uses of giving in struggles for a better world, and point to ways of gift giving that can lead to social transformation. Hawaiian sovereignty activist, UN advisor and lawyer Mililani Trask opposes the commodification of knowledge and nature, the theft of intellectual property and bio piracy that are now being promoted by globalization. Traditional knowledge and relationships with nature are sacred for Indigenous people. The bounty of Earth must be part of the commons so that all may share in the gifts of the creator. She makes the important point that Indigenous women should be in the leadership of the movement for a gift economy. In fact, if they come from gift economies they have the experience of generalized social gift giving, which makes up the context in which their roles as mothers and daughters are formed.

Taking the point of view of the other is an important aspect of an other-oriented gift economy. By taking the point of view of our sisters in the South who have been on the receiving end of "our" economic policies of structural adjustment and globalization, women in the North can recognize that we are part of a much larger international movement, which can give us both hope and direction. Corinne Kumar (India/Tunisia) tells us that we need an imaginary beyond the universalisms of the dominant discourse, a new knowledge paradigm, which refuses to accept the one objective, rational, scientific discourse, cosmology and world view as the *only* world view. Kumar looks at the worldview of the future, of women of the South, the people on the margins, the South in the South and the South in the North. In it she finds the voices of radical dissent that can give rise to a new imaginary. They show us that the development models, the models of democracy, progress, human rights, "enduring freedom" that we have been "sold" are deeply destructive. In contrast they give us an alternative vision where people on the margins are subjects of their own history.

Marta Benevides (El Salvador) life-long peace activist, tells us how the right created the fear of losing the remittances in order to influence recent elections in her country. As a strategist she says we have to vision what we want, do discernment and manifest power by being the future now, being peace. We should give the gift of living for the ideals of peace, freedom and justice, not just of dying for them. She believes we should be peace, be the revolution, changing the situation locally, with peaceful actions of the people, appropriate to each place.

Paola Melchiori (Italy) worries about the gift economy bringing back women to their traditional roles as proposed by then Cardinal Ratzinger, proponent of women's complementarity to men for spousal harmony, who is now the Pope of the Catholic Church. She believes that the only way to protect women from this subtle justification of enslavement is that they be freed from forced giving and practice gift giving beyond patriarchal control. Melchiori also finds hope in women mothering each other, creating relationships in the feminist movement as well as in alternative economic experiments, such as those created under women's leadership during the recent crisis in Argentina. Melchiori grapples with questions within the women's movement, which must be resolved in order for it to

assume the leadership role that is necessary for the gift economy and paradigm to prevail.

Frieda Werden (USA/Canada) of Women's International News Gathering Service (WINGS), discusses the models of private and public ownership of radio in different countries and time periods, and suggests that non commercial community radio and television can be seen as gifts, not just of information but of *channels* of information for and by the many. These channels run counter to the prevailing capitalist morality of information for sale and present a transformative model of co-muni-cation as "giving gifts together."

Filmmaker Renea Roberts (USA) showed a clip from her film, *Gifting It*. In her article, she describes what the feeling is at Burning Man, the gift economy festival, which is based on the work of Lewis Hyde. There are now many such four-day festivals, where people share their works of art and imagination free, around the world. Participating in this social experiment it is possible to get a glimpse of what a world based on a gift economy might be like. The festivals thus "normalize" an alternative within the capitalist monolith.

Brackin Firecracker gives examples of activism from her own life, including examples of the innovative new genre of radical cheerleading. She describes the "Rhizome Collective," a group she helped to form of young activists, who are trying to create a living example of an alternative, while they are at the same time helping to build a global movement of resistance to oppression and injustice. She believes it is important to recognize that gift giving is what activists have been doing all along, and that through this recognition, their values are more generally validated, giving them greater power to satisfy impelling needs for social change.

Angela Miles (Canada) makes important points emphasizing the utility of the gift paradigm as a "critical and visionary perspective that is broad and deep enough to speak to all our struggles and move them all forward." It lets us see for example that "in the non-patriarchal world we aspire to, men will not be masculated; their maleness will be lived through and not against their giving human qualities," and "in a feminist movement seeking giving alternatives to exchange rather than escape from giving, remaining women's sub-cultures and matriarchal Indigenous cultures are honoured as precursors of a more human future, not dismissed as vestiges of the past.

The "Feminist Gift Economy Statement" concludes this book. It was prepared by International Feminists for a Gift Economy, a loose-knit group, which began in Norway in 2001 at a meeting of women called by the nascent International Feminist University Network, makes a collective statement, which affirms the gift economy and critiques the market in the context of globalization. Members and non-members of this informal network have presented together at panels on the gift economy at international conferences such as the World Social Forums and Women's Worlds meetings as well as other activist and academic conferences. Some of the authors of the articles in this book are members of the network. This statement was first presented by the group at their workshop at the World Social

Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2002. See the website [www.gift-economy.com](http://www.gift-economy.com) for further information and to join the network list serve.

...In the light of the conference and the articles in this book, I invite the reader to seize the time and change the paradigm!

This is only the beginning.

*Genevieve Vaughan is an independent researcher, activist, social change philanthropist, and founder of the feminist Austin, Texas-based Foundation for a Compassionate Society in operation from 1987–1998 and in a reduced form until 2005. She is the author of For-Giving: A Feminist Criticism of Exchange (1997) and Homo Donans (2006), and the editor of an issue of the Italian journal Athanor titled Il Dono/The Gift: A Feminist Perspective (2004). She is also the author of two children's books, Mother Nature's Children (1999) and Free/Not Free (2007), and has produced a CD of her Songs for the Tree of Life. A documentary about her life, Giving for Giving: Not All Texans Are Like Bush, coproduced by Cara Griswold and Becky Hays of Full Circle Productions, has just been completed. Showings can be scheduled and copies ordered from [www.givingforgiving.com](http://www.givingforgiving.com). Vaughan's books and many articles are available free on her website [www.gift-economy.com](http://www.gift-economy.com). She is now based in Italy and devotes her time to writing and speaking about the gift economy. She has three daughters.*

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Patriarchy and Capitalism have similar values and motivations: competition for domination and the desire for accumulation in order to be the biggest, the one at the top. Like Capitalism, patriarchy is systemic. I discuss this more in the text and in my article below.
- <sup>2</sup> New information has come out about the numbers of Native people killed by diseases brought by the Europeans. In fact the lands seemed uninhabited because the people who lived there had all died due to epidemics of measles and smallpox brought from Europe. So first, the Europeans were carriers of diseases, which destroyed the Indigenous people. They ignored the extent of the Indigenous civilization because they did not know it. Secondly they attacked the remaining Native people ferociously, taking over their land, eliminating them as competitors. They developed a worldview, which hid the rapacity of their behaviour from themselves, and this worldview was added to their original ignorance. Similarly we do not consciously recognize the gift economy, which we are actually practicing and we also attack and exploit it so we are in denial about it, and this denial is added to our lack of recognition of it.
- <sup>3</sup> Barbara Mann tells us with her characteristic wit that the word "How" with which Native people typically greeted the Europeans meant "Go away!"
- <sup>4</sup> Examples of matriarchies range from the relatively small group of the Mosuo in China (See the television program *Frontline/World* 2005, "The Women's Kingdom") to the Minangkabau in Sumatra, who number some four million (Sanday 1998, 2002), from tribes such as the Navajo, the Hopi and the Iroquois in Northern America (Allen 1986; Mann 2000), and the Khasi in Northern India, the Arawak in South America, and the



Cuna in Central America (Goettner-Abendroth 1991, 2000). There are many more such societies but intense polemics have raged around them because of the threat women's egalitarian leadership poses to patriarchy. As Paula Gunn Allen says "The physical and cultural genocide of American Indian tribes is and was mostly about patriarchal fear of gynocracy" (1986: 3). By defining Matriarchal leadership as egalitarian, not "women's rule," Paula Gunn Allen (1986), Heidi Goettner-Abendroth (1991), Barbara Mann (2000), and Peggy Sanday (1981, 2002) have reframed the discussion so that the non-hierarchical and inclusive leadership style of women can be included among the options for social transformation.

- 5 Studies of cooperation and "partnership" (Eisler 1988) propose that a better world can be built on cooperation by diminishing dominator values. The discussion of the gift economy and patriarchal capitalism attempts to find where cooperative (partnership) and competitive (dominator) values and behaviours come from and to use this knowledge in constructing the alternative.
- 6 The Bielefeld School in Germany, consisting of Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Claudia von Werlhof among others, considers work beyond wage labour, such as women's life-giving subsistence labour, the source of capital accumulation. I agree with this approach but I look at this labour as gift labour, which I believe establishes a common thread of continuity with other kinds of gift giving.
- 7 Because exchange is adversarial it creates a focus on the individual and an ideology of the individual as opposed to others or "the masses." In a society based on the gift economy the individual would appear different, more inclusive of others. I am not proposing the end of individuality but that it develop on a very different basis.
- 8 An early exception making the connection with mothering is Helene Cixous (Cixous and Clement 1975). Among the men writing about the gift economy are Marcel Mauss (1990 [1923-24]), Bronislaw Malinowsky (1922), Lewis Hyde (1979), Alain Caille (1998) Jacques Godbout (1992), Caille and Godbout (1998), the MAUSS Revue publishing since 1982, as well as Jacques Derrida (1992), Pierre Bourdieu (1990) Serge Latouche (2004) and many others. On the other hand some women have written extensively on the "love" economy, the "informal" economy and the commons without connecting them specifically to gift economies. See for example, Hazel Henderson (1991, 1999). Others have theorized the care economy within the framework of the market (Nancy Folbre 1994, 2001).
- 9 There are important women's organizations in all of these areas and women are also very much involved in mixed gender movements, often doing much of the gift giving work under male leadership.
- 10 In this they are similar to the opposition and threat to the institutions created in Europe by the Nature religion of witchcraft.
- 11 For example, initiatives for economic justice, for equal pay for comparable work, for a living wage, for Fair Trade instead of Free Trade, initiatives for community currencies, for socially useful investing, for solidarity economics, and experiments like the Work Less Party, provide alternative models, help to create a less monolithic economy and empower grassroots agency. These attempts at partial change can make it easier to transition to more radical change without violence. I believe it is important not to consider them the final goals but steps along the path to a gift economy.
- 12 Since the male genitals are the physiological "possessions" by which males are assigned to their category in opposition to females who lack those possessions, it seems that having greater possessions can place them in a superior category generally. More on gender categorization can be found in my article in this book.

- <sup>13</sup> African gift economies as the “other” of European Patriarchal Capitalism were plundered and their members became “property” through exchange, their gifts turned toward the slave “owners.”
- <sup>14</sup> For example Derrida (1992) sees gifts as almost impossible because if they are done for recognition, and even if they are recognized, they become exchanges. Isn't the lack of recognition of housework then a proof that it is a unilateral gift?
- <sup>15</sup> Godbout and Caille assert that it is not necessary for the gift to be pure.
- <sup>16</sup> Matriarchal gift giving is egalitarian because it is not invested with Patriarchal motivations. There is less occasion for a struggle for recognition in egalitarian gift economies because recognition is easily given and passed on. (see Trask and Kuokkanen in this volume) We might look at the give-away competition of potlatch of Native Americans of the Northwest as the struggle to be recognized as the prototype however, and similar to the struggle that must have been going on at the time consciously or unconsciously between the Western and the Indigenous prototypes of the human.
- <sup>17</sup> Similarly, after the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers, there were many people on line calling for an investigation of the root causes of the attack in the poverty and injustice the U.S. had helped to create through globalization and wars in the Middle East. It was hoped that by giving aid to impoverished people of Afghanistan these causes could have been alleviated. Instead, a culprit was found to punish, i.e., with whom to “exchange,” retaliating for the harm the U.S. had “received.” If anything this punishment aggravated the conditions from which the original attack arose. That is, if the attack was not an “inside job” as many suspect.
- <sup>18</sup> For Marx (1930 [1867]) this is abstract labour value. We can say it is labour abstracted from gift giving. The concentration on the need of the other and the creativity involved in filing it, including personal details and tastes, along with the value transmitted, are left aside for this abstraction. In the market a product derives its quantity of value from the relation of similarity or difference with regard to the value of all other products within a given branch of production. These are abstract and general relations. The quantity of exchange value that products have depends upon the socially necessary labour time required to produce them (also calculated abstractly) at a given level of technology and productivity of labour. When the exchanger sells the product to another, the return is not a gift but only an exchange value, which s/he then passes on in a new exchange. The “expenditure of living labour” creates value. But unless it has a direct receiver no gift value is transmitted by it because gift value is the implied value of the other. Marx's metaphors, such as the commodity being “congealed labour” show how hard it is to imagine labour materialized as value in something when it is separated from the receiver of the gift. Such labour is the service or gift-production, which does not reach its destination because it is stopped by exchange or privatization. In her article in this book, Jeanette Armstrong tells us about a word in her Okanagan Syilx language that means to “stop the giving, to put an obstacle between the giving and yourself.”
- <sup>19</sup> Retailers use gift giving to promote sales with gimmicks; this is a gift used for the purposes of exchange. One can of course buy something for someone else as a gift; this is a gift beyond the exchange interaction itself.
- <sup>20</sup> Women seem to want to include men in their meetings and events while men typically do not include women. This perhaps shows that the women are practicing the gift logic, which is inclusive. They identify a possible need of men to be included and try to give them that gift while the men are practicing the identity logic, which is categorical and exclusive and does not stimulate them to perceive a need of women

- to be included. Even in the cases where they do perceive the need, they usually do not feel compelled to satisfy it. By including men, women run the risk of embracing those who are practicing an opposing and oppositional logic.
- <sup>21</sup> The practice in some countries of allowing girl children to starve while boy children are fed demonstrates how gifts and the implication of value can be withheld. The girl dies because to her parents and the wider society she is valueless and unvalued (and *because* she is allowed to die she is valueless).
- <sup>22</sup> The idea of a prototype or best example of a kind for the formation of categories can be found in the field of cognitive linguistics. See George Lakoff (1987) and John Taylor (2003).
- <sup>23</sup> I have discussed this process extensively in my books *For-Giving* (1997) and *Homo Donans* (2006), and the reader can find more about it in my article in this volume. The Freudian mythical murder of the father by his sons can be read as the overtaking of the prototype position by boys, which, seen in this way, is a moment of the early concept forming process in the child's gender development, not a real historical murder. Even if he overcomes the father as the prototype however, the boy still does not have the access to the gift economy he had when he was identified with his mother. In matriarchies and gift economies he never loses this access.
- <sup>24</sup> Where male chiefs compete to be the greatest gift givers—the most mothering men.
- <sup>25</sup> For example, look at the gift perspective and the issue of abortion rights. The idea that women can choose not to undertake years of maternal gift labour demonstrates that gift giving (or not) is a rational choice, that not giving birth, choosing not to give, can be based on other-orientation (recognition of one's own limitations as a giver in a context of scarcity for example), thus giving value and authority to the person who considers or takes that alternative. The ability to choose abortion gives back to women some of the authority over gift giving that Patriarchal religions have taken away from them for centuries. Moreover if the masculated male gender identity rejects the mother and imposes an identity based on not-giving, the ability of women (mothers) not to give, challenges the male gender construction by removing its oppositional cornerstone. The question of abortion is not so much a question of the right of the fetus to life (a right, which seems to end at birth anyway) but the right of the mother to give or not to give, and her authority over the gift logic itself. If religions (and governments) lose their authority over gift giving, what authority do they have left?
- <sup>26</sup> Though much has been written on women and language the writers have mostly taken their points of departure from within linguistics, semiotics, the philosophy of language as provided by Patriarchal academia. Similarly feminist economists have continued to work within the market paradigm. Writing about language, feminists discuss for instance how women use language differently from men (Lakoff, R. 1975; Tannen 1990) or how to produce an *écriture féminine* (Cixous and Clement 1975). What is needed is a different conception of language itself in tandem with a different conception of the economy, reformulating both in terms of the gift paradigm.
- <sup>27</sup> Initiatives as widely divergent as the Bolivarian Revolution of Hugo Chavez, which provides free health care and education to the poor and free petroleum products to poor countries and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, demonstrate gift giving being practiced by men “at the top.” I would say that even when men do gift giving at this elevated level they are still practicing the economy of mothering (and Chavez was probably positively influenced by his Indigenous heritage) although the fact of being men in the prototype position again obscures the mothering model. For

masculated men this is perhaps an apotheosis of what they gave up as children, the “return” of what in the Freudian sense has been “removed.” This “return” in which the men as philanthropists, become even more gift giving than the mothers whose identity they had to relinquish, paradoxically becomes the reward for acceding to the “one” position. It is in this sense that Patriarchal Capitalist philanthropy should be read. See the excellent book *The Better Angels of Capitalism* by Andrew Herman (1998). This also is the moral veneer of such organizations as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Patriarchal control of gift giving is normalized once more.

- 28 The group of the *MAUSS* (Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste des Sciences Sociales) *Revue* critiques what they call “utilitarianism” but they continue to talk about “gift exchanges.” An important critique of “economics” can be found in the writing of Serge Latouche (2004).
- 29 The idea for the temple had its beginnings in in the 1960s when I went to Egypt on vacation with my husband. The tour guide showed us the statue of the goddess Sekhmet, and said that she was the goddess of fertility, and that by making her a promise, a woman could get pregnant. I did that, promising her a temple and that very week became pregnant. I knew I had to keep the promise and finally bought land near the nuclear test site in the Nevada desert where the was temple built in 1992, and after which I gave the land back to the Western Shoshone. Cynthia Burkhardt was the temple priestess for the first year, and Patricia Pearlman was the second, from 1993 to 2004. Statues of Sekhmet and Mother Earth, by Indigenous sculptor Marsha Gomez, grace the temple along with smaller images of goddesses from many cultures. The temple and its guest house are free to visitors according to the principles of the gift economy. The present priestess is Anne Key (see [www.sekhmettemple.com](http://www.sekhmettemple.com)). Patricia Pearlman died of cancer in March 2006. We mourn her passing.

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**I. THE GIFT ECONOMY,  
PAST AND PRESENT**





## **Indigenous Knowledge and Gift Giving**

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### **Living in Community**

I would like to share my language with you, and give you greetings from all of my family and my community and my people, the Syilx. I give thanks that I am able to share some words with you.

I'm from an oral culture, and so that's how in this article, I share some of my ideas about giving—the concept of gift—and some ideas about my own people's understanding of giving, in terms of land, community and family, as well as the individual, because I believe something is really wrong in the world today. The only thing that I can offer is my thinking. How it might be put to work, how it might be incorporated, or how it might be thought of in terms of the change that needs to happen, is all up to those who hear and read these words.

I come from a small community in the southern interior part of British Columbia, about 200 miles inland and parallel to Vancouver. My people are sometimes referred to as the Okanagan people, but the Okanagan is actually the geographic valley that we live in. We are the Syilx people, and that is how I refer to myself.

The area that I come from has a lot to do with what I'm going to talk about. It is one of the only areas in Canada that is considered to be a desert. It means we have very little rainfall. This is because of the two mountain systems on both sides of our valley. The ecology is very harsh and dry in the summertime, and therefore the learning that our people have had to accomplish and achieve over many generations, in order to survive, has a lot to do with scarcity. In a land where there is not a lot of abundance, where the fragility of the eco-system requires absolute knowledge and understanding that there must be care not to overextend our use of it because it can impact on how much we have to eat the following year, or years after in terms of your coming generations, we have developed a practice, a philosophy and a governance systems are based on our understanding that we need to be always vigilant and aware of not over-using, not over-consuming the resources of our land, and that we must always be mindful of the importance of sharing and giving.

We must also be aware in everything that we are doing that the same possibilities must be available to our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren, and so it is an immense responsibility. I think of it in terms of our direct connection to how the land operates, how the land gives life, and how, as human beings, we are a part of that. I think losing that connection has a lot to do with some things

that are wrong today in the world. From my perspective, the land is a body that gives continuously, and we as human beings are an integral part of that body.

What Indigenous means to me is that everything that exists on the Earth is interdependent, an interdependence that must be understood. As an Indigenous person, I must have knowledge about it and I must be able to cooperate with all the other living things on the planet, on this land, so as not to make any one of them extinct or remove any one of them for my own need. In other words, to cooperate and to collaborate with every living thing so that they can live and I can live at the same level of health. To cooperate so that they can continue giving to me and to my children and my children's children, the health that they deserve, in being a life form of the land. Indigenous, to me, means you can't be without that knowledge and that level of cooperation with the land. Without this cooperation, you cannot call yourself Indigenous. For example, a plant we may have in our home is indigenous to somewhere because it could live there on its own in an interdependent relationship with its climate, within its land and its topography. But once removed from there, we have to do all kinds of other things to allow this plant to live in our environment. All kinds of energy and work has to be expended to help it live, as this plant, in its pot, is no longer indigenous in a room in anyone's house. If we took it out of the house and put it in the desert, where we live, this plant would not survive a day.

I think of Indigenousness in that way. I think of the paradigm shift that's required to recover the ability for human beings to live on the land without the immensity of destructive support systems that are required for the plant, for us, to live. I think of it in terms of the way that all the systems have been changed in my community in a forced way.

When I think about my life, I think about how the land gave me my life. Without the Okanagan land, without the Syilx people and all the relatives that live and lived on this land, without every single thing that sustains my people such as food, medicine, clothing and shelter, without all of those things that surround us, surround me, I would not be. I can only express in my language the meaning this has for me, and for me to be unable to protect the land, unable to stand between those things becoming extinguished from the land and the depth of love and understanding that's required for us to continue to receive that gift and to continue to honour and respect that gift, is profoundly significant. It's like family members being assaulted while your hands are tied. It is the same feeling with community, and it is the same with all of the generations of relatives that have sustained each other, interacted with each other, in really specific ways to be able to continue life.

I want to give you some idea of how our community thinks of itself and how it thinks about what community is. To us, our community is a living system. Like the land, it's a living diversity of beings and that diversity is immensely necessary, like the diversity on the land is immensely necessary. There's not one thing on the land that isn't necessary, there's not one person within community that isn't necessary, in our understanding of it. It would be like saying I don't need my fingernails

or toes just because I don't use them every day. Each person in the community fulfills a part of the community that may not be understood, in their generation or in the next generations. Like each diverse being on the land, we have no way of determining which is more important or which is less important. We have an understanding in our community that no person is superior to another.

I look at how society outside of our traditional community operates with the understanding that some people have more rights than others, that some people have more of a priority to things than others, and that some people not only are born with priority, but are born with the control over who has priority. They live and die within that idea of privilege, control and exclusion of others.

I think that part has always been, for me, a very difficult thing. I relate to people in a really different way because it is how my community relates. I can't recognize hierarchies. I don't recognize hierarchies. People are people in terms of how they relate to me. I notice it on an everyday level when I go into the community that I live next to. Depending on how much money you've got, and how much money you're going to spend, the amount of respect—and I don't like to use that word because that's a problem for me, but I will use the word anyway—the amount of respect paid is really related not to the person, but to their money, their power and to their ability to spend. This is so false and so inhuman and so against community and so very different from our understanding of what respect is within community.

In my community the chief—we do have chiefs in our community, women and men—the idea of “chief” has to do with how well that person hears everyone, and how well that person understands what is going on that might be wrong, that might cause conflict, and so might cause danger to the people. Our word for chief means to be able to take the many strands that are moving outward and twine them into one strand. One strand meaning one people and unification and a re-balancing with the land. It means that person must have an immense ability to feel what the community is saying, an immense ability to listen to the things that have been said, and to know the things that are happening, and to put it all together and say it back to the people. So it's about communication, and it's about being able to listen and being able to put it together so everyone understands and says, “Yeah, that's it!” It's not about telling people what to do, or leading people, or forcing people; it's being able to verbalize and communicate what everybody feels and knows and understands and remembers, and being able to put that together to create a movement forward. So our system relies on that kind of inter-relationship and communication in our community.

There is a process that I am just going to describe to you, briefly, as an example. I helped to establish an educational program to recover our traditional practices on the land within our community and within our families, called En'owkin. I've been working at it for 25 years. The idea for En'owkin comes from *Enowkinwixw*, a word that comes from our language. It is a word that describes how communities should operate, in terms of deep communication as a community process. In our minds, the way communities should operate is to be able to include everyone. The

concept of *Enowkinwixw* is that it is an inclusion-seeking process. Rather than exclude minorities, we actually try to find ways to help the minority articulate what they are saying, because minorities usually are saying something really different from everybody else. They are the ones who are experiencing something that really differs from others' experience in the community. Whenever there's an issue or a problem, it's that voice that's most needed, and it's the understanding of that voice that's most necessary towards resolution of conflict. If that voice can't find a way to articulate what the issue is, it can't be heard and can't be listened to, so then the whole community is in trouble. The minority voice is, therefore, a really an important factor in terms of how our community communicates and listens. Listening is the biggest part, and with that, finding ways to bring forward the ideas expressed by that minority voice.

*Enowkinwixw* describes that process within our community. It describes a process that makes that happen. We use it in our governance process and we now use it in our community dialogues. We use it in our family circles and our extended family meetings. The idea isn't to make decisions, the idea is to hear all of the different aspects, all of the different views, but in *Enowkinwixw*, we actually set up a dynamic in which decisions can happen. It is a dynamic in which we understand that there are always polarities in community, because there is diversity. We try to take the polarities in their larger sense and we give them context in the community. We give the polarities authority in terms of their context within the community, authority which can't be usurped by any other area of community. There are four general polarities we utilize in our community to create a dialogue.

The first of these polarities can be described in our language as something similar to the idea of elders, although that term is not really a correct in our language. It is a word that really refers to those who have had long experience. It doesn't mean in years; it really means to have teachings from generations and generations past. You could therefore be a part of this group even if you are 20 or 30 years old. It's about the knowledge that has been passed on to you and that you express and stand for that makes you an "elder" in our language. As an elder, your thinking and your concerns and your responsibilities are directed toward making sure that everything is remembered that is necessary to make things continue on in a healthy way. This group is usually directly polarized against a group that can be described as the youth, or the young people. We think of these in our language as people that have a really great urge for innovation and creativity, new ideas and new concepts. This is a dynamic that is always needed in any community and any society, and encouraged, just as the elders, in their bringing forward of all their teachings and immense knowledge, is encouraged. But these are two aspects of society that usually are a source of oppositional dynamics. So one part of our *Enowkinwixw* is to create a very clear process in which the people in those two groups speak to and listen to each other to inform each other, and to clarify for each other, their views.

Our process for discussion in *Enowkinwixw* is simple. We start with the concept that if there is a problem or a crisis, or something that we are trying to resolve

that we don't understand, if anybody already has the answers and already knows it all, they should have resolved it. So, why haven't they? Therefore, it means, that nobody has the answers and no one person should be arguing for their view, their position, their rightness. What it means is that each should be listening to try to understand what the other is saying, and to try to incorporate into the overall solution what each person is saying, so that what is brought together will make more sense than what one person is saying. Obviously, it means that as an individual, if I didn't resolve it, then what I'm saying isn't important by itself, it is important only in the context of the rest of the community.

The premise is to begin in a way that creates "dialogue." We tell people: *"You're not here to debate or to enforce your own agenda. You're not here to convince me of what you think. You're here to listen, and to hear the most diverse and opposite view to yours, and to understand where it's coming from and why it's there, and why that opinion is important in terms of how we find a solution. You are responsible for doing that. You are responsible for hearing what is the most opposite to your opinion, and finding a way to try to incorporate the other's diversity, the other's difference, and embrace that in terms of what we collectively come up with as a solution, so the difference will no longer be a difference, it becomes part of what we are and who we are."*

In terms of the other two polarities that exists in community, there is a word for one of these in our language that means "maleness." In our language, in our pronoun structure, we don't use words like "he" or "she" that are used in English. It is quite a difficult thing to think in the English language, because everything is gender-based in that way. I talked with my mother about it, and my Aunt Jeanette, whom I am named after, and both are medicine women, and I said, *"How come we don't have that idea?"* And my aunt looked at me and she said, *"Well, it has to do with being a person."* I asked, *"What does it have to do with being a person?"* She replied, *"If you were to say 'he' or 'she' in our language, you would have to point to their genitals, you would have to point to what's between the legs, and why would you talk about a person and point between their legs?"* She said, *"It doesn't make any sense."* And it doesn't—people are what they do and who they relate to and how they relate to the world. It has nothing to do with gender, except that there are males and females. So there are words like "maleness and femaleness."

The word "maleness" actually has to do with our understanding in our philosophy about how things work in the world—the cosmology of things. The way the word is constructed for "male" is about the spreading outward of our life form as human, the spreading outward of the diversity of life on the land. The meaning of the word "male" has to do with the idea of humans being able to dream and be able to spread outward in the life form of the human. And so the aspect or idea of procreation as "male," and the energy behind that, is understood as "maleness."

The word for "femaleness" is a really an interesting word in our language. The idea of separating part of the skin of the community, as a separation into family, is contained in our word for "femaleness." The understanding of "femaleness" means "a separating out from within the covering which is community" or "the skin of the community," that is, from the whole of the people into family systems.

So when family systems, represented by the dynamics of “femaleness” and “maleness”, together representing how the land operates, intersect as community, work has to be done to create balance, to make sure that there is clear understanding between those two dynamics.

How the people in the family are related to each other is based on how they feel about each other, how they treat each other. Society is really about feeling. It is about how we care for one another, how we love another, and how we protect one another. How we need to make sure there is food for everyone, that everyone has warmth and shelter, how everyone is nurtured emotionally and how people are made to feel good, and how to celebrate—all these things are what is understood and expressed by the word/concept of “femaleness.”

Another aspect of *Enowkinwixw* is the understanding that all of the things that we need, to make shelter, to give food, and to develop in all kinds of ways, requires organizing. Doing so is really about “how” things get done. In other words, it takes actions. That’s why “spreading out” is in that word of the “maleness” aspect of society. Everything becomes an action that is to be undertaken and when actions are undertaken there are consequences. In other words, what we do always impacts people. If we do things without thinking and without understanding or knowing how it impacts people, we can and will do a lot of things that are destructive, even though we may think that we are doing these things in the name of good, or in the name of providing, or in the name of prosperity.

If the male aspect of society gets its way that is what it will do. It will just keep doing that. That’s what, in this society, we think of as “patriarchy.” The patriarchal model is a model in which it does not matter that there are people starving, it does not matter that there are people hurting, it does not matter that there are minorities that are voiceless, that are not being included, that are being excluded. As long as this model is kept going, only some of the people can get good out of it and only some of the people can get privilege out of it, and that is really one of the dynamics that we’re talking about here.

The dynamic of the male and the female aspects of community must be balanced. The nurturing, caring and providing for “feelings,” for the well-being of the generations to come, must be part of the “doing” continuously, with clear understanding, cooperation and collaboration between both.

The dialogue we call *Enowkinwixw* means that we cannot sit down in our community and have any kind of rational decision, or any kind of rational action, unless we include all four aspects of community in dialogue, in a deep listening process. Without doing so, we are endangering the whole community. We are excluding parts of the community, and in doing so we are taking a vast risk for the next generations. I think that is something that really resonates for me. We need to think about how we can continuously include our view, our diversity, our most opposite opinion, and having to listen to the “other,” and how we must be responsible in putting these together.

In terms of the family systems, there are two things that operate within community that I think are important to mention. One is the idea that a family system,

like community, is a living organism. We think of it as a body. The whole family system as one body that is incomplete if that whole family system isn't intact. The nuclear family isn't what I am talking about. Family means extended family. Three or four generations of aunts, uncles, cousins, grandmas, grandpas, great grandmas, great granddads, and so on, as the repository of many skills in terms of how to do community, how to be community, and how to be community on the land; in terms of how we treat the land and how we take care of it and how we take care of each other without destroying the land, and how we move that along.

Family systems have become fragmented into non-family systems, and in this society this system is now just a mother and father and children. But, even the mother, father and children don't stay together in this society. There is a diaspora of family because of the market economy. We have to move to get jobs, here and there, around and around, to the other end of the world, and so family really doesn't exist. It does not exist and there is a yearning for it and a hunger for it, and a need for it. A much deeper need than we think we know.

In terms of our Indigenous community, family is the basis of survival. We cannot operate community without family. Community does not exist without extended family systems. Otherwise community is just a collection of strangers. People that are not cooperating, not collaborating, not loving each other, not taking care of each other over generations and generations of learning how to do that on the land they occupy. So there are no communities either.

Our family systems in our communities are like clan systems, and each extended family system usually has a role in the work of the community, maybe something like the long-ago guilds in Europe, where you had the bakers, and the millers, and so on. Huge families passed down those skills and they used those skills to contribute to the whole community. In our system, extended families are the repositories of different kinds of skills. There are medicine families, there are healer families—medicine families and healer families usually are similar, but we could say that one are ethno-botanists, while the healer families are the psychologists or psychiatrists, and usually part of a chief's family belongs to these families, because they have to be psychologists and psychiatrists to do the work that is required of them. There are chiefs' families, hunter families, fishermen, basket-makers, and so on. All these families have people in them that are conversant with different tools that our community needs to continue on its life cycle.

In our tradition, gift giving in our society is very similar to the West Coast traditions in that we too have a huge number of feasts during the year. Feasts are held by extended families. As an example, my mother had a role similar to the West Coast Long House leader. A "winter dance leader" we call it in our community, because we don't have big cedars like the West Coast so we have short houses. We have winter dances in the wintertime. Winter dances, like the smokehouse, big house dances on the West Coast, are big give-aways.

I grew up with my uncle being a medicine man and my mother being a medicine woman and the winter house dance leader. Our extended family—cousins, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, children, grandchildren—spent all year long

gathering and making and putting aside things that are to be given away during that winter dance. And every year, during that winter dance, our mother gave away everything she owned, without question, without deciding how or to whom it is to be given; it is simply given in a ritual of dance. And I saw this giving all my life, and I was brought up this way all my life. We were told by my mother, my grandmother, my aunts, my uncles, that giving is the only way to be human, that if you don't know that giving is essential to survival, then you don't know how to be human yet.

We are told this, once we can understand it, when we are growing up. When we're two or three years old, the very first thing we are taught is to give. In our families, we are shown how to give. We learn that when we receive something that we really cherish and we really care about, that it is the first thing we should give up, because our community is to be cherished on that level. Our people and our land is be cherished on that level. And if we don't know how to give like that, we are poor. We are in poverty. We might hoard all the things that we think our family or our business needs, but we are poor.

We used to drive through some of the cities, and my mother would look around her and she would say, "Those poor rich people! Those poor, poor rich people!" And she meant it. She wasn't being ironic or sarcastic. She was pointing out what they were missing out on. She was pointing out what they were hungry for and what they were trying to find, in accumulating and hoarding and being selfish.

She was pointing out what is really, really given to us when we reverse that, and what we feel when we give. We all know the feeling we have when we give out of purity. We all know how good it makes us feel. This is a natural feeling to us as humans. It is the real feeling of being human. And we all feel this when we give. For example, at Christmas time everybody is so excited about getting things and giving and giving—and some people go overboard. Where does this feeling come from? When we give to our loved ones (we're used to giving just to our favourite, chosen loved ones in this society), we sometimes do it without realizing that we would feel the same way whether we are giving to a direct blood relative or to a stranger, absolutely not known to you. The feeling is the same. In one of our laws we are told that when we start understanding that principle, and we start working with that principle, and we source that principle, we prosper.

In other words, if we lead our lives by giving continuously, never ever thinking about what we might get back from it or using it as an exchange for something that we want somebody to do for us (which, in fact, is not called "giving" in our language) our needs will never go unmet. In our language, giving to someone in order to get something back, is called something else. There is no word for "greed" in our language that I could find. What I found instead was a word which is used to describe a person that is expecting to get something back, or is expecting to have more than another, mostly desiring or expecting to eat more than another. We describe people that become this way with this particular word in our language. What this word means is "swallower or destroyer of giving."

In our traditions we found a way to describe this condition because it means



to stop the giving. To stop the giving you put an obstacle between the giving and yourself. And so we describe a person that way if they want more for themselves, or they want more for their family, or if they in some way act as an obstacle, by being selfish, that prevents everybody else in the community being given what is necessary and needed and deserved.

My language is one of the languages that are on the brink of extinction. I want to make clear that these words that I am defining and describing for you are immensely important words that belong in the understanding of our humanity, and are necessary and needed in the understanding of what needs to be done to make change happen.

In our way we are always told not to ask for anything. We are always told in our community, as a practice, that when we have to start asking for something, that's when we're agreeing that people be irresponsible. Irresponsible in not understanding what we're needing, irresponsible in not seeing what's needed, and irresponsible in not having moved our resources and our actions to make sure that need isn't there, because this is the responsibility that we, and the people that surround us, mutually bear. So in our community we cannot go to a person and say, "I want you to do this for me." All we can do is clarify for them what is happening and what the consequences are for our family, or for our community, or for the land. We must clarify for them what needs to be done and how it needs to be done, and then it is up to them and if they fall short of that responsibility, at some point they will face the same need themselves.

We are told on a spiritual level that when we give freely without asking for anything back, whatever it might be, especially the things that are really difficult to give, that you receive back the equivalent of four times whatever it is that you gave.

The simple exercise my mother taught me was: "Whatever amount you work for, keep a small amount, enough to put food on the table, enough to get you back and forth to work, and give all the rest away. You make sure you continue to do that every year, and you'll never have to worry for finding work. You'll never have to worry about all the things that you need." And I never have. I do this every year of my life, all the time. I give to my community, to my people, to strangers; everything that I do is with this way of living in mind. This is something that is needed in terms of how we are doing things in the world today. And this is something that needs to be understood deeply at the personal level.

It comes down to each person embodying this concept and practicing it without letting-up. It comes down to each person being human in this way.

It is my hope that in sharing these thoughts, that I share with each of you a part of the gift that I was given through community, family, and the land that I am from. I wish to extend my gratitude to those whose ideas, work, and resources were given to the idea of a gift economy.

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## Pan Dora Revisited

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### From Patriarchal Woman-Blaming to a Feminist Gift Imaginary

The article revisits the myth of Pandora's Box as the source of mankind's scourges and foregrounds Pan Dora as a pre-patriarchal All-Giver and Guardian of Giving and Abundance. After addressing the gendered assumptions about "human nature" underlying neo-liberal economic thought, I present an example of a Nordic/Finnish Pandora variant with her gift-related aspects. I suggest that the naturalization of a masculated worldview behind the "human norm" needs to be exposed. It is merely one among many possible ways of ordering human life and understanding human nature. In the alternative gift imaginary and logic, instead of *homo economicus*, the norm may well have been *femina donans*, the giving human, *Kave*.

The goal of my engaged research consists in reclaiming gynocentric imaginaries with their implicit ecological economics and sustainable worldview, one that also honours women and nature. In this paper, I will revisit the Greco-Roman myth of Pandora as a cross-cultural motif and its Finnish variant. This master narrative of humanity's creative origins consists in transforming women's gift labour into a woman-blaming narrative of male superiority. I introduce at the same time the gift imaginary with its philosophical tenets based on giving back to nature the goods it bestows on humans. Both patriarchal and gynocentric variants of "Pan Dora" as All-Giver, the goddess of abundance and life-centered values can be found across the world. My discussion of the fate of Pandora in Finnish, and more broadly Nordic mythology, is an example of how we can draw on local, situated mythologies to rediscover and make more visible the submerged and symbolically non-masculated (Vaughan 1997) ways of relating to and ordering the surrounding world.

I call the dominant western paradigm and worldview to do with human nature and values the master imaginary, which echoes aspects of the exchange economy on which Genevieve Vaughan (1997) has elaborated and what eco-feminist scholars have labelled as either the master identity (Plumwood 1993) or consciousness (Warren 2000: 48). The concept condenses the artificial and arbitrary dichotomies that have allowed mostly white heterosexual elite men to dominate nature, women, Indigenous populations, and people of colour as well as men defying the hegemonic gender contracts. The master imaginary refers to the totality of cultural customs, etiquettes, gendered divisions and processes of

labour, attitudes, behaviours, activities and gestures that lend legitimacy and inner strength to patriarchy's asymmetrical gender system. Among the central elements of this logic are assumptions and projections of non-egalitarian and hierarchically constructed difference (e.g. men vs. women, humans vs. animals, mind vs. matter or spirit, rationality vs. emotionality). This includes a gendered segregation of "male" and "female" realms of reason, influence, prestige, power or social activities and a relegation of the less prestigious "emotional" labour mostly to women. This imaginary rests also on a perceptual pivot which privileges a worldview of strict boundaries to ground ownership rights, competition and social hierarchies. Establishing society's moral boundaries via the female body is an effect of asymmetrical power relations, not of a categorical logic within social structures.

Women can and do, at different locations of power and privilege also embrace the master imaginary and its logic of mastery over the "other." Many women embrace themselves a system of boundaries projected on the (female) body, on territory and society that marks and defines female corporeality in its "open and vulnerable stage" (menses, pregnancy) as polluted and polluting (Douglas 1996 [1966]). However, it is necessary to distinguish between the internalization of patriarchal societal values and conscious, informed consent to sex/gender systems that subjugate women through a misleading politics of idealization/denigration of the "feminine." If one does not grow up knowing of alternatives to a patriarchal social order, one cannot really claim that women willingly embrace asymmetrically constructed social systems.

Although the master imaginary in its current, markedly economic form can be embraced by whites, non-whites, men and women, its roots are in the asymmetrical sex/gender systems of patriarchies and thus it contains gendered and gendering as well as class-related processes. David Korten (1996) has provided a succinct and useful summary of the current master imaginary, i.e. the neo-liberal visioning of human nature and worldview.<sup>1</sup> Competitive behavior is believed to be more rational for the individual and the firm than cooperation; consequently, societies should be built around the capital-hoarding, non-giving motive. Also, human progress is to be measured by increases in the value of what the members of society own and consume (Korten 1996: 20). These ideological doctrines assume according to Korten that:

People are by nature motivated primarily by greed, the drive to acquire is the highest expression of what it means to be human, the relentless pursuit of greed and acquisition leads to socially optimal outcomes, it is in the best interest of human societies to encourage, honour, and reward the above values (1996: 70-71).

These neo-liberal ideas, although a form of extreme capitalistic ethos, fit to some extent what Vaughan (1997) labels as the patriarchal exchange economy and the hegemonic belief system of today.<sup>2</sup>

The mythologies and patriarchal epics of the western world reflect the tenets

of the master imaginary, a gaze where women are defined in relation to men and where war, conquest, hero-worship take priority over narratives of life-sustaining events, collaboration and peaceful co-existence. Mythologies are powerful means of mind colonization, and stressing humanity's capacity for good is itself a revolutionary and mind-altering process. Many scholars studying archaic societies ignore the gender-molding cultural processes and refer simply and in a gender-neutral way to a society's social order. Few comment on how the various social contracts are established and consolidated through explicitly patriarchal mechanisms and values where women's views are not as a rule solicited. The socialization through patriarchal myths and grand narratives explains in part why women more than men have internal glass ceilings and self-limiting attitudes regarding power, leadership, authority and other attributes associated positively with men.

The gift imaginary contrasts with the masculated ethos in terms of its goals and values; it is a worldview, an alternative imaginary and ideology that one can perceive dominating pre- and non-patriarchal societies. Although it is important to heed historic and culture-specific variations, generally speaking in such communities economic life is built on balanced human and environmental relations, a recognition of our interconnections and interdependencies and a forward-looking use of resources to ensure future cycles of abundance, fertility, and rebirth of all species. Its logic consists in the rationality of care and responsibility to ensure collective survival and well-being (eco-social sustainability). Giving and sharing the Commons is at the root of this worldview and the norm of the human is best embodied by the care-circulating individual whose logic of action and ethics is like that of the ideal mother, not a distant, absent and judgmental father (see Ochs 1977). Today westerners in particular need to become aware of the white mythology and worldview that has been naturalized as the universal and desirable one. This is one precondition for the kind of ethnosensitivity required for us in the West to become open to alternative, more eco-socially reliable styles of knowing and living (Meyer and Ramirez 1996). The gift and give back economies of by-gone eras appear not to have been as dualistic and based on strict hierarchies of being, knowing and wielding power. Modern westerners have been so conditioned by the dichotomous worldview, however, that it takes a special effort for many of them, as well, to re-imagine the more integrated, holistic model of cognition, perception, and *beingknowing*. The gift imaginary, rooted in the ethos of group cohesion, circulation of a community's resources is not pure utopia (although we also need utopian visions to help chart us towards a more justice-oriented world). Heide Goettner-Abendroth (1987, 1995, 2004) has found evidence of such societies even in the contemporary world<sup>3</sup> and provides much evidence of matriarchal societies having combined sustainable green economics and a worldview of balanced/complementary gender relations beyond the hierarchical and asymmetrical dualisms of western sex/gender systems. In these societies the social imaginary is not rooted in the idea that self-interest and fierce competition are natural or desirable; in contrast, their social rituals serve to guarantee collective survival and not to ground private accumulation.

The myth of Pandora's box epitomizes patriarchy's historical appropriation and reversal of the gift-circulating and woman-friendly mythologies and economies. By re-owning this myth in the North and elsewhere, we can trace our steps back towards the more sustainable view of the human and of communal life that we sorely need today's world of global warming and the green house effects.

### On Pandora and Spirit Guardians of the Gift

The myth of Pandora's box is an appropriate "case" for making visible the attributes and values to do with women, gift giving and nature that have been overwritten to make way for the master imaginary and politics. Although our knowledge of pre-patriarchal times is uncertain, there is sufficient scientific data to allow us to speculate that a gift circulating and more gynocentric socio-cosmic order has existed. If matriarchy refers to "mothers at the beginning," and not "maternal domination" as Goettner-Abendroth argues (see her article in this volume), the Pandora myth refers precisely to the world's first woman and beyond the story's patriarchal rewriting to social systems where the primal mothers were honoured as gift providers. There are innumerable versions of the story particularly in Greek and Roman mythology.<sup>4</sup> I will introduce first some patriarchal versions of the myth before elaborating on their feminist reinterpretations. According to *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Pandora" refers to "All-Giving" and the first woman:

After Prometheus, a fire god and divine trickster had stolen fire from heaven and bestowed it upon mortals, Zeus, the king of the gods, determined to counteract this blessing. He accordingly commissioned Hephaestus (a god of fire and patron of craftsmen) to fashion a woman out of earth, upon whom the gods bestowed their choicest gifts. She had or found a jar—the so-called Pandora's box—containing all manner of misery and evil. Zeus sent her to Epimetheus, who forgot the warning of his brother Prometheus and *made her* [my emphasis] his wife. Pandora afterward opened the jar, from which the evils flew out over the earth. According to another version, hope alone remained inside, the lid having been shut down before she could escape. In a later story the jar contained not evils but blessings, which would have been preserved for the human race had they not been lost through the opening of the jar out of curiosity by man himself. (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 2002).

In another, more recent encyclopedia version we read:

... in Greek mythology, first woman on earth. Zeus ordered Hephaestus to create her as vengeance upon man and his benefactor, Prometheus. The gods endowed her with every charm, together with curiosity and deceit. Zeus sent her as a wife to Epimetheus, Prometheus' simple brother, and gave her a box that he forbade her to open. Despite Prometheus' warnings, Epimetheus allowed her to open the box.... (*The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia* 2005)

One finds the earliest extant (patriarchal) Greek text of Pandora in 700 BC in Hesiod's *Works and Days* with the classic image of Pandora and the box; the latter however is really a "jar," and the story does *not* specify exactly what was in the box Pandora opened. The idea of humans as giving beings (*femina donans*) epitomized in the giving, creative and procreative mother, the first woman, is far removed from the above variants of Pandora. As in today's archi-capitalist ethos of marketization, commodification and structural violence, men and male gods wage war between each other with women merely as trophies, objects, beauty queens or screens on which to project the weakest links of dysfunctional patriarchy itself. In the patriarchal versions of Pandora, a natural impulse—the desire to understand one's surroundings, one's life, one's gifts—is turned in the case of the subaltern—women—to a sin, a transgression. This is no doubt an attempt to keep the lid on women's mental, psychological, spiritual and cultural authority. Both Genesis and the myth of Pandora's Box are among the primal myths that serve to manipulate women to distrust their own impulses, instincts and epistemic desires, and, at worst, to perceive the critical, probing, questioning mind as evil. Both types of narratives of course help keep women obedient, flexible, and malleable—and humble enough to internalize the master imaginary in its various historical manifestations. In patriarchal mythic narratives, blame for the most unimaginable wrong-doings have been passed on to the female sex, and this is one way of producing free-floating collective guilt as a precondition for submissiveness. Of course, many women can negotiate their gender script and disown parts or even all of it. Yet, the performative repetition of the primal story and woman's role in it does lend dubious support to society's other woman-blaming mechanisms.<sup>5</sup> The bringing of gifts to the first woman echoes another story of divine creation, the birth of Jesus, to whom gifts were brought from near and far. Could it be, then, that even this incidence is an appropriation of the historically more remote gift-bestowing to the Goddess? It is particularly dis-empowering for women to be told that Pandora as first woman was created as a curse and as revenge for the theft of fire by Prometheus. This epitomizes the patriarchal notion of woman as mere currency of exchange in relation to men and male interests. On the other hand, Pandora was fashioned as a bewitching beauty endowed with gifts from all the gods and goddesses. Pandora's beauty, instead of representing the inherent beauty of creation, nature and humanity becomes a pawn of power in the struggle between men for dominance. Indeed, the rapes of women during wars serve precisely the same function of projecting shame on victims rather than the perpetrators of violence. It is a means of dishonouring men and entire nations by depriving their women of honour (sexual "purity"). Woman is honourable only as male property. Pandora's box is a proto-narrative of domination-submission and "power-over" relations beginning with Zeus's power over men and ending with men's power over women's nature, female beauty, and the female body. The story and its many variants epitomize how the ancient mystical vessel—the womb, female blood, and related myths have been turned to their opposite. Philosophically, in Vaughan's terms (1997), the story

epitomizes how the gift economy as a particular quality of other-orientation and metalogic has been replaced by a more ego-oriented exchange economy, although both imaginaries continue to co-exist in more or less visible and complex gendered and culture-specific forms. In many variants cited by feminist scholars and numerous research articles, Pandora's mythic origins are foregrounded to reveal the transformative politics of the master imaginary. Sandra Geyer Miller (1995) for one refers to Anesidor as one of the Earth Goddess avatars that the writers of master narratives have sought to replace. Jane Harrison (1975) sees in Hesiod's story evidence of a shift from matriarchy to patriarchy in Greek culture. As the life-bringing goddess Pandora is eclipsed, the death-bringing human Pandora arises (283-85). The above-cited patriarchal variants also hint at a historical and narrative shift from a more peaceful to a more violent and militaristic male order, whereby men are turned into each other's enemies. Eros is replaced by logos, an all-pervasive and positive sexuality transformed into a denigration of women, corporeality, matter, earth, even physicality.

### Non-Patriarchal Reinterpretations of Pandora as Pan-Dora

Patriarchal and feminist versions of Pandora differ significantly, and one way to epitomize the transformation is to view them as expressions of the gift and exchange or master economies and the worldview to which they belong. An important point revealed by male and female scholars critical of the hegemonic version is that the very notion of a "box" may have been nothing less than a mistranslation, if not an intentional effort to rewrite mythic herstory. Evidence suggests that indeed, Pandora herself was the "jar"—the creative/procreative womb, the holy vessel or grail. In Ancient Greece jars commonly bore images of women's uterus. The mistranslation is usually attributed to the sixteenth-century Humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam.<sup>6</sup> Various feminist scholars claim that in an earlier set of myths, Pandora was the Great Goddess, provider of the gifts that made life and culture possible.<sup>7</sup> The Greek and Judeo-Christian versions of both the Eve and Pandora myths serve above all now to propagandize the message of early patriarchy about the status of women at that time and Hesiod's tale is seen as part of a propaganda campaign to demote All-Giver from her previously revered status (Geyer Miller 1998). A very different definition is provided by Barbara Walker (1983) who notes, regarding "Vase" that as:

Forerunner of the funerary urn in Old Europe [it] was the large earthenware vase representing the Earth Mother's womb—of rebirth. When cremation was the chosen funerary rite, reducing the body to ashes, small vases were created to contain these remains and still serve as womb symbols. The uterine shape of the vase so often bore the connotation of rebirth, that even when corpses were no longer stuffed into actual earthenware vases like the funerary *pithei* of early Greece, a vaselike shape persisted in various receptacles for dead bodies. The sacrophagus seems to take the shape of the uterus in many

societies.... In pre-Hellenic Greece, a title of Mother Rhea as the Womb of Matter was Pandora, the All-Giver [my emphasis]. Her symbol was a great vase, originally signifying the source of all things, like the great cauldron of the Mother Goddess in northern Europe. Hesiod's antifeminist fable converted Rhea Pandora's womb—vase into the source of all human ills and evils. Centuries later Erasmus mistook *pithos* (vase) for *pyxis* (box) and mistranslated Hesiod into the now-conventional story of Pandora's Box. The vase retained its uterine symbolism in alchemy, where the Womb of Matter was called *vas spirituale*. A vase containing the Water of Life remains the symbol of the Chinese Great Mother Goddess Kwan-Yin. (160-161)

Among other data, the reference to female imagery, rebirth, and procreation allow us to speculate that Pan Dora as the gift-giving human, the human norm refers back to matriarchal worldviews; of course, more research is also needed to specify and identify the local itineraries and processes of transformation from a more gynocentric<sup>8</sup> to a more patriarchal social order. The stories and myths of the first woman, the Sacred Feminine and primal gift givers have been overwritten across the patriarchal world, in alignment with the values of patriarchy and the master imaginary. The hope that this provides—like Pandora's box itself—is that behind these layers of the myth, we can re-discover, unearth and reintroduce the more originary, woman-friendly versions. I will next elaborate on the Finnish Pandora variant.

### Kave and Louhi: From Panarctic Gift Givers to the Origin of all Evils

As there has been a conscious and non-conscious suppression of the gynocentric dimensions and layers of Finnish culture, the female goddesses in their broad spectrum are practically unknown in Finland. Many of them have simply been split along the axis of good/evil, plus replaced and condensed into a monomyth—Virgin Mary or her demonic counterpart. It is therefore empowering to make visible and to re-circulate the gynocentric stories and images, representations and fragments relating to archaic Finnish goddesses, *haltias*, female spirit beings and guardians. This is important because they are the matrix of a different worldview and can be seen to preside over the gift imaginary.

The Finnish *Kalevala*, the canonized epic of the Finnish Golden Past was compiled and put together by Elias Lönnrot, a folklorist and country doctor, in a patriarchal framework and according to nineteenth-century Christian and nationalistic ideas and values. It does contain reflections of the archaic worldview that stressed ecological balance and the philosophy of thanking nature for the gifts it bestows. The give back- based worldview is reflected in numerous poems in the Finnish Folk Poetry collections where the sauna, guardians of game and animal life as well as the forest, among other beings and things, are greeted and thanked as part of a cyclical world order based on bonds rather than an ethos of unilateral mastery over nature. The bear ceremonials and other festivities (Honko 1993)<sup>9</sup>



were occasions for sharing rituals and for both establishing and transgressing boundaries of the sacred as a way of reconfirming them (Anttonen 1992). Much has been written about this ancient system of combining economics, religion and socio-cosmic order. Less, however, has been written about the role of the realm labelled as “feminine” or of the gift circulating ethos from a gynocentric point of view. The goddess tradition allows us to foreground prepatriarchal representations of female power, not as “power over” but as creation-power. I look upon the goddess guardian of Bear and game, Mielikki as one such non-patriarchal manifestation of an imaginary beyond the split female psyche, the whore-madonna dualism, for Mielikki as a benign *haltia* need not be pitted against a separate negative goddess. Rather, she contains in herself her shadow aspect; Kuurikki as do all mortal beings. She withholds game if she is not respected and the balance of nature maintained. In the patriarchal order, however, the first woman, the mysterious Kave linked also with Ilmatar, goddess of the Air, is clearly split from the destructive feminine dimension, following the patriarchal imaginary. Good and evil become absolute, rather than shifting dimensions of a single goddess which of old reflected the waxing and waning moon or cycles of nature’s death and rebirth. In Finnish mythic herstory, the transformation of Pan Dora, “the all-giver” has been replaced in prominence by the “procreator of scourges,” Louhi. The Finnish goddesses of nurturance, fertile nature, sexuality, and rebirth are often linked with or embodied in a figure called Kave, which Irmeli Nieminen (1985) defines more narrowly as just the typical epithet of female *haltias* or goddesses (Mäkinen 2004: 60). A study of the *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* (SKVR) (a collection of ancient Finnish folklore and poetry) reveals that Kave is indeed the attribute of a host of different goddess or *haltia* figures. However, she is above all linked with *haltias* associated with healing, midwifery and the enhancement of nature’s gifts of plenty. Most importantly, she is the mother of Luonnotars, the daughters of Nature that echo the Roman Parcea, the Nordic Norns, the Sami Uksakka, Sarakka, Juksakka. Finnish mythology commands closer attention in light of comparative mythological studies that allow us to reveal affinities between Finnish/Finno-Ugrian, Nordic and Greco-Roman mythologies. It is challenging both for the renewal of our imaginaries and for scientific reasons to recreate the archaic gynocentric worldview from the fragments and more complete folk materials that have failed to inspire even female scholars identified with mainstream folklore methods and schools of thought. European and Euro-American scholars consider Demeter, Hecate and Persephone to be the proto-types of the three ages of women, personifying virginal youth, sexually mature middle-age and the menopausal age of the Crone. These figures in the culture-specific constellations are part of the continuum of the cyclical worldview and its system of time measurement; the ages of women and of all growth cycles, the waxing and waning of the moon. Kave has obvious affinities with the birth-giving and omni-creative aspect of the primal Guardian/*haltia* just as Louhi is her death-wielding aspect is comparable to many Greco-Roman and international mythic figures from Kali to Hecate. Although myths take on local form, expression and color, the notions

of women's puberty, pregnancy, reproduction, coming-of-age and "ripening" are likely universal land-marks of women's life. As an instance of cultural translation of mythic material, the myth's variant is located spatially in the most holy site of Finnish traditional culture, the sauna.

In Finnish folk poetry, Kave, as the principle of nourishing nature and creativity is linked with the material abundance of nature (*Luonto*). John Abercromby, in his two-volume, *Magic Songs of West Finns* (1898), reveals the links between the mysterious Kave—transformed into Virgin Mary in later periods—and Louhi, both of whom are put forth as principles of life protection and creativity:

The recuperative power of nature would naturally occur to exorcists and wizards when healing the sick, and in a more objective form would be appealed to for assistance. Old mother Kave (the woman), the daughter of nature (*luonto*), *the oldest of womankind*, [my emphasis] the first mother of individuals, is therefore invoked to come and see pains and remove them. Almost in the same terms she is implored to help an exorcist. And under the same title she is invited to allay the pains of child-birth because *she formerly freed the moon from imprisonment in a cell, and the sun from a rock*. [my emphasis] But the original idea is on the wane in a charm for relieving pain, in which it is related that three Luonnotars sit where three roads meet and gather pains into a speckled chest or a copper box, and feel annoyed if pains are not brought to them. And the old idea of her functions is missing where the woman (*kave*), the old wife Luonnotar, the darling and beautiful, is asked to point out the path to a bridal procession. Or when she is invited to bewitch sorcerers and crush witches; to weave a cloth of gold and silver, and make a defensive shirt under which an exorcist can live safely with the help of the good God. (Abercromby 1898: 307-8)

In this passage, Kave's role is that of a midwife, helping women give birth through imitative magic. She is referred to also as *einesten emä*, a dispenser of nature's provisions (*Kalevala* 38:82 and *The Birth of the Snake* 26:707).<sup>10</sup> In the patriarchal epic, this type of a variant of Kave is replaced with the one-sidedly negative goddess variant, Louhi, now the mirror image of the midwife: no longer the giver or promoter of the gift of life, she is turned into the symbol of spiritual darkness, greed, avarice, denial of life.<sup>11</sup> In Abercromby's (1898) above description of the role of Kave, she is referred to as freeing the moon from imprisonment in a cell, and the sun from a rock. In the *Kalevala* the same motif is found in reverse: Louhi is depicted as imprisoning instead of releasing the luminaries. The birth-giver and creator/releaser of new life is transformed or split into a figure, Lemminkäinen's mother, who can recreate life, and the Pandora-like source of disease and chaos. The goddess with her temporally and situationally changing aspects is thus split into the classic patriarchal dualism of nameless, idealized mother and the whore so labelled because she transgresses the acceptable female role. The copper box in which pains are gathered in the above description, can also be related to Sampo, the Finns' magic mill of prosperity and

endless riches (Kailo 1987). A multilevel, overdetermined and mysterious symbol, it has been interpreted as a mythic mill of immaterial and material goods. However, in connection with the Lapp matriarch, it is turned into a metaphoric source of greed and treason. As patriarchy gets stronger, primal woman-blaming increases while the role of female goddesses is replaced by the ascendancy of male gods (cf. Kemppinen 1960: 276-277).<sup>12</sup> To foreground Louhi over Kave epitomizes the Finnish version of Pandora's role and fate from an All-Provider to the Christian projection of All-Evil.

The Finnish Goddess/*haltia* galaxy in its gynocentric form consists of numerous shape-shifting complex characters and spirit guardians with overlapping and context-specific symbolic functions associated with Life and Creation. They include Ilmatar, Rauni, Akka, Maaemo and Suonetar, to name the most common ones.<sup>13, 14</sup> The Finnish concept of *luonto* or nature is also their essential quality and has very different associations from the kind of human nature to which Freud, among others, ascribes aggressive and ego-oriented drives. In her form as Kave, the goddess is her own excuse for being, the graceful materiality and ground of existence, beyond the priority to trade and exchange, or horde and monopolize spiritual power as a way of ensuring mastery over the other. Kave is a complex, yet clearly beneficial energy force of nature in its procreative, fertile and autonomous manifestation. Like all goddesses, she is part of a circle or web of interconnections, not comparable to the solitary hero or autonomous hero-god of patriarchal lore. Kave condenses associations to do with mother, matter, nourishment, food and is related to the Golden Woman, a mysterious archaic being in Finnish and Finno-Ugric oral tradition, referring to honey and the magic meady ("golden") substance giving and maintaining life.<sup>15</sup> She is a condensed Akka/Maderakka (the latter being the Sami variant), with Louhi as her patriarchal version—Hag of the North, Mistress of the North Farm.<sup>16</sup>

I foreground Kave as an appropriate role model and embodiment of the worldview honouring nature, women and the Gift or Give back imaginary. This attribute of the feminine divine allows us to retrace the historic steps back towards the more "originary"<sup>17</sup> meaning of Pandora or the Finnish version of the All-Giver in a worldview based on abundance rather than scarcity and the creation of false needs serving the master imaginary. Since traditional Finnish folk poetry has been above all functional and performative—it was meant to be performed and hence was communal rather than textual—it is misleading to posit anything like a Finnish pantheon of gods and goddesses separate from such a performative function.<sup>18</sup> However, just as patriarchy has created its own would-be-national pantheon of significant male gods, the representations of a gynocentric imaginary can be reintroduced into the collective consciousness. The fact that it is impossible to posit and prove a matriarchal or matristic imaginary beyond the constant give-and-take of cross-cultural influences does not prevent such a goal. It has not prevented the male elite of the nineteenth century from creating an imaginary male order to reinforce male domination in cultural and political matters. If such an epic was used to help Finland achieve its independence, why not use folk poetry also to ensure women's independency from the master imaginary?

In nineteenth-century folklore there are numerous descriptions of the sauna as a sacred site becoming a demonic place in the presence of Louhi—the midwife and “post-menopausal” crone associated with disease and pollution. Louhi as the Finnish Pandora variant is represented as giving birth to various child-monsters and ailments, and transgressing the holiest of societal rules by naming the offspring herself—without the sanctifying intervention of Christian priests or pastors. Both in folk poetry and the Finnish *Kalevala*, Louhi is described in numerous variants as a harlot or demon, giving birth to a variety of illnesses and evils. Instead of Kave embodying the life and reproductive force, however, the folk poetry is full of references to the Finnish Virgin Mary, Marjatta, helping a male god cure ailments in the sauna.<sup>20</sup> Sauna itself can be seen as a kind of primal pitthos or originary womb of rebirth. The sauna is also where Marjatta gives birth to a child echoing the story of Jesus. The sauna has traditionally been a symbolically feminine place—not unlike a bear’s den, which is the site for Spring-time rebirth, it is also womb-like in its darkness and warmth. One key recurrent attribute of Finnish folklore is honey. In many folk descriptions Louhi is portrayed as a whore copulating with the wind and producing, for example, nine sons as embodiments of gout and other diseases. Thus the role of the divine midwife is turned to its opposite (*SKVR* 470, Source 2834. Ilomantsi. Eur. H, n. 178. 45. Hattupää) (Kailo 2005b). Not only has Louhi in many representations been made to evoke otherness, blackness, old age, animality and asexuality, but she has been represented in many films and books even of today as the classic dispenser of disease and destruction, pollution and black storms threatening human life.<sup>21</sup>

Emil Petaja (1966, 1967), an American-Finnish science fiction writer has resurrected the character of the dark and “evil witch of the North” in many of his science fiction stories based on the Finnish *Kalevala*, providing a good illustration of the ongoing misogynous myth-making going back to the myths of Pandora and Eve. His repetition of mythic woman-blaming underlines the need to interrupt and transform the master imaginary as the psychological anchor of asymmetrical gender relations. In Petaja’s novels the northern witch, Louhi’s resurrected spirit is referred to as a black-faced Lapp. In *Kalevala* Louhi requires the Sampo as booty, in exchange for her daughters which the *Kalevala* heroes coveted and desired as their wives. She is represented as a matriarch who breaks her promise and keeps the goods and the magic mill all to herself. At the end of *Kalevala*, the Sampo is finally lost to both the men and Louhi, and it is broken into pieces in the bottom of the sea. Petaja makes Louhi<sup>22</sup> return to the scene where she manages to pick up a few fragments of its mystical cover. This echoes the lid of Pandora’s box which represents hope in the story reported by Geller Miller (1995). In Petaja’s (1966) retelling, Louhi makes the Sampo grind goods in reverse, i.e., she is depicted as the root of the ecological destruction the book dramatizes. Thus Louhi’s avatar is identified in *The Star Mill* as the “Mistress of All Evil” (200):

Sorcery and cunning were the Witch’s watchwords. Louhi’s evil nature was

so strong that it soaked up all of the other evil in the universe like a sponge, and had done so for thousands of years. Her pacts with alien creatures who were inimical to man had given her immense power. (Petaja 1966: 196).

In light of Petaja's science fiction stories where the "Louhi stereotype" is again made to embody pollution, evil, destruction (Petaja 1966: 66x), the question imposes itself as to the reasons for such stability of the oral tradition and their literary offspring—and for the psychological meaning of such projections across time and space, from Finland to North America. Louhi, something of a feminized *alter ego* for the male heroes of *Kalevala* is as a woman of science and innovation/power made to carry all the negative attributes of knowledge as mere black magic. The Sampo, the major symbol of material and immaterial wealth in the Finnish epic could also be related to Pandora's box as the perverted mill of abundance. Whereas a gynocentric story might portray the mill as a womblike pot of honey, source of life and material/immaterial riches, the patriarchal imaginary has made of it a mill of economic prosperity and a source of conflicts between two warring groups, the matriarchal "man-eating Lapps" or their historically ambiguous equivalent, and the patriarchal forefathers of the Finns. This epitomizes the contrast between the master and the gift imaginaries. As is the case with the pithos-pyxis translation mistake in the Greco-Roman stories, the woman-positive meaning of which has been most intentionally re-interpreted, Sampo, too, can be rethought through the word's earthy, ecospiritual and gynocentric interpretations. Sampo's etymologies and possible linguistic variants have provided scholars with a wealth of opportunities for creative speculation. Many of them somehow express the ideas of connection, spirituality and community. It is possible to read into them the most diverse meanings, for at the deepest level, the Sampo is the symbol of symbolism itself. "Symbol" derives from Greek and means "Sun" (together) and "ballein" (to throw). *Symbolon* originally referred to a concrete token of recognition for an object which had been separated from its other half, evoking original oneness and its loss. On one level the symbol means whatever meaning a particular object or phenomenon has been endowed with by a particular society through a social contract. The Sampo can be seen as a condensation of all the etymological theories that scholars over the centuries have given of it; it is a *samovol* (Slavonic), a selfgrinding signifier capable of endless new meaning proliferations; it is also a god-image (*sam bog* – Russian) for it can represent the metaphysical "nail of the North Pole" around which an individual's quest for metaphysical meaning revolves and it is also *summum bonum* (Latin), the highest good, if, as a symbol, cymbal-like, it allows a reader to enter into aesthetic ecstasy or expand his or her perceptual horizons (Kailo 1987). Comparetti associates the Sampo even with the Swedish *sambu* with its archaic meaning of living together (today one's living partner). These interpretations based on linguistic terms believed to lie at the word's root differ greatly from the economic reductions to which Sampo has given rise today (Sampo as the name of an influential major banking institution in Finland).

## Conclusion

The myth of Pan Dora when linked with matriarchy is a powerful example of how the world view of gift circulation has in the course of patriarchal history been transformed into its opposite—gift deprivation or an exchange economy-related interpretation of the very concept. It epitomizes how women as creators and reproducers of humanity have been turned into representations of impurity and pollution (Douglas 1966)—the scourges flowing out of Pandora's box. The widely-spread patriarchal narrative summarizes how power elites operate; among other strategies by reverting/recoding/renaming symbols of power and by vilifying those that threaten their monopoly on Truth, Justice, Good and Evil—totalitarian, class-related, gendered and dualistic notions of the patriarchal master identity. The dominant form of the human norm—the neo-liberal pseudo-autonomous individual with his competitive and non-giving ethos—is not a natural reflection of “human nature” and worldview, but one that has developed as elite male hegemony and the master imaginary have deepened.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, we need the pre-patriarchal myths of Pan Dora myths in order to instill hope and trust that the norm of the human can well be a caring immanent and life-preserving mother rather than an abstract, feared, judgemental father-god. The myth matters also in terms of women's renewed trust in their own power and authority. When a dominant culture insists that power lies only outside the individual, in hierarchical organizations, people eventually cease to believe in their own inner power. This may be another reason why Pandora's Box was “invented.” The sense of union with the larger powers of life is tremendously empowering. Hence, the connection between inner wisdom/strength and outer power is one that patriarchy does not want women to make (Iglehart 1982: 294).

Over millennia, mythology has developed narratives about universal human conditions. The gift imaginary represents for me a return to myth making of a more holistic and eco-socially sustainable variety. The validity of a theory and practice might be measured by the extent to which it enhances human/woman rights, wellness and ecological sustainability, and how strongly it advocates the rights of all to spiritual and other basic modes of self-determination and expression. The feminist self-reflection has further ensured a constant process of realignment and assessment of one's own collusion with abusive ethno-political politics and ways. As Audre Lorde (1984) notes, the erotic is manifest in everything that binds us, as the eros and magic of everyday life. This is for me an essential quality also of the gift imaginary where we can also give expression to utopias of gift-based communities, equality and justice, the raw materials for change. As Vaughan (1997) sums this ethos, it is based on listening to the sign-gifts of individual and collective needs, and being able to respond to them. For an American writer on ecospirituality, Cynthia Eller (1990), the creation of a feminist spirituality is a logical extension of other feminist premises. The interest in reclaiming the female body as a positive image and as an intrinsic and celebrated part of women's existence through the other imaginary, moves simultaneously with the desire of uniting

spirit, body, and mind into a more holistic, resisting or empowering lifestyle. In this context, healing becomes a metaphor for any form of self-transformation, whether physical, emotional, or mental; it is the name given to the overall effort to gain self-knowledge and marshal personal power (Eller 1990: 110).<sup>24</sup> Finnish folk healing also contains the notion that in order to heal one must know the words of origin (*synnyinsanat*), something that applies also to collective balance. To know, cherish and honour one's roots is to stay or become whole, what the fragmented, atomistic modern self suffers from is loss of soul, loss of rootedness and connectedness with the extended family of sentient beings. According to old folk beliefs, people can only be healed by healing them together with the environment and broader cosmic spirits and forces. After all, they all form one, and hurting nature means hurting oneself.

The gift imaginary as the radically other worldview is, as I have tried to suggest, a way of going back to the ecologically and socially sustainable roots of our being and earth communities (the etymology of "radical" has to do with "roots"). Feminists are among the groups today that are trying to make a difference through their engaged politics and consciousness-raising. They are the transgressive women opening Pandora's Box, prying into patriarchal secrets and exposing the roots of the inequities and structural inequalities making the world an unsafe and unstable place for women and men alike. Social activism is also a form of traditionally feminine gift and to such an extent feminists are the modern kinfolk of Pandora, opening the lid on the scourges created by the modern corporate world with its politics of unsustainable accumulation. They remind society that it is the corporate elite, not women that have released the evils that plague us today—global warming, the bird flu, the mad cow disease. Today's scourges unleashed by the neo-liberal fundamentalist globalization are indeed gene manipulation and terminator seeds, terminator technology, computer viruses, nuclear proliferation, a deepening digital divide, and an increasing wedge between the haves and have-nots between the industrial and overexploited countries. In sum, then, the other imaginary means returning to Pan Dora her role as gift giver, not as an enemy of patriarchy. In concrete politics, this also means listening and voting for gift-ed men and women—for a change. And reminding us all what Pan Dora's original vase contained—honey. Not missiles and woman-blaming tales. In Geyer Miller's (1995) view:

In mythology, gifts are symbols of power and authority. Pandora received many gifts and thus came down to earth well equipped. The patriarchal overlay on the myth has robbed the feminine descendants of Pandora of their birthright, the knowledge of the meaning of the gifts and the power and authority to utilize them effectively. It was the Horae who enhanced Pandora's attractions by embellishing her hair with floral garlands and herbs to awaken desire in the hearts of men (golden grace). Thus Pandora wore the fruits and flowers of the seasons, bedecked with nature's finest perfumed offerings. She is, herself, the most delectable offering in perfect timing, a "natural" gift. She

is the first earth woman, with her cyclic nature and ability to move in tune with the tides and seasons. Pandora is the symbol of birth and death. By her, a man enters and leaves the physical world. Like the Horae, she is the keeper of the gates. Her gift is that of having an integral sense of timing.... The Greek word for grace, “charis,” means the “delightfulness of art.” Aglaia, the youngest of the Graces, was the wife of Hephaestus. Her name means “the glorious” or Brilliant. Thalia (Flowering) and Euphrosyne (Heart’s Joy) were the other two Graces. Older names were Pasithea, Cale, and Euphrosyne which was actually a title of Aphrodite (Pasithea Cale Euphrosyne) meaning “The Goddess of Joy who is Beautiful to All.” (9)

The gifts of gynocentric mythology and imaginary remain to be unearthed. Ritvala’s Helka festival is one strong gynocentric ritual remaining of the pagan past in Finland. As a women’s spring and fertility ceremonial going far back through the oral tradition, it is one of the most promising gateways towards the other imaginary, despite its strong Christian-patriarchal overlay (Kailo 2007). It is not only possible to reconstruct the woman-friendly and ecosocially sustainable imagined communities of the past, it may well be that without a radical change in our worldview, there is not much of a world left to defend. Patriarchy as institution and the master imaginary as its psychological order have let so many scourges out of its arsenals of violence and destruction that hope is indeed the only thing we now have left of a sustainable future.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> He exposes the norm of the “human” behind the current value system; it is, I believe, also the invisible Eurocentric norm, linked with a notion of “autonomous” subjectivity that does not fit women’s and many non-European cultures’ values or perceptions. We are, after all, all dependent on each other—and men particularly so regarding the care work that women provide.
- <sup>2</sup> Vaughan (1997) believes that the current western norm of the human is, to use a heuristic description of men as a group, a masculated male ego in the “exemplar” position,



reflecting the outcome of a male-specific upbringing and conditioning to become the non-gift giving gender entitled to receive rather than bestow nurture. The individual, cut-throat ethos of neo-liberalism is for educational and socialization-related reasons less expressive of the values and behavioural mores with which women are brought up. It is clear that the greater responsibilities and societal expectations regarding carework fall mostly on women's shoulders. My point in this paper is that the underestimation of female contributions to society through reproductive, emotional and care labour and the concomitant overevaluation of men's realms of influence have their mythic, psychological roots in the primal myths that circulate in and with which children are conditioned in patriarchal Western societies. Hence the importance of exposing and rewriting such myths operating in our deep unconscious.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.gifteconomy.org](http://www.gifteconomy.org) and [www.akademia.hagia](http://www.akademia.hagia) for information and video clips of the Peaceful Societies past and present conferences organized by Akademia Hagia.

<sup>4</sup> According to William E. Phipps (1988, 1976), the myths of Pandora and Eve are similar in that both attempt to explain why woman was created. Hesiod's poetry, entitled *Theogony* (507-616) and *Works and Days* (West 1985: 47-105), provides the only Greek source pertaining to woman's creation.

<sup>5</sup> Pandora is in some versions portrayed as the product of Hephaestus' craft and Zeus's guile. Geyer Miller in "What is the Pandora Myth All About?" (1995) offers a version of Pandora in which she is clearly a trophy between warring male gods, providing an illustration of the "exchange economy" as an ideology adopted by men to trade in women and other resources (Vaughan 1997): "Prometheus (fore-thought) and his brother Epimetheus (after-thought) were Titans. Prometheus had remained neutral during the revolt of the Titans against the Olympians and thus had been admitted to the circle of Immortals by Zeus. Seeing that the race of men had been destroyed in the deluge, it was Prometheus who fashioned another prototype man, into whom Athena, the favored daughter of Zeus, breathed soul and life. As long as Cronus had reigned, gods and men had lived on terms of mutual understanding. In the cool of the evening the gods might wander down to earth and sit down together with men to partake of the supper. With the coming of the Olympians, everything changed. Zeus asserted his divine supremacy. Although Prometheus was now an Immortal he harboured a grudge against the destroyers and favoured mortals to the detriment of the gods. He tricked Zeus into choosing the fat-covered bones as the part of the sacrifice for the gods, leaving the best meat for mortals. Zeus, in his anger, withheld fire from man. Prometheus stole the forbidden fire and gave it to the mortals. Zeus, enraged, called for Hephaestus the forger. He bade him make a virgin woman of dazzling beauty equal to the Olympian goddesses. He requested all of the gods to bring her their especial gifts. *Her name was Pandora (anciently called Anesidor, which was one of the names of the earth-goddess), rich in gifts, the all-gifted* [my emphasis]. Zeus also ordered a large Pythos (casket) to be made in which were placed the Spites: Old Age, Labour, Sickness, Insanity, Vice, and Passion to plague mankind upon their release. Delusional Hope was placed in the jar to keep men from killing themselves in despair and escaping their full measure of suffering" (Geyer Miller 1995).

<sup>6</sup> See also Kramarae and Treichler (1985), "Pandora."

<sup>7</sup> The honey vase of gifts has indeed been transformed into the pot of poison, as even the etymology of the word Gift suggests (it has both meanings of gift and poison in German) (Vaughan 1997).

<sup>8</sup> For an alternative view of Pandora, see Spretnak (1978) and Stone (1976).

<sup>9</sup> To quote Goettner-Abendroth (2004): "Matriarchal women are managers and ad-

ministrators, who organise the economy not according to the profit principle, where an individual or a small group of people benefits; rather, the motivation behind their action is *motherliness*. The profit principle is an ego-centred principle, where individuals or a small minority take advantage of the majority of people. The principle of motherliness is the opposite, where altruism reigns and the well being of all is at the centre. It is at the same time a spiritual principle, which humans take from nature. Mother Nature cares for all beings, however different they may be. The same applies to the principle of motherliness: a good mother cares for all her children in spite of their diversity. Motherliness as an ethical principle pervades all areas of a matriarchal society, and this holds true for men as well. If a man of a matriarchal society desires to acquire status among his peers, or even to become a representative of the clan to the outside world, the criterion is "He must be like a good mother (Minangkabau, Sumatra)" (3).

- <sup>10</sup> Lauri Honko (1993) has elaborated in *The Great Bear on Finno-Ugric festivities* and reflects the Maussian view that behaviour at a feast was characterized by some element of competition between families and communities for whom the maintenance of good relations was important: "The act of hospitality central to festivals and feasts had two functions. On the one hand, it emphasized one's own social position and the status of guests in relation to it. On the other hand, acceptance of hospitality also assumed reciprocity and the guest inevitably had in mind his own forthcoming duties as host, while the host did not forget that it would soon be his turn to act as guest. In this social exchange, not only bonds between individuals but, above all, between groups were defined and strengthened. The host demonstrated his perception both of his own standing and that of his guest by his behaviour and the scale of his hospitality. Sometimes a host might deliberately use the occasion to enhance his own prestige and humble his guest either by exaggerated largesse or by deliberately offering less hospitality than custom required" (259).
- <sup>11</sup> The poems have been primarily collected from Juhana Kainulainen from a spell used in bathing a sick person: "Kaveh eukko, Luonnotar/kaveh kultainen, koria" (*SKVR* VII 4, 1758: 90-91). Kave woman, golden, beautiful is implored with other forces to help the one to be bathed be relieved of his or her problem. Luonnotar sometimes also manifests as one of Tapio's daughters (Haavio 1967: 68; Krogerus 1999: 131).
- <sup>12</sup> Tuulikki Korpinen (1986) reveals through her study of Louhi's etymologies that her name has both the meaning of "flame" (Swedish *låga*) and *lux* (light), suggesting how patriarchy has turned this fiery bringer of light into a figure of death and darkness.
- <sup>13</sup> Iivar Kemppinen (1960), for example, analyzes the history of Finnish mythology and spiritual life and views the gradual replacement of the goddesses with the one god of resurrection as the Finn's heightened maturity and "development" towards a higher form of religion.
- <sup>14</sup> On Nordic mythology and goddesses from a feminist perspective see Sjöo (1985).
- <sup>15</sup> In Christian dualistic mythology women are not generally represented as belonging to the sky-world but are kept associated with the inferior "other" of the "masculine" mind (matter), spirit (body), or culture (nature). In the pre-patriarchal representation of the creative spirit women are images both of nature and culture, where such a dichotomy does not exist. The Luonnotar daughters can be associated with an alternative social order and alternative sex/gender system; after all, they create the products of "culture" such as iron out of maternal milk, expressing thereby an imaginary where maternity and the female breast are not restricted to their patriarchal functions: nurturing babies or being objects of the male erotic gaze, the fetishized breast. This

is one telling example of an alternative worldview or way of endowing prestige to social contributions. The above representation of the feminine is not dependent on an approving male order but is defined in relation to itself and its own values, e.g. the inherent value of women creating both life and technology.

- <sup>16</sup> “Using clay and water, he fashioned the beautiful artifice. The forges and fires of the earth are the artificial womb from which Pandora is born. This Hephaestian passion for creative expression is deeply of the mother. Pandora was not the product of a union with the masculine but through Hephaestus, the most primordial feminine influences of nature are mimicked and made real. In addition to the gift of life, Hephaestus fashioned a golden crown, which was placed on Pandora’s head by Athene. On this shining masterpiece were carved all of the creatures of the land and sea. They were complete with voices and movement, an animated world of instinctual and natural energies. It was a crown for an earth goddess (Rhea Pandora), the first woman, Queen of nature, and a symbol of fertility and seasonal life” (Geyer Miller 1995: 2). As this quotation suggests, the earth goddess may well have affinities also with the Finnish Golden woman or Kave. In patriarchal lore, for instance the *Kalevala*, the Golden Woman is turned into a mere fantasy of the eternal smith and hammerer, Ilmarinen. Echoing the Greek Hephaistos, he is the prototype of the engineer-innovator-scientist who tries to reproduce through technology what he cannot own in a flesh-and-blood woman (Kailo 2002). Ilmarinen hammers for himself a kind of primitive cyberlady and exemplifies the male effort to create through mechanistic means and machinery what men cannot bring to life in a womb. These efforts of “artificial insemination” or possible womb-envy projected into technological innovation and projected to the level of the nature/culture split and myth fail. The Golden Woman remains lifeless, as indeed are classic dualistic male fantasies of women. They are projections and hence cannot give life to women as complex humans beyond the restricting and unrealistic whore/madonna dualisms.

- <sup>17</sup> “The givers of gifts were living there and the old wives that give game lay just in their working dress, in their dirty ragged clothes. Even the forest’s mistress too, the cruel mistress Kuurikki was very black in countenance, in appearance terrible; bracelets of withes were on her arms, on her fingers withy rings, with withy ribbons her head was bound, in withy ringlets were her locks, and withy pendants in her ears, around her neck were evil pearls. The evil mistress then, the cruel mistress Kuurikki was not disposed to give away, or inclined to helpfulness” (Abercromby, 1898: 179-180). As this description of Kuurikki and its broader context by Abercromby reveal, Mielikki and Kuurikki are not a separate good and bad goddess but two aspects of the same game-giving female haltia. For studies of Louhi see Nenola-Kallio and Timonen (1990); Siikala and Vakimo (1994) and Kailo, in English (e.g., 1996, 2000). Siikala (1986) discusses the connections between Louhi and words or etymologies connoting trance states, addressing the chthonic projections on Louhi as the mistress of the domain of death, the North and the otherworld

- <sup>18</sup> By “non-imaginary” originary meaning I refer to the postmodern insight that ultimately any one primal version is unknowable. To refer to origins is a “no-no” of postmodernism because such a quest presupposed unified origins and a linear history. While I embrace the constructivist nature of postmodern theory, I refer to originary meanings as part of a conscious strategic essentialist claim to a founding mythology aimed at empowering a group, in my case, women.

- <sup>19</sup> My source for the analysis of Kave/Louhi is the vast collections of folk material in the archives of the Finnish Literature Society in Helsinki, primarily the *Suomen Kansan*

- Vanhat Runot (SKVR)*, plus the Finnish national epic, *Kalevala*.
- <sup>20</sup> The sauna is at its best when bathed in meady vapours, and there is a *haltia* of beer, Osmotar, associated with the drink that raises spirits and energies (Kailo 2005a).
- <sup>21</sup> She is best known through the Finnish *Kalevala*, an epic that is an appropriate *mise-en-abyme* of the tendencies persisting in literature on the North. The striking feature about these stories is that their representations of femininity and masculinity, male heroes and female anti-heroes could not be further removed from reality, in light of historical facts or contemporary developments (Kailo 2005b).
- <sup>22</sup> See Sawin (1998) for an excellent feminist analysis of Louhi.
- <sup>23</sup> As Myram Miedzien (1991) has demonstrated, there are numerous peaceful cultures, among them Indigenous nations that have been able to heal from a violence-based social structure. Goettner-Abendroth (2004) has also gathered proof of existing matriarchal social systems with little or no violence. It may be idealistic and naïve to argue that archaic societies or matriarchies were either peaceful or that aggression did not characterize humans at all times. However, it is necessary to distinguish between worldviews that have or have not sought to naturalize giving and a sustainable cultural, economic and biological order. If the peoples labelled as “noble savages” have never been simplistically noble, it is still of great significance that their worldview, if not all individuals, have more humane cooperative values built into their visions of life and way of living than is the case in today’s dominant ethos of “each for his own.”
- <sup>24</sup> However, it is important to stress that feminist approaches to power emphasize power within and empowerment for all rather than power over.

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## **The Gift Logic of Indigenous Philosophies in the Academy**

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In this paper, I discuss how the logic of the gift embedded in Indigenous philosophies relates to the prevalent ignorance and benevolent imperialism of the academy. I suggest that there is a pressing need for a new paradigm in the academy; a paradigm based on the logic of the gift as understood in Indigenous thought. With the help of the notion of the gift, I argue that it is possible to envision alternative ways of perceiving and relating to previously marginalized epistemes in the academy. In short, we need to conceptualize a new logic that would make the academy more responsible and responsive in its pursuit of knowledge.

The logic of the gift articulated here foregrounds a new relationship characterized by reciprocity and a call for responsibility toward the “other.” Thus far, much academic attention with regard to Indigenous peoples has focused on seeking to “acclimatize” Indigenous students to the university environment and academic culture. This approach is based on an implicit assumption that Indigenous people are in need of help. Further, these assumptions are premised on externalizing responsibility. Those who are ultimately responsible are always somewhere else.

### **Sami Worldview and Gift Practices**

In Indigenous worldviews, the gift extends beyond interpersonal relationships to “all my relations.”<sup>1</sup> Put another way, according to these philosophies, giving is an active relationship between human and natural worlds based on a close interaction of sustaining and renewing the balance between them through gifts.

Instead of viewing the gift as a form of exchange or as having only an economic function as many classic gift theories suggest, I propose that the gift is a reflection of a particular worldview characterized by a perception of the natural environment as a living entity which gives its gifts and abundance to people if it is treated with respect and gratitude (i.e., if certain responsibilities are observed). Central to this perception is that the world as a whole is constituted of an infinite web of relationships extended to and incorporated into the entire social condition of the individual. Social ties apply to everybody and everything, including the land. People are related to their physical and natural surroundings through

genealogies, oral tradition and their personal and collective experiences pertaining to certain locations.

According to the traditional Sami perception of the world, like in many other Indigenous worldviews, the land is a physical and spiritual entity which humans are part of. Survival is viewed as dependent on the balance and renewal of the land, the central principles in this understanding are sustainable use of and respect for the natural realm. The relationship with the land is maintained by collective and individual rituals in which the gift and giving back are integral. The intimacy and interrelatedness is reflected in the way of communicating with various aspects of the land which often are addressed directly as relatives. The close connection to the natural realm is also evident in the permeable and indeterminate boundaries between the human and natural worlds. Skilled individuals can assume the form of an animal when needed and there are also stories about women marrying an animal (Porsanger 2004: 151-2).

An interesting, almost completely ignored aspect in the analyses of Sami cosmology and “religion” is the role of the female deities in giving the gift of life (to both human beings and domestic animals, mainly reindeer) and the connection to the land. One could suggest that the Sami deity Máttaráhkká with her three daughters signified the very foundation in the Sami cosmic order. Máttaráhkká could be translated as “Earthmother” (the root word *máttár* refers to earth and also to ancestors). Moreover, words for “earth” and “mother” in the Sami language also derive from the same root (*eanan* and *eadni* respectively). The role of women and female deities in Sami cosmology and the world order of giving and relations is a neglected area of study. Máttaráhkká and her three daughters are the deities of new life who convey the soul of a child, create its body and also assist with menstruation, childbirth and protection of children. In spite of the fact that the most significant gift of all, a new life, is the duty of these female deities, they have, in ethnographic literature, often been relegated to a mere status of wives of male deities. This reflects the common patriarchal bias of ethnographic interpretations of cultural practices.

Traditionally, one of the most important ways to maintain established relations and the socio-cosmic order has been the practice of giving to various *sieidi*s. *Sieidi* is a sacred place to which the gift is given to thank certain spirits for the abundance in the past but also to ensure fish, hunting and reindeer luck in the future. Although the several centuries’ long influence of Christianity has severely eroded the Sami gift-giving to and sharing with the land by banning it as a pagan form of devil worshipping, there is a relatively large body of evidence that the practice of *sieidi* gifting is still practiced (Kjellström 1987; see also Juuso 1998: 137).

I argue that contrary to conventional interpretations, giving to *sieidi* cannot be completely understood through the concept of sacrifice. Even if *sieidi* gifts do have aspects of sacrifice, they are not and should not be regarded solely as such. They may have other dimensions that can be as significant—if not more so—as the aspect of sacrifice. Bones are given back, the catch shared and reindeer given to the gods and goddesses of hunting, fishing and reindeer luck represented by *sieidi*



sites as an expression of gratitude for their goodwill and for ensuring abundance also in the future. In this sense, giving to *sieidis* appears involuntary as it is done for the protection and security of both the individual and the community.

### The Academy and the Reproduction of the Values of the Exchange Paradigm

The university remains a contested site where not only knowledge but also middle-class with its eurocentric, patriarchal and (neo)colonial values are produced and reproduced. As Althusser and others have exposed, the academy is one of the main sites of reproduction of hegemony. Not surprisingly, then, the studied silence and willed indifference around the “Indigenous” continues unabated in most academic circles. In the same way as Indigenous people remained invisible in shaping and delineating of the nation-states in the “New World” (see Hall 2003, 66), Indigenous scholarship remains invisible and unreflected even in discourses of western radical intellectuals. The politics of disengagement rooted in hegemonic forms of reason combined with the corporatization of basic values—accumulation of intellectual capital, competitive self-interestedness—deter many self-identified critics of hegemonic discourses from seriously committing themselves in elaboration of alternatives or engaging in the slow and demanding process of “ethical singularity” (Spivak 1999: 384). In the spirit of the times, they count upon the revolution—a sudden rupture that appears from nowhere without much effort. Val Plumwood (2002) has pointed out the critical but usually hidden relationship between power and disengagement:

Power is what rushes into the vacuum of disengagement; the fully “impartial” knower can easily be one whose skills are for sale to the highest bidder, who will bend their administrative, research and pedagogical energies to wherever the power, prestige and funding is. Disengagement then carries a politics, although it is a paradoxical politics in which an appearance of neutrality conceals capitulation of power. (43)

The reality remains, as Gayatri Spivak reminds us, that mind-changing requires patience and painstaking attempts of learning to learn: “The tempo of learning to learn from this immensely slow temporizing will not only take us clear out of diasporas, but will also yield no answers or conclusions readily” (Spivak 1990). “Instant fix” models or reductionist sloganeering are simply not going to deliver the transformation. “Feel-good” transformation that does not address complexities or multiple realities and challenges will not get us very far. We must be able to see how cynicism and nihilism are not only counterproductive but serves the interests of power. Cynical attitudes particularly common among male intellectuals that suggest that envisioning alternatives is too idealistic only serves the hegemonic structures by creating new and sustaining old hierarchies and relations of power. Peter McLaren (1995) urges intellectuals and educators to deprive cynicism “in favor of a will to dream and act upon such dreams” (56).

Another contemporary reality is that, as the pervasive economic globalization has painfully demonstrated, sites of separatism are no longer possible. In a way or another, all societies and communities are affected by the forces of globalization that eliminate borders of all kinds. The pervasive nature of neoliberal corporate mentality is also reflected in the (willy-nilly) adopting much of its values. Particularly relevant in this context is the externalization of social responsibility. It seems that the corporate ethos according to which social responsibility is considered a distortion of business principles (Bakan 2004) is also increasingly influencing the academy, where even “revolutionary scholars” prefer to point fingers and disavow their own personal social responsibilities. One repeatedly hears that we need alternatives and that we have to start creating them, but very few in fact get beyond that point.

Why, then, more academics are not envisioning alternatives? A brief visit to recent conferences in numerous fields and disciplines show that most scholars, including some Indigenous intellectuals, are content to limit their thinking within existing, hegemonic paradigms and become satisfied in asking complacent questions such as “minimum requirements” for our participation in current structures. Ironically, those who do not limit themselves to telling others to create alternatives and new visions but attempt to elaborate them are ridiculed as utopian and idealistic even by those who call for alternatives. Maria Mies (1998) suggests:

The difficulty of even thinking of an alternative in our industrial societies is due partly to the concept of linear progress which dominates Eurocentric thought. People cannot understand that “going back” and looking for what was better in the past, or in non-industrialized societies, might be a creative method of transcending the impasse in which our societies are stranded.... They are also reluctant to step out of their given mindset and dream of another paradigm, unless they are offered a fully fledged model of another economy. They fear to join a process, which is already under way, and contribute their own creativity and energy. They want security before they step out of their old house. (xvii)

The reality is that we have to have the courage to start from the scratch and participate in an on-going, unfinished process. Suggesting, as some academics have done, that we need to learn from the New Right because their strategies seem to work is not going to get us anywhere. One quickly learns that fabricating lies, manipulating fear, manufacturing myths and hostility toward the other in the name of uniting the nation and at the end, believing in these myths themselves is not going to teach us very much else than how utterly corrupt, savage and unconscionable the New Right is. It is impossible build viable alternatives with these tactics. Moreover, considering how the general spirit of distrust and disillusionment generated particularly by the Right appears to have affected also the spirit of much of the Left, it is clear that we do not need to learn from the Right. In our search for teachers and sources of learning, we need to look elsewhere,

scratch the surface deeper and broaden our horizons beyond the Right and Left. We need to start learning from the Gift. As Spivak (1999) states:

There is an alternative vision of the human: those who have stayed in place for more than thirty thousand years.... Yet here too lies the experience of the impossible that will have moved capital persistently from self to other—economic growth as cancer to redistribution as medicine: *pharmakon*. (402)

### Scholarly “Give Back”

A central principle of Indigenous philosophies, “giving back” also forms the backbone of current research conducted by many Indigenous scholars and students. It expresses a strong commitment and desire to ensure that academic knowledge, practices and research are no longer used as a tool of colonization and as a way exploiting Indigenous peoples by taking (or as it is often put, stealing) their knowledge without ever giving anything back in return. After centuries of being studied, measured, categorized and represented to serve various colonial interests and purposes, many Indigenous peoples now require that research dealing with Indigenous issues has to emanate from the needs and concerns of Indigenous communities instead of those of an individual researcher or the dominant society. Indigenous research ethics assert the expectations of academics—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—to “give back,” to conduct research that has positive outcome and is relevant to Indigenous peoples themselves (e.g., Battiste 2000: xx; Smith 1999: 15)

The principle of “giving back” in research—whether it is reporting back, sharing the benefits, bringing back new knowledge and vital information to the community, or taking the needs and concerns of the people into account—is part of the larger process of decolonizing colonial structures and mentality and restoring Indigenous societies.

Besides generating respectful and responsible scholarship, the recognition of the gift of Indigenous epistemes also provides it with a deeper, more informed understanding of contemporary Indigenous-state (or the dominant society) relations manifested in numerous and complex ways as well as of the different perceptions of the world which emphasize the relationship between human beings and the natural environment. Considering the destructive agendas of unlimited economic growth based on prevailing neoliberal, global capitalist and patriarchal paradigms labelled as “free trade” and commodification of all life forms is yet another reason for the academy and the mainstream society at large to recognize and become cognizant of the main principles in Indigenous philosophies.

At the same time, we need to remain vigilant of patriarchal, masculinist mechanisms of control that also exist within contemporary Indigenous scholarship. As a young Indigenous woman and junior academic, I have experienced the old boys’ network functioning in most unexpected academic spaces and learned that in some cases, male-bonding and solidarity with other male academics is far greater than the unity of “Indigenous peoples’ front” in working

towards transformation and decolonization of our peoples and societies. Here of course lies the irony of the double standard—this is the very same front that is considered threatened when Indigenous women concur with feminist analysis and build alliances with non-Indigenous women and feminists. Yet more than once Indigenous women scholars have been faced with the male mechanisms of control which seek to silence and keep women, including young Indigenous women, in their place and stop them stepping on the toes of the authorities. These incidents have made it clear that if we adhere to these male mechanisms of control, we as Indigenous female scholars are allowed and can be critical only within carefully defined parameters.

### The Future of the Academy and the Recognition of the Gift

I contend that the future of the academy is dependent on the recognition of the gift of Indigenous epistemes—recognition as understood within the logic of the gift that foregrounds the responsibility in the name of the well-being of all. As in Indigenous epistemes, the future of the academy is dependent on its ability to create and sustain appropriate reciprocal relationships grounded on action and knowledge. In other words, recognizing the gift requires acquiring and adopting a new logic that is grounded on the responsibility toward the other that is defined as the ability and willingness to reciprocate at the epistemic level, not only at the level of human interaction. The call for the recognition of the gift of Indigenous epistemes is a call for an epistemic shift grounded on a specific philosophy and as such, a more profound transformation than efforts toward the inclusive university seeking to “democratize” the traditionally Eurocentric curriculum and the canon. In the discourse of inclusion, the paradigm—the mode of thinking and relating, the relationship—remains unchanged as a one-way relationship where the flow of knowledge is always unilateral (and thus hegemonic), whether from Indigenous people to the academy (the scene of the native informant) or from the academy to Indigenous people (the scene of Eurocentric, hegemonic intellectual foundations of the institution).

The gift logic necessitates mind-changing—opening up to a new way of seeing and conceptualizing knowledge as well as our relationships and responsibilities. As such, it also exceeds analyses put forth by advocates of critical pedagogy. Cultivating critical thinking and social responsibility, critical pedagogy emphasizes the political and emancipatory nature of education. Many also advocate “revolutionary critical pedagogy” that foregrounds the social class and is informed by Marxist theories. For the most part, however, critical pedagogy is a white, male discourse and thus, not necessarily emancipatory for many other groups and individuals (Ellsworth 1989). In its articulation of the primacy of the social class or the processes of democratization, revolutionary critical pedagogy also usually ignores the fundamental question of expropriation of Indigenous peoples lands and territories (see also Grande 2000: 51). Scholars of critical theory and pedagogy are apt to note how capitalism would not be possible without the unpaid work of slaves, people

of colour and women, but there is again a studied silence about the usurpation of Indigenous lands. Perhaps it is strategic forgetfulness to ignore “the historical facts which are for many hard to swallow”—that at best, the Anglo-American is a guest on this continent, and at worst, the United States of America is founded upon stolen land” (Silko 1980: 215).

The concept of revolution is inconsistent with the logic of the gift. Revolution is always predicated of violence of some sorts, whether physical, overt violence or more subtle forms such as structural, symbolic, or even epistemic. Revolutions take place to overthrow oppressive, hegemonic regimes. Further, observing the recent discourses of revolution by both the Right and the Left has left me somewhat wary of the potential of revolutions. If the neoconservatives can view themselves as revolutionary in their myth-making and battle against the evil in the name of saving the “nation,” revolution has literally come too close to terror and hegemony. In such revolution, there simply can be no liberation for the majority of the world’s population. Revolutions are also marked by the gender bias which merely reproduces patriarchal, hierarchical models as the ideals for new sovereignty (see Spivak 1985). As Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen note, “[a]fter so many failed or abrogated revolutions, we no longer have confidence in the power which comes out of barrels of the guns of the international warriors” (1999: 120).

Yet another reason for not having faith in revolutions is because no transformation takes place if we are incapable of getting beyond the language of aggression. As we know, language mirrors but also constructs our reality and thus our values. We do not need replication and reinforcement of the language of violence, we need a language of new possibilities. Instead of opposition, we need participation and commitment. The logic of the gift that compels us to reconsider concepts such as responsibility, recognition and reciprocity. This does not mean that Marxist analysis and critique is no longer needed. There is no doubt that epistemic ignorance is sanctioned in the interest of global capitalist relations. But instead of relying on one theory and expect it to do all the work, we have to recognize that no theory alone can deliver change or do the job single-handedly. This is also where our intellectual maturity may begin—when we stop engaging in wholesale dismissals of useful tools called theories without first doing our homework.

I have also called attention to the fact that Indigenous epistemes cannot be recognized as a gift within the prevailing neocolonial, global capitalist system. The language and values of exchange market economy and male rationality have permeated all spheres of life, including the way academics view their responsibilities. Moreover, universities are increasingly run like corporations and are marked by the values of neoliberal ideologies. This directly and indirectly affects to what is considered important and relevant in teaching and learning. By counting on the wealth and profit the gift or aspects of it such as “traditional knowledge” can generate for the advancement of the academy, this system only exploits and commodifies the gift by perceiving it as part of the exchange economy. In this

system, knowledge is being commercialized—a trend reflected, for example, in the view of Joseph Stiglitz for whom knowledge is a global public good capable of producing benefits and “one of the keys to development” (1999: 320). The idea of the recognition of the gift challenges this ideology embedded in the current trend of universities on the road of “becoming corporate institutions motivated by profit-thinking” along the lines “[t]he more money one attracts, the more one is “excellent” (Kailo 2000: 65; see also Findlay 2000: 312).

Further, the concept of epistemic ignorance seeks to pave way to a new language that exceeds cultural discontinuity theories and analyses. Epistemic ignorance refers to the predominant, general resistance to, indifference and lack of recognition and knowledge of Indigenous worldviews and discursive practices in the academy. The concept assists to expose practices of active and passive “not-knowing” and mechanisms of exclusion in the academy which ensure that the gift remains impossible. However, it is clear that academy is not only benevolently ignorant but also in many ways, adamantly opposes Indigenous epistemes because they do not conform their learned views about the world, knowledge and rationality. Therefore, epistemic ignorance does not only refer to innocent not-knowing but also structures of power, ideologies that seek to maintain status quo, consolidate native informants and keep them in the academic reservations.

Instead of focussing on the question of what needs to be done for Indigenous people in the academy, we need to hold the academy responsible for its ignorance and therefore, for its homework. Creating Indigenous spaces and asserting their voices in the academy is an insufficient measure because these gestures do not guarantee that Indigenous people can speak or are heard and understood by the academy. The historic, cultural and social foundations of the academy continue to be informed by patriarchal and colonial discourses and practices, resulting in a situation where “[t]he conditions of intellectual life are circumscribed by these assumptions and practices” (Green 2002: 88). In addition to the conditions of intellectual life, also what is being heard is confined and defined by these parameters. Due to the selective, rarefied intellectual foundations of the academy, those coming from other epistemic traditions are either forced to “transcode” their systems of knowing and perceiving the world into the dominant ones or simply remain “unheard” or misunderstood.

What is urgently needed is an unconditional welcome and openness to the “other” epistemes in such a way that “translation” of these epistemes is not a prerequisite to be welcomed to the academy. The questions that we need to ask include: how to move beyond the pervasive and widely sanctioned benign neglect? How to transform mere tolerance to engagement and to active participation in the logic of the gift?

Epistemic ignorance, however, is not only an “Indigenous problem.” It is also a problem of higher education at large for it seriously threatens and limits “free and fearless” intellectual inquiry and pursuit of knowledge. Beyond the academy, it is a problem of entire society. With the current suicidal economic priorities and destructive values, what is at stake is the long-term survival of everyone. Therefore, the problem of epistemic ignorance in the academy or elsewhere in

society is not solved by adding “Native content” in curriculum or incorporating the “Indigenous” in critical pedagogy. Calls for raising awareness and increasing knowledge are not new—they can be found in almost any list of recommendations dealing with education and Indigenous peoples. In Canada, for instance, they are among the core recommendations in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* in 1996 and reiterated in the more recent report, *Learning About Walking in Beauty: Placing Aboriginal Perspectives in Canadian Classrooms* in 2002.

I argue that in the academy, Indigenous epistemes need to be recognized as a gift according to the principles of responsibility and reciprocity that foreground the logic of the gift. The recognition called for here, however, is of a specific kind. It is not limited to the often fleeting moment of recognizing diversity in terms of “other” identities and cultures associated with multiculturalism but as I propose, it stems from an understanding grounded in the logic of the gift. This recognition requires knowledge but also commitment, action and reciprocity—one must take action according to responsibilities that characterize that particular relationship. As the various gifts of the land cannot be taken for granted in this logic—if they are, the balance of the world which life depends on is disrupted—the gift of Indigenous epistemes cannot be neglected. If they are, the university has failed its profession. As the gifts of the land have to be actively recognized by expressions of gratitude and giving back, the gift of Indigenous epistemes must be acknowledged by reciprocating which includes the ability to understand not only the gift itself but also the logic of the gift behind it.

Changing our mindsets to the logic of the gift is a challenging, interminable process that requires a strong commitment to hospitality and a sense of responsibility toward the “other” on the academy’s part. Rather than simply comprehending otherness, it is a matter of recognizing agency of the other (see Spivak 1995b: 182). Knowing (about) other cultures or epistemes will never alone erase systemic inequalities and disparate relations of power and privilege in the academy or elsewhere in society. This is why the academy must be called into action by an unfaltering commitment to responsibility and reciprocity as discussed above. Echoing Spivak’s words, my work makes “a plea for the patient work of learning to learn from below—a species of ‘reading’, perhaps—how to mend the torn fabric of subaltern ethics...” (Spivak 2001: 15).

This plea is not romanticizing: “What we are dreaming of here is not how to keep the tribal in a state of excluded cultural conformity but how to construct a sense of sacred Nature which can help mobilize a general ecological mind-set beyond the reasonable and self-interested grounds of long-term global survival” (Spivak 1995a: 199). This mobilization, however, does not imply taking the easy but irresponsible step across the threshold of embracing a “land ethic” or the logic of the gift, for that matter, without addressing the contemporary realities of Indigenous peoples. Nor it involves viewing Indigenous peoples as “nature folk” and picking and choosing aspects of Indigenous cultures according to the personal preference and need. It is not a call for simply paying tribute to Indig-

enous peoples and their land-centered practices or for merely employing them as inspirational symbols without knowing and acting upon one's responsibilities as required by the logic of the gift.

Superficial cultivation of short-lived references to Indigenous peoples' relationship with the land has nothing to do with the logic of the gift. Rather, they only romanticize and perpetuate persistent stereotypes with regard to "tradition" versus "contemporary." The gift has to be read in its various contexts and one of the sites is the academy. Neither various gift practices nor the logic of the gift can be rendered as belonging only to "archaic" or "traditional" societies. The logic of the gift remains central in Indigenous epistemes. We are all contemporaries although some of us may have different ways of perceiving and relating to the world.

A commitment to openness and learning to learn will hopefully also assist people in the academy to see the links between issues such as the logic of the gift and contemporary land rights of Indigenous peoples—a question that, from the perspective of the dominant, often appears controversial, problematic and above all, political. The gift is a reflection of a worldview that emphasizes the maintenance of good relationships with the land. If there is no land to have a relationship with—that is, if the land is expropriated or used for other, more "profitable" purposes, whether in the name of civilization or globalized economy—not only the gift is made impossible but also the survival of the people is impossible. In other words, the subordination of the rights of peoples to the global "imperatives" of capital and profit does the same job as the earlier anti-potlatch law and other policies and measures of banning cultural practices of Indigenous peoples. The Bretton Woods institutions effectively continue the legacy of colonization and assimilation by making the conditions of the gift and other practices impossible. To turn Pierre Bourdieu's theory of gift practices upside down: it is not the gift, but WTO, that is the most effective form of symbolic violence. The WTO *is* the new "anti-potlatch law" (see, for example, Bracken 1997; Cole and Chaikin 1990). Therefore, the bottom line is to change the values and thinking behind these values because—as Indigenous people in particular know—otherwise we kill the planet and ourselves with it.

The gift is a wakeup call to the academy and society at large. It is a collective vision for a common future that is more reasonable—if we recall, the non-hegemonic form of reason implies the ability to receive—as well as a more sustainable and just society. The gift is not only about applying new tools for teaching as sometimes suggested. The logic of the gift is not merely settling with minimum requirements within existing paradigms, nor is it just about "Indigenous voices" in the academy. It is a much more fundamental transformation of mindsets and values with a measure of creativity and radical break with previous practices. This transformation goes beyond incorporation of subjugated knowledge in the margins of an intact core of the knowledge. It is a radical change in the way academics, students, administrators and others in the academy perceive the role and nature of "other" epistemes. As Luce Irigaray (1985) contends, there cannot be change in the real without a concurrent change in the imaginary. As long as



the mainstream western society is dominated by a destructive imaginary, change is simply impossible.

The heart of the logic of the gift lays in the conceptual push to reimagine the academy as a site of responsibilities where epistemic reciprocity occurs. There is no single mode how this can be done. Rather, the logic of the gift is embedded in a practice that takes into account the multiplicities and specificities of each individual context. The very core of the gift logic is that there is not a single set of practices—this is evident in the multiplicity of gift practices of Indigenous peoples. The logic is shared but the practices vary from a context and situation to another. The intellectual maturity starts when we recognize that there is no one magic way, only the on-going active participation of everybody and endless ways of reciprocating, receiving the gift and taking responsibility. The logic of the gift cannot and should not be reduced “to a congerie of prescribed methods and techniques that sacrifice theory and reflection at the altar of high priests and prophets of practice” (McLaren and Farahmandpur 2005: 7). Advocates of “concrete solutions” who separate practice from theory are misguided in their dualistic mindsets and hyperseparation that reflects the ingrained modern consciousness, only reinforcing the politics of disengagement. As we can see in the relationship between the philosophy and the multiplicity of practices of the gift, theory and practice are inseparable and overlapping, one informing the other. For those, who are not sure how to practice the logic of the gift, one place to start looking is the gift giving practices themselves. Another place is self-reflection: How can we collectively and individually start transforming our values so that they would better reflect the basic principles of the gift logic, participation and reciprocity—the conditions of being human? How can we practice these principles in our work, research, teaching and daily academic life? What do we need to learn to ensure that Indigenous epistemes “can speak”? At the same time, we need to continue critiquing the patriarchal global capitalism and its values in the academy and engage in lesser used strategy of social justice—practising and living our alternatives—the gift logic, for instance—also in the academy.

*This article is based on my forthcoming book, Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes and the Logic of the Gift (University of British Columbia Press, 2007).*

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The expression "All my relations" (or "all my relatives") is commonly used as a way of concluding a prayer, speech or piece of writing by North American Indigenous people, reflecting the underpinning philosophy of the interconnectedness of all life (e.g., Vine 1996). In the introduction of an anthology of the same name, the editor Thomas King writes that besides reminding us of our various relationships, it is also "an encouragement for us to accept the *responsibilities* we have within this universal family..." (1990: ix). Moreover, as Deloria contends, the phrase "describes the epistemology of the Indian worldview, providing the methodological basis for the gathering of information about the world" (Deloria, Foehner and Scinta 1999: 52).

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## **She Gives the Gift of Her Body**

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The archetype of selfless or altruistic giving—without attachment to outcome or any concept of “reciprocity”—belongs originally and most fully to the Goddess, the Great Mother of All Things. Whether we see it in the bountiful harvests of the agricultural fields of Mother Earth, or the life-giving nurturance of a mother’s body supporting a pregnancy and nursing her baby, “the feminine force is active and life-producing” (Gimbutas 1999: 8). The female body in ancient times was perceived as “parthenogenetic, that is, creating life out of itself” (Gimbutas 1999: 112). As creator of the universe, known scientifically as the “Big Bang,” her boundless creativity gave rise to the endless and diverse forms found in Nature whose beauty is impossible to replicate and whose primary expression is unceasing, dynamic, cyclic growth—birth, death, and regeneration. I see the Goddess as a great spider spinning the world from her center, patiently reweaving the web of life again and again, through eons and ages. This cyclic continuity should be enough to give us hope in our current situation, no matter how bad it gets.

### **First Woman and the Gift of Life**

Since the first vulvas were inscribed on cave walls and rock outcroppings tens of thousands of years ago, the female has been formally imaged as gift-giver par excellence. In Australian rock art, she is known as “First Woman.” The gift she gives, of life and all that sustains it, made a lasting impression on early humans coming to consciousness, beginning to express themselves through language and art. So-called “Venus” figures from the Eurasian Paleolithic period, with their huge breasts and buttocks emphasized over any distinguishing personal features, demonstrate the acknowledged gift-giving capacity of the ancestral matrix figure later to be called Great Mother, Mother Earth, Pachamama. The vulva—that sacred doorway—was the original glyph of the human species becoming literate as far back as 30,000 years ago. It is a sign expressing gratitude, reverence, and awe toward the female body and its marvelous ability to create life, sustain it, and even—in death, as Mother Earth—to receive it back. Vulvas carved in rocks and painted on walls all over North and South America are known to have been

used for female blood mysteries and “puberty rites” since the most ancient times (Marshack 1991). Images of females dance among the pregnant animals that predominate in caves and rock shelters used by humans during the Ice Ages (Bahn 1997 [1988]). The female mysteries of periodicity and nature were at the center of whatever religious rites were practiced by early humans, whose lunar menstrual calendars document their interest in cyclic reality (Marshack 1991). Upright, our ancestors walked out of Africa and journeyed east and west, bringing their metaphorical “Dark Mother” with them, and eventually peopling vast continents (Birnbaum 2001). The first acts of human worship appear to have been in honour of this original ancestress, the Mother of Life, inside of whose mystery we had awakened to ourselves. Tens of thousands of years later, clan structure is still organized around the mother of an extended household in modern matriarchal societies, such as the Mosuo in China or the Maninkabau in Indonesia, where she is perceived as the central “pillar” of the home (Sanday 2002).

At the end of the last Ice Age, the weather warmed over much of the planet and our ancestors left their caves. Many of them developed the ability to settle, grow food, and domesticate animals. Cultivation, rather than being a sudden “revolution” as once thought, apparently unfolded in a fairly natural way from the sophisticated gathering that had gone on for millennia. (Harris 1996) The development of agriculture marks the beginning of the Neolithic period around 10,000 years ago. One important center of agriculture (“Nautufian”) emerged in northern Africa, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Middle East, from which it later was carried to other places, including the female-centered early civilizations of Greece and Anatolia (ancient Turkey). Archaeologists, linguists, and biologists have tracked the spread of agriculture eastward beyond the Caspian Sea and along the trade routes that would much later be known as the Silk Road (Harris 1996). Centers of agriculture also arose—perhaps independently or maybe through diffusion, this is currently still being debated—in China as well as in the Americas (Diamond 1999).

## **Women and Agriculture**

Women are usually credited with having invented agriculture, particularly the deliberate cultivation of plants and the various complex processes that accompanied it, such as cooking, processing, and food storage—extending to basketry, pottery, and other forms of vessels, as well as granaries allowing for a surplus of food for whole populations. The granary is a metaphor for the womb of the mother, as well as representing the literal ownership by the communal female group of the property in agricultural societies. The Dogon of Mali equate the Sirius star system with the “granary,” seeing it as a “reservoir and source of everything in the world” (Temple 1976: 43). Egyptians called the same star “Sothis” (“to be pregnant”) and represented it as the Great Goddess Isis (Temple 1976: 71). At Catal Höyük, a seventh-millennium town in ancient Turkey, an important female figure, perhaps

pregnant herself, and sitting enthroned between two leopards, was found in the granary (Gimbutas 1989: 107). Ceramic vessels crafted with breasts or in the shape of a female body emphasize the biological functions of pregnancy and lactation, womb and breast—the female’s concrete gift of life. Breasts on ceramic vessels used in ritual emphasize the female body “and by extension the body of the divine female, as a vessel of nourishment or renewal.” (Gimbutas 1999: 7)

### Shamanism Was Originally Female

The common equation of women with “hearth and home” links to the evolutionary act of harnessing fire for cooking and warmth, as well as referring to the sacred nature of the hearth as altar and the woman as shaman-priestess. Portable offering tables or altars have been found in female burials since the beginnings of civilization, documenting the ongoing function of the sacred woman. By the first millennium BCE, portable altars were buried with every priestess in central Siberia, and these altars or offering tables, along with certain other predictable items such as mirrors, are among the defining features of shaman priestess burials across Central Asia (Davis-Kimball 2002).

“Among several tribes traditions exist that the shaman’s gift was first bestowed on women. In Mongolian myths goddesses were both shamans themselves—like the Daughter of the Moon—and the bestowers of the shamanistic gift on mankind” (Czaplicka 1914: 244). A Russian ethnographer from the early twentieth century states that “Neo-Siberians” all have different (later) words for “male shaman,” but a common (original) word for female shaman from the most ancient times which has etymological links to the words “bear,” “earth-goddess,” “housewife,” and “wife” (Czaplicka 1914: 244). Shamanism is understood to be a sacrificial (or “gift”) vocation, in which one heals the sick, dispenses wisdom, performs magical rituals and communal ceremonies, and is generally available to the community in beneficial ways. Although male shamans are more often featured in contemporary ethnographic studies and shamanism is generally equated by scholars with male-ness, Czaplicka’s 1914 book suggests otherwise.

Among the Kamchadal [in Kamchatka] there are no special shamans... but every old woman and *kockchuch* (probably women in men’s clothes) is a witch, and explains dreams.... [T]hey used no drum, but simply pronounced incantations and practiced divination. (171)

### Female Biological Mysteries and the Baking of Bread

Birthing, ritual ceremonies, and the baking of bread happened more or less side-by-side in the early Neolithic temples of northern Greece. Ovens were created in the shape of a womb with an umbilicus, and pregnant female figurines were found nearby (Gimbutas 1999: 16). Evidence of bread offerings are found in most sacred sites in Europe, from as early as 12,000 BCE in the Ice Age caves

of France, down through the Neolithic, and into the classical period when Dianic priestesses baked crescent-shaped cakes for the Moon Goddess. Today it is the Catholic nuns who still bake wafers for communion, and we still say “she has a bun in the oven” when a woman is pregnant (Noble 1991: 24) Before this altruistic and communal nature of women was colonized and exploited, it functioned for the good of the whole and society was able to sustain itself for several thousand years in peace. Even now remnants of these ancient practices exist all over Europe, as I witnessed recently at Lepinski Vir in Serbia where a village man brought a freshly baked loaf of bread to show the assembled group of scholars. The bread was decorated with Old European symbols of the Goddess and formed in the shape of a mandala not dissimilar from those used for meditation by contemporary Tibetan Buddhist practitioners.



*Mandala-shaped loaf of freshly baked bread, brought to Lepinski Vir archaeological site by local Serbian man the day author visited with tour group sponsored by the Institute of Archaeomythology. Photo: Vicki Noble*

### Paradise Lost

It is a fatal error to assume, as many people do these days, that the development of agriculture itself was the beginning of private property and domination of nature (Noble 2004). Ancient female-based agriculture was practiced in harmony with nature and presents us with an almost utopian model of sustainability and peace on earth, compared with everything that has occurred since these civilizations were first disrupted during the fourth millennium BCE. At that time—with the introduction of male-dominance, kingship, war, slavery, and private property—the peaceful agricultural societies began to disappear (along with their languages, scripts, art, and rituals). The incredibly beautiful artwork of a society like Sumer, for instance, which in the opinion of art historians has

never again been equaled (Giedion 1962), was quickly replaced by mass-production and the values of the economic bottom line, while images of women dancing and performing rituals diminish and were eventually replaced by men (Garfinkle 2003: 269).

Organic and biodynamic farmers today are instinctually groping their way back to what was once an intact system of complex and intelligent relatedness with all of life. Our ancestors (and ancestresses) left us many images, artifacts, and physical signs of the successful continuity of culture, which they created and in which they existed successfully for several thousand years. Their central icon was the Goddess—the Mother of All Things—whose centrality begs to be re-established today along with women in leadership as her ministers. If progressives could begin to look at this legacy with open eyes, we could stop confusing the agribusiness of today with the agriculture of the past, and instead recognize matriarchal agriculture as the holistic model it is. We would then be forced to stop claiming, ignorantly, that “there has always been war, and there will always be war, it’s just the human condition.” Perhaps this realization would give us the impetus to refuse and reject the efforts of powerful corporations like Monsanto currently involved in dangerously altering our food at the DNA level, as well as taking out patents (private ownership) on life.

### **Womb as Tomb: She Gives the Gift of Death and Rebirth**

As mentioned earlier, I had the good fortune to visit Lepinski Vir, the oldest Neolithic site in Europe, which was originally situated on “an inaccessible” terrace overlooking the Iron Gates region of the Danube River separating Romania from Serbia (the former Yugoslavia). The site, on the Serbian side and once facing a “tumultuous whirlpool” (Gimbutas 1999: 56), had to be moved when the river was dammed in recent years. Dating from the mid-seventh to the mid-sixth millennia, and composed of “tombs and shrines in the shape of the female body” (Gimbutas 1999: 55), the site was “not meant for habitation, but for rites of death and regeneration” (Gimbutas 1999: 57). The trapezoidal shrines, which clearly represent vulvas (the sacred pubic triangle of the Goddess), were accompanied by enigmatic rock sculptures that archaeologists have called “Fish Goddesses,” but which are also undeniably an expression of the much later “Sheela-na-gigs” found all over the British Isles. The sculptures, many of which were covered in red ocher, show a wide-eyed (entranced) female figure with legs spread and hands pointing to (or opening) her triangular vulva. And like the earlier paleolithic period, some of the rocks at Lepinski Vir had only a vulva incised—referring in the most abstract and refined way to the Great Goddess in her dual manifestation of life and death, death and rebirth.

Because the human skeletons found at the site were mostly “disarticulated” and the skulls “set aside for special care, often protected with a box of stones,” we can assume that the people practiced secondary burial rites in which they “laid out their dead in front of the shrines for excarnation.” After the defleshing of the human





*Fishlike female stone deity ("Ancestress") found at Lepinski Vir (6000 BCE). Reproduction. Courtesy Iron Gates Archaeological Museum on the Danube in Serbia.*  
*Photo: Vicki Noble*

bones by carrion birds, whose bones have also been found at the site, the remains were buried in the shrines (Gimbutas 1999: 59). The earliest images of such "sky burials" are found in wall murals from Catal Hüyük in Turkey dated to the seventh millennium BCE. One painting shows two towers—one where the headless body has been placed, and one with a head—with vultures approaching each. A second painting shows vultures "with 'human' legs and a headless corpse" (Mellaart, Hirsch and Balpinar 1989: 59-60). Rites of excarnation ("secondary burial") were practiced all over Old Europe and the Mediterranean region for

millennia, and in Central Asia as well, and remnants of this practice are carried on in some places today. Marija Gimbutas (1991) documents such practices in Italy, the Near East, Anatolia, Greece, and even as far north as the Orkney Islands, with skulls routinely buried separately and skeletons "disarticulated" (283). The famous hypogeum of Malta, for example, contains the remains of 7000 human skeletons that were deposited there over a period of 1500 years. The site was simultaneously used as a gathering place for funerary rites and communal rituals, a widespread custom of ancient prepatriarchal people.

Frequently these finds (skulls and disarticulated bones, some with cut marks) have led archaeologists to conclude that "cannibalism" and "human sacrifice" were practiced. Yet in Tibet the ancient rite of "sky burial" is still practiced, where a corpse is taken to a "specially designated area outside the town or village, often at the top of a mountain," and "bodybreakers" (*domdens*) chop the body into pieces and feed it to the vultures who are considered to be incarnate *dakinis*. Recent films about Tibet (e.g. *Seven Years in Tibet*, *Kundun*, and *Himalaya*) show graphic representations of these funerary rites, where pieces of flesh are laid out as a banquet and the giant screaming birds come to feast ravenously on the remains. We in the West tend to view such practices with alarm, judging them as primitive, barbaric,

unnatural or gruesome. Tibetans, on the other hand, view a three-day-old corpse as lifeless, “its purpose fulfilled. The manner of disposal is considered as a *final act of generosity*, enabling other animals to be nourished by one’s remains” (Batchelor 1987: 65, my emphasis). This funerary gift-giving seems to reflect a remnant of the ancient matriarchal understanding of our embeddedness in nature, quite counter to the dualistic phobia of death we have cultivated in the modern West.

A pre-Buddhist rock painting at an important site in Tibet sacred to the Goddess Tara shows a bird-like female identified as a “khyung,” a mythical figure sacred to Tibetans and perhaps a precursor to contemporary “sky women” or dakinis. (Bellezza 1997: 185) This harks back to megalithic sites all over Old Europe where excarnation was the main burial rite, “skulls received special attention” (Gimbutas 1999: 66), and birds of prey were associated with the megaliths (Gimbutas 1999: 71). Bird Goddesses and shamanistic “sky-walking women” (dakinis) are ubiquitous in the matriarchal strata in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas, suggesting a particular function of the female. The function of flight is widely celebrated, perhaps pertaining especially to funerary rituals but also generally related to the spirit journeys of shamanism. Valkyries were winged “corpse choosers” who carried the souls of the dead off the battlefields, and Ovid describes Scythian women as rubbing their bodies with flying ointments just like later European witches were purported to do.

Miranda Shaw (1994) reports on the “siddhis” (powers) of famous yoginis, who “could become invisible, had mastered the ritual gazes, and had the power of fleetfootedness, the ability to traverse vast distances in a matter of minutes” (79). As I wrote about Medea of Colchis, a Bronze Age shaman woman or “sorceress” known for her regenerative magic (Noble 2003), her lineage may continue even today in a group of mostly women and girls living in the Caucasus who are “called *messulethe* and described as sorceresses” according to a report by Jeannine Davis-Kimball (1997/98). They live among tribes considered to be descendants of Scythians and Sarmatians, and they “fulfill a role very similar to that of Altaic shamans, falling into trances, escorting the dead to the underworld, or reincarnating them” (42).

### Dakinis and Yoginis Carry on the Tradition of the Gift

Shamanism is a service vocation. Once exclusively a women’s province (Czaplicka 1914), shamanism is a sacrificial practice in which the shaman uses her body as a vessel for powerful energies to flow through her for healing and magic. In the most ancient times, women performed this function collectively in ecstatic rituals and communal ceremonies involving (and on behalf of) the whole community. Female Buddhas and high-ranking shaman priestesses are pervasive in the artifacts and images from female-centered civilizations of Old Europe (6000 BCE). [illustration] Later during the Bronze Age (3500-1200 BCE), as agricultural civilizations were disrupted and scattered by violence, a special African-European-Asian amalgam of the shaman priestess emerged in the Mediterranean region (known

as “Maenads”) with counterparts in the Indus Valley and northern Tibet (China’s Tarim Basin).

Possession is the norm in “women’s religion” around the world, as elucidated in I. M. Lewis’s classic text, *Ecstatic Religion* (1989 [1971]). Just as a pregnant woman gives over her body for the duration of her incubation, a shaman gives over her body for the temporary use of an incarnating spirit or ancestor. Denigrated today as “merely mediums,” descendants of these special women are still able to make way for more powerful healing energies to inhabit and work through their bodies. Female shamans are officially still active in the contemporary societies of Japan and Korea, as well as in isolated regions of Russia and Mongolia. They can also be found in Nepal, India, Indonesia, and Central and South America, to name only a few places.

The ability to become “empty” is a formal goal of meditation practice, highly valued in Tibetan Buddhism, and embodied by the Tibetan Dakini (sky-going woman). Her selflessness is said to be “compatible with activity in the world ... with, or for, the sake of others” (Klein 1995: 123). The Wisdom Dakini is described as “fully awakened and acts to awaken others.” (Simmer-Brown 2001: 64) Although it mostly goes unrecognized, Dakinis are believed to take human form as women, so any woman could potentially be acting as a Dakini at any time. As Judith Simmer-Brown puts it in her book, *Dakini’s Warm Breath* (2001), human “women are the display that emptiness takes when it expresses itself in form” (40). The dakini gives “the blessing of her own body,” referring especially to the “subtle yogic body” with its “vital breath, channels, and essences.” In a tantric sexual encounter, the dakini blesses her partner “with her empty and radiant body, a direct transmission of her nature” (Simmer-Brown, 2001: 249). But the dakini’s “empty and radiant body” can also be given in bodywork, healing, and other forms of interaction that are sacred, magical, and nonsexual.

According to scholar John Vincent Bellezza (1997), the Medicine Buddha (“*śman lha*”) has a female precursor in Tibet, a pre-Buddhist group of Tibetan female deities who “often form sisterhoods.” He describes them, sadly, as “no longer popular and nearly extinct in the region.” The Tibetan word (“*śman*”) pertains to “both medicine and women,” is “defined as benefit, use or beneficence” (111), and is also “an honorific term for women.” (Bellezza 1997: 130) Put simply, women embody the gift. Bellezza states that, “Women and the *śman* share the same qualities ... [and] *śman* also came to mean medicine by virtue of its connection with the feminine qualities of nurturer and healer” (1997: 111). As in Siberian shamanism, the female “*śman mo*” (“benefactress”) predates the later “*śman pa*” or male doctor (111). Recognizing the long continuous female lineage that runs like an underground stream through Tibetan Buddhist literature and territory, Bellezza states that, “Though the appearance, theology, and culture of the great goddess could be altered, she was never eliminated” (1997: 117).

Today Dakinis and Yoginis are treated mainly as abstract deities or “yiddams” in the texts, interiorized into Indian and Tibetan Buddhist tantric visualization practices. Nonetheless, their historical reality is strongly attested to. Bellezza and

others mention references to “Eastern and Western Kingdoms of Women,” where “women held dominant social and political roles in the autocracy and authority that was matrifocal” (Bellezza 1997: 134). The area to the immediate west of Tibet was once known as Oddiyana, the “Land of the Dakinis.” This is the place from which the great guru, Padmasambhava, arrived in Tibet in the eighth century. Dudjom Rinpoche, a high Lama and head of the Nyingma Lineage, is quoted as saying in the twentieth century that “the women of the region belong to an ancient race of dakinis and still ‘have power over the arts of magic gaze, transformation of objects by means of certain gnostic spells, and some minor sorcery’” (Simmer-Brown 2001: 55). “Bodily offerings appear to be the province of all dakinis,” says Simmer-Brown (2001: 247).

In India, the so-called “cult of the Yoginis” embodied many of these same concepts. In tantra, the transformative quality of the female fluids was perceived as source and nourishment for the tribe. “(W)hen she is not a mother, its excess is discharged as menstrual blood; when she is pregnant, it becomes the ‘uterine milk’ that feeds the embryo in her womb; when she is a mother, it becomes the milk that feeds her child” (White 2003: 92). Women’s blood is described in tantric texts as the “supreme fluid” and the “font of life itself” (White 2003: 93). “Female [menstrual] discharge is the ‘milk of the vulva,’ and a Yogini’s menstrual blood, which has its origins in her breast, is nourishing” (White 2003: 91).

The Yoginis, also known as Matrikas or “Circles of Mothers” (White 2003: 136), were famous for their “eight siddhis” or supernatural powers. They represent an ancient lineage going back to the Indus Valley and Central Asia, continuing in some form to the present day in self-proclaimed shaman women (“Devi”) like Ammachi. In our day, Ammachi embodies the feminine ideal in her gift-giving expression of divine love. People come to her by the thousands for “darshan” (blessings) which consists of standing in line and getting hugs from this giant of a woman who performs her hugging function for many hours at a time without (apparently) becoming tired. People describe her energy transmissions as powerfully electric, emotionally moving, and consciousness-altering.

Much of my research in the last decade has been to document the unbroken lineage of female shamanism across Afro-Eurasia, from ancient times to the present. The continuity of practices, rituals, and artifacts identifying the sacred women who have functioned as religious leaders in their communities all across the Silk Road for thousands of years is a main theme in my 2003 book, *The Double Goddess: Women Sharing Power*. A major subtext of the book demonstrates direct links between Greek Maenads, Central Asian Amazons, Indo-Tibetan Dakinis and Yoginis, and European Witches. All of these assemblies of women were known for their abilities to fly through the air, heal the sick, resurrect the dead, brew sacred intoxicating fermented beverages (such as Soma), and perform sexual and divination practices for which they have been misunderstood, maligned, peripheralized, and demonized in the modern world.

A timely example of this negative bias is a Russian article describing a rich female burial recently excavated in the Crimea. The Sarmatian woman, who died in her

mid-40s, was buried with symbols of great wealth or rank, including her “lavish dress, massive golden earrings decorated with garnets, golden necklace, and golden medals sewn to her dress.” But it was the “occult inventory” (“nine bronze rings, the same number of bells ... [and] a whole array of different amulets” and beads) buried with her that caused the archaeologist to jump to the incredible conclusion that she must have been a “witch” (in the pejorative sense). Because “all the relics date back to a much earlier period than the woman’s corpse,” he imagines: “The witch must have dug out those accessories from ancient burials in order to intensify her magic powers.” (“Archaeologists discover witch burial in Crimea”). In fact, heirloom artifacts are commonly found in important female burials from all over the ancient world, and were most likely passed down as “cult” items from one priestess in a lineage to the next, or from mother to daughter—another form of the gift.

### The Patriarchal Transition: Stealing the Gift

The shift from a gift economy to a commodity culture can be seen in the transition that occurred from matriarchal cultures to patriarchal ones everywhere. Under patriarchy, shaman priestesses became “witches,” “ogresses,” “demonesses,” “sacred Harlots,” or “temple prostitutes,” and what was once freely given became a commodity controlled by male authorities in male-dominated social structures. Just as the Earth has been harnessed by modern agricultural methods to produce without pause, women’s natural gift-giving capacities have been exploited and colonized for the use of men and male society.

Most recently the transition can be seen in India where the Devadasis (“temple dancers”) were still—until the 1950s—giving the gift of their bodies by dancing for the deity in temples, cooking food to be shared communally with the worshippers in attendance, and performing the sacred sexual rites to benefit all beings. Because the British conceived of them as “prostitutes,” the Devadasis were outlawed and forced to stop practicing their ancient rites (Marglin 1985). The visible outlawing of this ancient female tradition of gift-giving goes hand-in-hand with the further colonization of women as witnessed in the systematic use of rape in war, as well as the catastrophic rise of sex work and female sexual slavery around the world in recent decades. In 2004, Amnesty International decreed these pervasive crimes against women to be the worst human rights violations in the world—a pandemic of domestic violence being the number one contemporary global problem named in their report.

When research scholars in the women’s spirituality movement plead for a return to the Goddess, it is not a frivolous or peripheral issue as compared with some supposedly “larger” issues of the day. It is a call to remember the core model of gift-giving that belongs innately to the human species—our evolutionary birth-right—which has been gradually diminished and forgotten over several thousand years of patriarchal domination. As Genevieve Vaughan (2004) often reminds us, we all received the gift of life from a mother—she who gives the gift of her

body. The memory of gift-giving exists within us, individually and collectively, and needs only to be remembered and reinvigorated.

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## The Goddess Temple of Sekhmet

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### A Gift Economy Project

First a prayer and then a pledge of allegiance. Here's the prayer:

I will fly; I know barbed wire, [thumb tacks], bare halls. I've seen the white walls of slavery, and I can transform them, too. Each thing examined regains beauty. I will fly into colour itself, red as the fiery robes of huge women, blue as the veins in her breast, green as her hair trailing on the sea, purple as her most sacred self. I will fly like a plant flies, invisible in small seed pods, borne on the friendly goddess winds, touching endless possibilities. Someday, the sod of rich land, where to sprout, knowing I will fly again, I will be rich weighted by a hundred flying women, gold flashes from caring, and as they fly by my window, wearing images of the goddess next to their skin, I'll fly in a rising mist of desire, I'll touch the smoke, taste the wet air, fly above, fly below, infinite acrobat. I will fly, fly in dreams, fly working, break out of the shadow flying, skywrite letters and invocations, fly lonely as purple dipping sun, or fly in clouds of beautiful women, or drifting into the [warm dress] of the Mother herself. I'll see as I fly; my eyes will fly, I am simple and splendid in flight. Like all natural things, a simple miracle, a woman in flight.

A pledge of allegiance:

I pledge allegiance to the Earth, and to the flora, fauna, and human life that it supports, one planet, indivisible, with faith, air, water, and soil, economic justice, equal rights, and peace for all.

The Sekmet Temple is a product of the gift economy. It's a gift to all that go to visit it. It was the greatest gift for me. Living the gift is very unique. It has been wonderful living the gift economy. At the Temple, there are no membership dues. We don't pass the hat because we don't wear one. And we don't have a donation box. People will say, "Well, what if I want to donate?" We reply, "if you want to give a gift, that's fine. But it's also important to give others the gift of receiving." So when people offer me a gift I never say no, because even if I





*The sand-coloured stucco Temple opens to the elements of nature, with archways to the four directions and an open roof to the sky. Photo: Anne Key*

may not have a use for it, I know I'll find somebody who does. And this way it's a gift that keeps giving.

If we deny some of those things, like all the gifts that the Goddess or the Creator provide, it would be like denying what our Mother wants to give us. At the Temple, we do weddings, christenings, hand-fasting, legal weddings, and all the rites of passage. I also give lessons, instructions, and there is never a charge or fee for any of these things. Some of my colleagues or acquaintances in the area say, "Oh, you've got to charge, or people won't appreciate it." But as soon as you put a fee on these things, that's all they're worth. And so you can't charge for anything like this. And then they would say, "Well, for instructions you have to charge, because they have to make a commitment."

Anybody who drives to the Temple has made a commitment. We have a guesthouse that can accommodate twelve people. The guesthouse has all the conveniences, kitchen etc., and women from all over come and visit. The guesthouse is also a gift to the women visiting. That's no charge for that, no fee.

Most of the things that I have, have been gifts from people visiting the Temple. When people come to visit, if they aren't going to stay, I will serve them tea and chocolate. That's what witches do. That's how you know them. It has been a wonderful experience all these years, and the hundreds and hundreds of women that I have met from all over, not only appreciate the gift economy, but practice it as well.

I would like to pass one little thing on that I learned from someone once. No matter what your budget is, you can hold onto a few extra dollars a week that you can carry around with you. I started this practice a while ago, and I use it for

people who I see begging out in the streets. I always have x amount of dollars that I can give to them, so when somebody comes up to me and is in need, I don't have to say "no." Just couple of dollars here or a dollar there. I learned this from a woman who was practicing the gift economy. And this is a really great thing, because you don't feel like you're being used, but you've got this special little extra, this special something for somebody who really needs it, and I like to encourage people to give what they can.

Let me tell you about how I got to be at the Temple. When I moved to Las Vegas, I didn't know where I was going to live, or what I was going to do. I was doing a radio show for awhile but I wanted to move outside of the city. I wanted to be in the desert. It was a full moon, 1993; it was on Samhain, which is our special day, and it also was on a Sunday that the clock had turned back, so it was a 25-hour day, full moon, and Samhain. Three things. So I wrapped myself in a white sheet and went out under the moon and told the Goddess, "I want to lose this life, it's coming out of the closet, the broom closet. I want to be in this community and live it 25 hours a day." A year to the day is when I took over as Priestess at the Goddess Temple.

We have the power to do things, to put out our energy, and to make changes. I would like quote Sojourner Truth. She was speaking at the National Women's Suffrage Convention in 1852 when she said, "If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these together ought to be able to turn it back and get it right side up again."

And now we are asking to do this, and men, you better let us!



*Patricia Pearlman was the Priestess of the Temple of the Goddess Spirituality Dedicated to Sekhmet in Cactus Springs, Nevada, for more than ten years. She established the Temple as an institution, giving it a foothold in an unlikely environment, between a nuclear test site and the airforce base, not far from the adult Disneyland that is Las Vegas. She created and sustained a community of people who visited the temple for rituals, healing and counselling. She passed away on March 24, 2006.*

## **Matriarchal Society and the Gift Paradigm**

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### **Motherliness as an Ethical Principle**

The extent of a society's development is most clearly reflected in the freedom women enjoy, and in the extent to which they are able to express their creativity. The way we live today, as members of society, is influenced by a worldview, and a sense of history, that are based to a large extent on male principles: an ideology of male dominance and universal patriarchy, the foundations of which are underpinned by structural and physical violence. The principles of matriarchal societies contradict this worldview.

The emerging subject of Modern Matriarchal Studies is the investigation and presentation of non-patriarchal societies, both past and present. Even today there are societies that exhibit matriarchal patterns in Asia, Africa, America, and Oceania. None of these societies are, however, a reversal of patriarchy, where women are perceived to rule over men—as it is often commonly believed. Instead, they are all egalitarian societies, without exception. This means that hierarchies, classes, and the domination of one gender by the other are unknown to them. This is what makes them so attractive to those looking for a new philosophy to create a just society. Nevertheless, while they are societies free of domination, they still have guidelines and codes of conduct that govern relationships and community.

Equality in matriarchal societies does not mean a mere levelling of differences. The natural differences between the genders and the generations are respected and honoured, but they never serve to create hierarchies as is common in patriarchy. The different genders and generations each have their own honour, and through complementary areas of activity, they are geared towards each other.

This can be observed at all levels of society: the economic level, the social level, the political level, and in the areas of their worldviews and faiths. More precisely, matriarchies are societies with complementary equality, where great care is taken to provide a balance. This applies to the balance between genders, among generations, and between humans and nature.

The differentiated patterns of existing matriarchal societies have been researched in detail. But history alone will not reveal how matriarchal people thought and felt, how they conducted their politics, and how they lived out their faith. To be able to observe this is an advantage of anthropology. Over the past few decades, my major work has been to research, describe, and present a wide range of matriarchal

societies throughout the world. Based on cross-cultural examination of case after case, I have outlined in my work the structures and regulative mechanisms that function across all levels of matriarchal societies (see Goettner-Abendroth 1988, 1991, 1995, 2000).

I call all non-patriarchal societies “matriarchal” despite of the word’s various connotations. But I believe the term should be redefined. This redefinition would be a great advantage especially because, for women, *reclaiming* this term means to reclaim the knowledge about cultures that have been created by women.

Philosophical and scientific re-definitions of words mostly refer to well-known words or terminologies. After these words have been re-defined, scholars can work with these new interpretations, but the words do not lose contact with the popular language of the people. In the case of the term “matriarchy,” we are not obliged to follow the current, male-biased interpretation of this word as signifying “domination by the mothers.” The only reason to understand “matriarchy” in this way is that it seems to parallel our understanding of the word “patriarchy.” However, the Greek word *arché* has a double meaning. It means “beginning” as well as “domination.” Therefore, we can translate “matriarchy” accurately as “the mothers from the beginning,” while “patriarchy,” on the other hand, translates correctly as “domination by the fathers.”

The word “patriarchy” could also be translated as “the fathers from the beginning.” This nevertheless leads to its meaning as “domination by the fathers,” because not having any natural right to “beginning,” they have to enforce it through domination! By the same token, since the mothers clearly *are* the beginning by their capacity to bring forth life, they have no need to enforce it by domination.

### Defining “Matriarchal Society”

Up until recently, scientific research in the field of matriarchy has lacked clear criteria for defining matriarchal societies and a scientific methodology to prove their existence, despite several competent studies and an extensive data collection.<sup>1</sup> This absence of scientific rigour opens the door to the emotional and ideological entanglements that have been a burden to this research from the beginning. Patriarchy itself has not been considered critically and stereotypical views of women, as well as a neurotic fear of women’s alleged power, have often confused the issues.

The definition of matriarchal studies that I present below has been derived from my cross-cultural studies of matriarchal societies that continue to exist worldwide. I will present the various criteria for matriarchal society on four different levels: the economic level, the social level, the political level, and on the cultural level.

On the *economic level*, matriarchies are most often agricultural societies, but not exclusively so. Goods are distributed according to a system that is identical with the lines of kinship and the patterns of marriage. This system prevents goods from being accumulated by one special person or one special group. Thus, the

principles of equality are consciously kept up, and the society is egalitarian and non-accumulating. From a political point of view, matriarchies are societies with perfect mutuality. Every advantage or disadvantage concerning the acquisition of goods is mediated by social rules. For example, at the village festivals, wealthy clans are obliged to invite all inhabitants. They organize the banquet, at which they distribute their wealth to gain honour. Therefore, on the economic level they produce an economy of balance, and I thus call matriarchies *societies of economic reciprocity*.

On the *social level*, matriarchies are based on the union of an extended clan. People live together in big clans, which are formed according to the principle of *matrilinearity*, i.e., kinship is acknowledged exclusively in the female line. The clan's name, and all social positions and political titles, are passed on through the mother's line. Such a *matri-clan* consists at least of three generations of women: the clan-mother, her daughters, her granddaughters, and the directly related men: the brothers of the mother, her sons, and grandsons. Generally, the matri-clan lives in one big clan-house, which can hold anywhere from ten to more than 100 persons, depending on size and architectural style. The women live there permanently as daughters and granddaughters never leave the clan-house of their mother when they marry. This is called *matrilocality*.

What is most important is the fact that women have the power of disposition over the goods of the clan, especially the power to control the sources of nourishment: fields and food. This characteristic feature, besides matrilinearity and matrilocality, grants women such a strong position that these societies are distinctly "matriarchal." (Anthropologists do not make a distinction between merely matrilineal, and clearly matriarchal societies. This continues to produce great confusion.)

The clans are connected to each other by the patterns of marriage, especially the system of mutual marriage between two clans. Mutual marriage between two clans is not marriage between individuals, but rather a communal marriage. The married people do not leave the houses of their mothers, but practice visiting marriage. That is, a husband will visit his wife in the clan-house of her mother, where she lives, only in the evenings, leaving at dawn to return to his home, the clan-house of his own mother. Due to additional patterns of marriage between all clans, everyone in a matriarchal village or a matriarchal town is eventually related to everyone else by birth or by marriage. Therefore, I call matriarchies *non-hierarchical, horizontal societies of matrilineal kinship*.

On the *political level*, even the process of taking a decision is organized along the lines of matriarchal kinship. In the clan-house, women and men meet in a council where domestic matters are discussed. No member of the household is excluded. After thorough discussion, each decision is taken by consensus. The same is true for the entire village: if matters concerning the whole village have to be discussed, delegates from every clan-house meet in the village council. These delegates can be the oldest women of the clans (the matriarchs), or the brothers and sons they have chosen to represent the clan. No decision concerning the

whole village may be taken without the consensus of all clan-houses. This means that the delegates who are discussing the matter are not the ones who make the decision. It is not in this council that the policy of the village is made, because the delegates function only as bearers of communication. If the council notices that some clan-houses are of a different opinion, the delegates return to the clan-houses to discuss matters further. In this way, consensus is reached in the whole village, step by step.

A population living in the region takes decisions in the same way: delegates from all villages meet to discuss the decisions of their communities. Again, the delegates function only as bearers of communication. In such cases, it is usually men who are elected by their villages. In contrast to the frequent ethnological mistakes made about these men, they are not the “chiefs” and do not, in fact, decide. Every village, and in every village every clan-house, is involved in the process of making the decision, until consensus is reached on the regional level. Therefore, from the political point of view, I call matriarchies *egalitarian societies of consensus*. These political patterns do not allow the accumulation of political power. In *exactly* this sense, they are free from domination: They have no class of rulers and no class of suppressed people; i.e., the *enforcement bodies* that are necessary to establish domination are unknown to them.

On the *cultural level*, matriarchal societies do not know religious transcendence of an unseen, untouchable, and incomprehensible all-powerful God, in contrast to whom the world is devalued as dead matter. In matriarchy, divinity is immanent, for the whole world is regarded as divine—a feminine divine. This is evident in the concept of the universe as a goddess who created everything, and as Mother Earth who brings forth every living thing. And everything is endowed with divinity—the smallest pebble and the biggest star, each woman and man, each blade of grass, each mountain.

In such a culture, everything is spiritual. In their festivals, following the rhythms of the seasons, everything is celebrated: nature in its manifold expressions and the different clans with their different abilities and tasks, the different genders and the different generations, believing in the principle of “wealth in diversity.” There is no separation between sacred and secular; therefore all tasks, such as sowing and harvesting, cooking and weaving are at the same time meaningful rituals. On the spiritual level, I thus define matriarchies as *sacred societies as cultures of the Goddess*.

### The Relationship between Matriarchal Societies and the Gift Paradigm

In order to explore the relationship between matriarchal societies and the gift paradigm, we need first to examine the guidelines and codes of conduct that govern relationships and communities in matriarchal societies.

There is no private property and there are no territorial claims. The people simply have usage rights on the soil they till, or the pastures their animals graze, for “Mother Earth” cannot be owned or cut up in pieces. She gives the fruits of

the fields and the animals to all people, and therefore the harvest and the flocks cannot be privately owned; instead they are shared equally.

The women, and specifically the oldest women of the clan, the matriarchs, hold the most important goods in their hands, for they are responsible for the sustenance and the protection of all clan members. The women either work the land themselves or organize the work on the land and the fruits of the fields, and the milk of the flocks are given to them to hold and distribute equitably among the community.

Matriarchal women are managers and administrators, who organize the economy not according to the profit principle, where an individual or a small group of people benefits; rather, the motivation behind their action is *motherliness*. The profit principle is an ego-centred principle, where individuals or a small minority take advantage of the majority of people. The principle of motherliness is the opposite, where altruism reigns and the well-being of all is at the centre. It is at the same time a spiritual principle, which humans take from nature. Mother Nature cares for all beings however different they may be. The same applies to the principle of motherliness: a good mother cares for all her children in spite of their diversity. Motherliness as an ethical principle pervades all areas of a matriarchal society, and this holds true for men as well. For example, among the Minangkabau in Sumatra, if a man desires to acquire status among his peers, or even to become a representative of the clan to the outside world, the criterion is: "he must be like a good mother."

This is not a romantic idea of motherliness, as it has often been portrayed by the patriarchy, which has led to the concept of motherliness being devalued as a merely sentimental cliché. This is the way in which patriarchy systematically obscures the caring and nurturing work done most often by mothers, by women. Without this work of daily care, there would be no help for the sick, no aid in crisis situations of any kind, no assistance for the elderly. In particular, there would be no children, which means any society would cease to exist in a short while. Motherly work is the most important work of all; it is work for life itself, work for our future. It is because of its great importance, that this work is intentionally made invisible by patriarchy.

Matriarchies consciously build their existence on this work, which is why they are much more realistic than patriarchies, not to mention the fact that they have much more vitality. They are, on principle, need-oriented. The guidelines on which their societies are based aim to meet the needs of each with the greatest benefit for all.

Gift giving is, therefore, not a coincidental, arbitrary act in matriarchal societies, something confined to the private sphere. On the contrary, it is the central feature of their society. In matriarchal societies, goods, nurturing, care, cultural creativity in ritual events, all circulate as gifts. These gifts are manifest in the festivals which are at the core of these cultures and which drive their economies. Matriarchal societies celebrate the festivals of the agricultural year, along with the lifecycle festivals of the individual clans, festivals that are also celebrated together with the

whole village or town. During these festivals the goods and food, nurturing and care, and cultural presentations are “moved around”: not in the sense of exchange with the expectation of something in return, but as an unconditional gift. For example, a clan that has had a bumper crop and is able to collect a great harvest will give this fortune away at the first opportunity. At the next festival, this lucky clan will overextend itself by inviting everybody in the village or town or district, will lavishly care for their well-being, feed them and give them cultural presents like music, dancing, processions, rituals, which everybody participates in according to their religious traditions. The clan hosting the festival will not hold back anything. In a patriarchal society, this would be considered suicidal behaviour and would ruin the giving clan. But in matriarchal societies these festivals work according to the maxim: “those who have shall give.” At the next big festival another clan, one that is by comparison better off than the rest of the community, will take on this role. Now the others are invited and gifts are lavished upon them. Round and round it goes in the community, and it is always the well-off clans who have the responsibility for the festivals.

It is apparent that in this system an accumulation of material or cultural goods, with a view to personal gain and enrichment, is not possible. Matriarchal societies are not based on accumulation, as are patriarchal societies. The opposite is the case: the economic and cultural actions are geared towards a levelling of the differences in living standards, and to the joy of everybody participating together in the cultural performances.

A generous clan never gains any claim to material or cultural goods from the other clans; rather, it wins honour. “Honour” in matriarchy means that the altruism and pro-social action of this clan gains great admiration from the other clans, and that this act verifies and strengthens the relationships between the clans. Honour means priceless and invaluable human contact and cooperation. It sets free the most honourable human feelings such as unreserved giving, true devotion, benevolence, and friendship. It enables love to grow. Such a clan will always be supported by the other clans should it have need of anything or even fall on hard times. This reciprocity is also a question of honour.

### **The Matriarchal Model as Guiding Principle for the Future**

It should be clear from this outline of matriarchies that these cultures demonstrate knowledge of non-patriarchal, egalitarian patterns of society that are urgently needed in this late phase of globally destructive patriarchy. During their very long history, as well as in the societies that continue to exist today, matriarchies have maintained and sustained themselves without domination, without hierarchies, and without wars. It is particularly important to stress that the violence against women and children that characterizes patriarchal societies all over the world is, in these matriarchal societies, completely unknown.

I have begun to consider that knowledge of the *matriarchal model* can have enormous significance for present and future society. Indeed, compared to philosophi-



cally constructed futures that could never be implemented, matriarchal societies are not abstract utopias built on ideas. These societies have been developed over long historical periods, embody practical experience and thought gained over millennia, and belong indispensably to the cultural store of knowledge of all of humankind. Their precepts show how life can be organized in such a way that it is based on needs: peaceful, non-violent, and simply human.

Together we can glimpse what this *matriarchal model* could mean for the situation our present day world is in.

On the *economic level* it has become impossible to further increase industrial production—and so-called living standards—without risking the total destruction of the of the planet's biosphere. An alternative to this kind of destructive growth are the communities that use a subsistence perspective as an economic strategy for smaller units of organization, such as at the regional level. These communities work frugally and self-sufficiently, stressing the quality of life over the quantity of production. On a worldwide scale, it is urgent that we strengthen and enlarge the still-existing subsistence societies, where production and trade are usually overseen by women. We must not, under any circumstances, let them be sacrificed to the process of globalization. Establishing regionalism in which the economy is guided by women is a matriarchal principle.

On the *social level* the task is to prevent a further fragmentation of society, which drives people deeper and deeper into solitary living and loneliness, becoming increasingly ill and destructive. In the end, this is the matrix in which war and violence grow. To counteract this, the goal is the formation of diverse communities. They might be intentional communities or networks or neighbourhoods. Elective affinity does not come about by merely shared interest; interest groups come and go very quickly. Elective affinity only comes into being if there is a spiritual-intellectual common ground. On this basis, a symbolic clan comes into being that is more committed than any interest group. The matriarchal principle here is that these clans are usually initiated, carried, and led by women. The measuring stick is the needs of women and children who are the future of humankind, and not the power or potency wished for by men that has led to patriarchal extended families, such as the big political, economic, and religious men's clubs, which have suppressed and excluded women. These new matri-clans will integrate men totally, but with a value system based on mutual care and love instead of power.

On the *political level*, the matriarchal consensus process for making decisions is indispensable for an egalitarian society. This is the most important principle for matriarchal community formation as it prevents the establishment of domination by individuals or groups in newly organized symbolic clans of various designs. A consensus decision-making process establishes the balance between men and women, but also between the generations, because both older and younger people have their say. Furthermore, it honours the promises formal democracy makes but never keeps.

According to matriarchal principles, well-ordered groups of the new matri-clans are the supporting social unit and the actual decision-makers at the regional level.

Flourishing self-sufficient regions based on subsistence economies are the aim, not nation states, nation-alliances or super-powers that grant more and more power to the ruling classes and in which human beings are reduced to numbers and have become merely human “resources.”

This kind of regionalism does not mean people are limited to connecting spiritually and culturally within just the one region, because this would lead to the narrow mind of provincialism. The regions will have symbolic connections with each other as sister-regions, and these connections will be realized through cultural exchange in the celebration of joint festivals. In this way a free, horizontal network comes into being between the regions. This network-based paradigm is completely different from a centralized, hierarchical state control. In the age of the Internet, this network is not limited to neighbouring regions, but can span the globe. Why should a matriarchal region in Europe not have sister-regions in India, Africa, the Americas, and yet another one in Polynesia? Such connections are limitless, but they are totally different from the global structures and hierarchies of exploitation that patriarchal states have with each other.

On the *spiritual-cultural level*, we will bid farewell to the various fundamentalisms that are associated with hierarchical patriarchal religions and their claims to absolute truth. With their claims to moral superiority they have debased and vilified the earth, humankind, and especially the half of humankind who are women. Now we have the opportunity for a new sanctification of the world in accordance with the matriarchal imagination: the whole world, and everything in it, is divine. This gives rise to celebrating and honouring all life on the planet—creatively and freely: nature with her multitude of beings and phenomena, and her great diversity of peoples, each with their own special capabilities. All this diversity is celebrated to the full. In this way, matriarchal spirituality permeates everything and once again becomes a central and integral part of everyday living.

It is evident that destruction of nature, sexism, and racism are not possible in a future matriarchal culture. According to the matriarchal principle, *diversity is the true wealth of the earth, humankind, and culture*. The values of the matriarchal ethos are: balance, reciprocity on all levels, and the loving connection with all living beings and phenomena of nature.

In all of this matriarchal spirituality is central. Matriarchal societies have always been sacred societies. Their entire structure has been developed in accordance with their spiritual beliefs. For this reason, establishing new matriarchal patterns in our societies is not possible without an all-permeating matriarchal ethos.

To sum up, this new research called “Modern Matriarchal Studies” has presented us with a rich spectrum of knowledge and practice that can be useful in our work toward the development of a just and peaceful future based on a matriarchal model. The gift economy/gift paradigm as presented by Genevieve Vaughan (1997) also offers us a vision of what is possible, and demonstrates how, every day and everywhere in patriarchal society, gift giving is practiced, and is, in fact, what these matriarchal societies are based on. Matriarchal societies demonstrate that gift giving indeed embodies *the highest value* and the *practical reality of whole*

*societies*, past and present. We need not invent an abstract utopia to find social structures that embody motherliness as an ethical principle and that practice gift giving, because they have existed over the longest eras of human history, and they still exist today worldwide. The social organization of matriarchal, gift giving societies can inspire us, and teach us how to develop a future based on a matriarchal model that will result in just, well-balanced, and peaceful societies, in which women do not rule, but in which motherliness as an ethical principle provides the foundation for life, for living, and for giving to satisfy the needs of each for the benefit of all.

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<sup>1</sup> For an extensive bibliography, see Goettner-Abendroth 1988, 1991, 1995, 2000.

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## Significs and Semioethics

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### Places of the Gift in Communication Today

Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory,  
and stretch themselves upon their couches,  
and eat lambs from the flock,  
and calves from the midst of the stall;  
who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,  
and like David invent for  
themselves instruments of music;  
who drink wine in bowls,  
and anoint themselves with the finest oils,  
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!  
Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile,  
and the revelry of those who stretch themselves shall pass away.  
(Amos 6, 4.7)

### Gift Giving and Significs

What is significs? Significs is that discipline, or better, theoretical orientation that consists in obstinately asking the questions: “What does it signify? What does it mean? What’s the sense?” It is not surprising that this discipline should have been invented by a woman, Victoria Lady Welby (1837-1912). Nor is it surprising that this woman has never entered the Pantheon or genealogical tree of the “Fathers” (of course!) of the science of signs and language, in spite of the influence she exerted on scholars such as Bertrand Russell, Charles S. Peirce, Charles K. Ogden, George F. Stout, John M. Baldwin, Ferdinand S. Schiller, Ferdinand Tönnies, Frederik van Eeden, and many more.

“What does it signify? What’s the sense?” These are questions that Welby induces one to ask in the face of any form of expression, verbal and non-verbal, any piece of human behaviour or social practice, in the face of all languages in ordinary life and in the professions, in intellectual life, in the face of scientific languages, the languages of artistic discourse, religion, politics, economy, etc. As a significian, Welby (see 1983 [1903], 2006<sup>1</sup>, and unpublished mss.) focused on the relation between the signs and values that go to form languages and behaviour. This led to

her invitation to interrogate the sense of words, human practices, in the ultimate analysis of the worlds human beings contribute to constructing for themselves. What does a given discourse, text, behaviour mean? What's the sense of a given social program? What does education imply? Why poverty? Why exploitation? What are the implications involved in the progress of science? What's the use of definition? Dogmatism? Why keep the different at a distance? What's the sense in isolating that which is different? The disobedient with respect to dominant ideology? What is the sense of war? How must we respond to all this? These are examples of the questions that *significs* teaches us to ask.

With a focus on the dignity of the human person, Welby (1881, 1887, 1910, 1983 [1903], 1985 [1911], 2006, unpublished mss.) promoted and theorized the development of critical consciousness and interpretive capacity from infancy (see also, Petrilli 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2004, 2005, 2006; Petrilli and Ponzio 2005: chp. 2). Such themes are accompanied throughout her writings by reflection on the inevitable connection of signs and values with responsibility and freedom and, therefore, with the capacity for hospitality and listening to the other alien to self. According to the logic of *significs*, which is in line with the logic of a new form of humanism, the humanism of otherness, to take responsibility for the other is inextricably connected with creative love for the other, care for the other, and therefore with the capacity for proposing new and better worlds with and for the other.

Proceeding with Welby, and beyond Welby in the world of globalization, we propose to work for the construction of worlds which are no longer founded on difference understood in terms of the logic of identity. Thus understood difference means to construct worlds on the basis of identity separations—whether these pertain to gender, ethnic group, religion, ideology, etc. Such logic inevitably involves the need to defend rights and interests connected with difference as subtended by the egocentric logic of identity and belonging, even to the point of accepting the logic of war, which, impossible to deny, characterizes the global world today.

In contrast, from the perspective of *significs* or what we propose to call “semio-ethics,” it is possible to work for a world that is founded on difference understood in terms of otherness and dialogism, rather than of prevarication and dominion of one difference over another. Such logic involves the capacity to stay together on the basis of intercorporeal dialogue and co-participation among differences, even when they clash. Global peace and freedom cannot be separated from the relation of global involvement with the other—without identities, barriers, or alibis—from the relation of responsibility for the other, of dialogic responsiveness towards the other. And according to this logic, to be committed to human rights means to be committed, always and without reserve, to the rights of the other.

The gift is a constant theme throughout Welby's writings both as the object of discourse when she predicates such values as love and care for the other, and compassion, justice, and patience as the guiding values for social practice. But even more significantly, she identifies gift logic as a constitutive component in

the relation among signs, in the generation of signifying processes and practices. Otherness and excess, overflow with respect to identity logic, are recognized as determining factors in the dynamics of interpretive processes and therefore in the development of expressive systems, including verbal language. This is all one with the dynamics of the constitution of subjectivity, the development of interpersonal relations and experience of the world.

### **The Problem: The Logic of Identity and Global Communication-Production**

The expression “global communication” refers to the capitalist, or postcapitalist, system in its current phase of development. It may be understood in at least two different senses. In fact, the term “global” in the expression “global communication” indicates: 1) the *extension of communication over the entire planet*; and 2) the *realistic tendency of communication to accommodate the world as it is* (see Petrilli and Ponzio 2000).

Globalization implies that communication pervades the entire productive cycle. That is to say, communication not only enters exchange relations, as in earlier phases of socio-economic development, but also relations of production and consumption.

Globalization involves interference of communication, understood as communication-production, not only in human life, but in all life over the planet. Therefore, the expression “global communication-production” indicates the fact that the communication network with the market based on equal exchange logic has extended worldwide. But even more radically, it also refers to the fact that life in its globality, including human life, has been englobed by the communication-production system.

The capitalist system today in its global communication-production phase is characterized by the industrial revolution in automation, globalization of communication, and universalization of the market. That the market has been universalized implies not only a quantitative fact of expansion, but also a fact of quality. This is represented by the translatability of anything into goods and by the production of new goods-things. Communication today does not just concern the intermediate phase in the production cycle (production, exchange, consumption). Far more extensively, it has also become a constitutive modality in production and consumption processes. In other words, not only is exchange communication, but production and consumption are also communication. This means that the whole productive cycle is communication. For this very reason, it follows that the current phase in capitalist production may be characterized as the “communication-production” phase.

Communication understood as communication-production is *global* communication in the sense that it has expanded over the entire planet (of course, the planet of the privileged!), but also in the sense that it is communication of the world *as it is*, of *this* world. Communication-production relates to the world, it accommodates the world as it is, it is appropriate to *this* world. In this

socio-economic context, the capitalist or post-capitalist production system, communication and reality, communication and being coincide. Communication *is* reality. Realism in politics must keep faith to ontology, to being, and even goes as far as to accept the *extrema ratio* of war, the crudest and most brutally realistic face of being, dictated by the inexorable law of the force of things. Realistic politics (and if it is not realistic, it is not politics) is politics that fits global communication, the being of communication-production. Today, the relationship between politics and ontology is the relation of politics with the ontology of being-communication, which is global communication, that is, global communication-production.

Perseverance in communication-reproduction is *perseverance in one and the same social system*, the capitalist. Capitalist society, with its continual adjustments and transformations functional to its own maintenance, has not yet ceased to set, has not yet finished ending, in spite of the signs of its ending, in spite of its having emerged only at sunset (Hegel's "noctule" [see Hegel 1819-20]). Ideology that is functional to maintaining capitalism identifies *being, the being of communication-production*, with the *being-communication* of social reproduction in general. The being of communication-production identifies so closely with the being of social reproduction in general that it seems natural, indeed the only possibility for human beings, an inherent part, as it were, of human nature. In other words, once high levels have been reached in the economic, cultural, and scientific-technological spheres (according to the logic of linear development), *being-communication-production* is passed off as structural to human beings, as a necessary and unchangeable modality of existence for the human species.

World planning for the ongoing development of communication and for control over communication itself goes together with the reinforcement and reaffirmation of the being of communication-production. This approach to world planning is based on awareness of the productive character of communication and of the fact that communication and being identify in capitalist communication-production society. This socio-economic plan also knows that control over capital can only be achieved by controlling communication.

Communication-production ideology is the ideology of total control over communication. Communication-production ideology is so realistic, coherent, and consistent with the being of things as they are, that it would seem to be the logic of communication-production more than its ideology. Nor does communication-production ideology hesitate to flaunt the good news of the end of ideology. In relation to *global communication-production*, we propose the expression "*ideo-logic*" rather than *logic* or *ideology*. Ideology functional to maintaining this particular social system passes itself off, in good or bad faith, as the ideology that subtends social reproduction in general.

On the contrary, social reproduction must escape the established order, that of being-communication, in order to reinvent and re-organize social relations. Indeed, social reproduction must get free of social systems such as that represented by global communication-production given that the latter obstacles and endangers social reproduction itself.

To preserve the being of communication-production is destructive. Reproduction of the *productive cycle* itself is destructive. The reproductive cycle destroys: (a) machines that are continuously replaced with new machines—not because they are worn out but because they are no longer competitive; (b) jobs, thereby making way for automation which contributes to increasing unemployment; (c) products on the market, where new forms of consumerism are ruled by the logic of reproducing the reproductive cycle itself; (d) products that once purchased would otherwise exhaust the demand (which means that products must be designed so as to become immediately outdated and obsolete; in this way similar but new products may be continuously proposed and introduced onto the market; (e) commodities and markets unable to stand up to competition in the global communication-production system.

The European Commission has devoted special attention to the problem of inventiveness and innovation functional to profit, to “immaterial investment” and “competitiveness,” as dictated by equal exchange market logic. In the context of this logic, the “ideo-logic” of capitalism, it is not surprising that the European Commission (1995) has identified “*innovation*” with “*destruction*.” The innovative character of a product coincides with its capacity for destruction: new products must be able to destroy products that are similar and already present on the market, which would otherwise prevent the circulation of these new products. In today’s world the capacity for innovation coincides with the capacity for destruction, therefore the criteria for evaluating innovation are adjusted to equal exchange market logic.

The *conatus essendi* of today’s communication-production system destroys the natural environment, the life-forms that inhabit our planet. It also destroys difference among economic systems and among cultures. Equal exchange market logic activates processes of homogenization, which eliminate difference. Global communication-production renders habits of behaviour and needs identical (although the possibility of satisfying them is never identical). Even worse, communication-production society levels desires and the imaginary at a worldwide level. The *conatus essendi* of communication-production destroys traditions and cultural patrimonies considered a threat to the capitalist logic of development, productivity and competition, or that in the light of capitalist logic are simply useless or nonfunctional. The communication-production system destroys any forces or expressions of humanity that tend to escape the logic of capitalist production. Intelligence, inventiveness, and creativity are subject to “market reason” and as such are penalized (especially when production forces invest in “human resources”). Today’s communication-production system is also destructive because it produces underdevelopment as *the condition for development*, pushing human exploitation and misery to the point of non-survival. This is the logic behind the expanding phenomenon of *migration*, which “developed” countries are no longer able to contain because of objective space limitations. No doubt this problem has reached greater proportions today than ever before.

To globalize the market is destructive. The global market means to globalize the



status of merchandise which is applied indiscriminately to anything, including relationships; this too is destructive. In today's world, the more merchandise is illegal, the more its economic value increases and the more it is expensive—think of the traffic in drugs, human organs, children, uteruses, etc. To exploit the work of other people is destructive. The more work produces profit the less it costs: with the aid of a powerful support system as is global communication-production, developed countries are ever more turning to low-cost work in underdeveloped countries (“stay where you are, we will bring work to you”). The disgrace of the communication-production world is manifest in the spreading exploitation of child labour, which is mostly heavy labour and dangerous. Much needs to be said and done about children as today's privileged victims of underdevelopment, children living in misery, sickness, and war, on the streets, in the work-force, on the market.

The destructive character of worldwide communication-production is made obvious by war, which is always a scandal. Global communication-production is also the communication-production of war. War calls for new markets for the communication-production of weapons, conventional and unconventional. War must also be acknowledged as just and necessary, as an inevitable means of defense against the growing danger of the menacing “other”: from this point of view war is used as a means of imposing respect for the rights of “identity” and “difference.” However, identities and differences can neither be threatened nor destroyed by the “other.” The real menace today is a social system that encourages and promotes identity and difference while undermining them, rendering them *fictitious* and *phantasmagorical*. This is why we tend to cling to such values so passionately, so unreasonably, according to a logic that fits the logic of the communication-production of war to perfection.

The spread of “biopower” (Foucault 1988) with the controlled insertion of bodies into the global production-communication system is supported by the idea of the individual as a separate and self-sufficient entity. The body is conceived as an isolated biological entity that belongs to the individual. Such a conception has led to the quasi-total extinction of cultural practices and worldviews based on intercorporeity, interdependency among bodies, the exposition of bodies, and opening to each other. What we are left with are mummified residues studied by folklore analysts, archeological remains preserved in ethnological museums or in the history of national literatures—the expression of a generalized situation of museumification.

Think of how the body is perceived by popular culture as discussed by Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1963, 1968), of the various forms of “grotesque realism.” According to the logic of grotesque realism, the body or corporeal life in general are not conceived individualistically, that is, separately from the rest of life on Earth, indeed, from the rest of the world. However, only weak traces of the grotesque body have survived in the present age. Examples include: rites, ritual masks, masks used during popular festivities, masks used for carnival. Before individualism was asserted with the rise of the bourgeoisie, the body was presented by “grotesque

realism” ideology in popular culture during the Middle Ages as undefined and unbounded, as flourishing in symbiotic relations with other bodies. In the Middle Ages, the body was related to other bodies in relations of transformation and renewal that transcended the limits of individual life. On the contrary, present day global communication-production reinforces the individualistic, private and static conception of the body.

As evidenced by Michel Foucault (1988, see also Foucault *et al.* 1996), division or separatism among the sciences is also functional to the ideological-social necessities of the new cannon of the individualized body (Bakhtin 1968). (On this point we must also remember the work of the Italian philosopher and semiotician Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1975) and his sharp analyses of the 1970s.) Separatism among the sciences associated with ideological and social individualism favour control over bodies and their insertion into the reproductive cycle of the communication-production system.

### **A Way Out as Indicated by Global Semiotics and Semioethics: The Logic of Otherness**

We propose an approach to the signs of life and to the life of signs that is global and at once detotalizing. This approach is connected with the logic of otherness. It implies a high degree of availability for the other, readiness to listen to the other, a capacity for hospitality, and for opening to the other both in qualitative and quantitative terms (global semiotics is omni-comprehensive). Semiotic interpretation must not prescind from the dialogic relation to the other. Dialogism and the condition of intercorporeity are fundamental conditions for an approach to semiotics that is oriented globally and at once open to the local, which is not simply to be englobed. The approach we are theorizing privileges the tendency toward detotalization and otherness rather than totalization and englobement according to the logic of identity.

As Emmanuel Levinas (1961) demonstrated, otherness obliges the totality to reorganize itself ever anew in a process related to what he calls “infinity.” This process may also be related to the concept of “infinite semiosis” (or sign activity), as understood by Charles S. Peirce (1931-1966). The relation to infinity is more than a cognitive issue. It involves co-implication with the other, responsibility beyond the established order, beyond convention and habit, and beyond the alibis these provide to keep a clean conscience. The relation to infinity is the relation to *absolute otherness*, that is, a relation to that which is most refractory to the totality. The relation to infinity implies a relation to the otherness of others, to the otherness of the other person. We are alluding to the other understood as the other that is alien, the extraneous other, and not the other understood as another self like one’s own self, another *alter ego*, another “I” belonging to the *same community*. The other we are theorizing is understood in the sense of strangeness, diversity, difference toward which we must not be indifferent, toward which we must tend in spite of all the efforts made by self to the contrary, in

spite of guarantees offered by the identity of I, of self.

This approach to semiotics is not ideological. On the contrary, our focus is on the human being understood as a “semiotic animal,” therefore on human behaviour in the light of a unique capacity specific to human beings for responsibility. The expression “semiotic animal” indicates a responsible agent capable of producing *signs of signs*, of suspending action and of meditating and reflecting; the semiotic animal is capable of responsible awareness with respect to signs over the entire planet. From this perspective, “global semiotics” does not imply a cognitive approach alone to semiotic processes. Global semiotics is sensitive to another dimension beyond the theoretical, that is, the ethical. Given that this dimension concerns the ends toward which we must strive, we have also designated it with the terms “teleosemiotics” or “telosemiotics.” Now we propose the term “semioethics.”

Semiotics and, therefore, the semiotician, must inevitably make a commitment to the “health of semiosis.” The capacity for responsive understanding toward the entire semiotic universe must be cultivated. To do this, semiotics must be ready to improve and refine its auditory and critical functions, its capacity for listening and critique. Semioethics can provide semiotics with adequate instruments for a critique of signs and sign systems. We believe that semioethics can provide an interpretation of sign processes in transition, that is, an interpretation in terms of the dynamics of shift, rupture, and flux that regulate sign processes, in contrast to signs and sign systems fixed and crystallized into objective entities and conceived in terms of being instead of becoming.

### Places of the Gift from a Semiotic Perspective

As I have stated elsewhere (2004), semioethics may contribute with gift theory (see Vaughan 1997) to a better understanding of today’s world and of the subjects who inhabit it. Ultimately, they may contribute to radical social change according to the logic of “social agapism” (from “*agape*” = love). This is a happy expression proposed by Genevieve Vaughan in a letter to me commenting on my 1997 paper, “Subject, Body and Agape.”

As Vaughan says in the book *For-Giving* (1997), gift giving exists “*in many places*” but is made invisible by patriarchal capitalism. In reality, gift giving is effectively the basis of communication, including communication-production in the present day phase in capitalist production. Traces of gift-giving are in fact visible on a large-scale in the capitalist system: for example, in economies of Indigenous cultures, in such phenomena as women’s free housework, or the remittances sent by immigrants to their families in their home countries. As Vaughan also demonstrates, even linguistic work, or “immaterial work” (as we now call it), is inseparable from gift giving and, in effect, is itself gift giving, linguistic gift giving. What we also need to underline is that in the global communication-production system, linguistic work or immaterial work is now acknowledged as a fundamental “resource,” a basic “investment” (that is, an “immaterial investment”), indispensable to that system.

As a contribution in a semiotical key to the gift giving paradigm conceived by Vaughan (1997, see also Vaughan 2004), the following may be indicated as further places of the gift and may also be considered as susceptible to development in the direction of semioethics (and signification).

A *place of the gift is creative inference*, which the American semiotician Charles S. Peirce (1931-1966) has contributed to emphasizing with his concept of *abduction*. In the language of inference and inferential processes abduction indicates innovative argument, creative reasoning. Abduction is the name of a special type of argumentation, the development or transition in reasoning from one interpretant to another, which is foreseen by logic but supercedes the logic of identity. Abduction develops through argumentative procedures that may be described as eccentric, innovative, and inventive, especially in its more risky or creative expressions. In abduction, in contrast to induction and deduction, the relationship between the interpreted sign, i.e., the premise, and the interpretant sign, i.e., the conclusion, is regulated by similarity, attraction, and reciprocal autonomy. Grounded in the logic of otherness, abduction is dialogic in a substantial sense. Therefore, abduction belongs to the sphere of otherness, of substantial dialogism, creativity; it proceeds through a relationship of fortuitous attraction among signs and is dominated by similarity. As anticipated, abductive argumentative procedure is risky, which is to say that it advances mainly through arguments that are tentative and hypothetical, leaving a minimal margin to convention and mechanical necessity. Insofar as it overcomes the logic of identity and equal exchange between parts, abduction belongs to the sphere of excess, overflow, exile, *dépense*, of giving without profit, of the gift beyond exchange, of desire. It proceeds, more or less always, at the level of the “interesting” and is articulated in the dialogic and disinterested relationship among signs. This relationship is regulated by the law of creative love. Therefore, abduction is an argumentative procedure of the *agapastic* type.

Another place of gift giving that is strictly connected with creative inference, is what Victoria Welby (2006, unpublished mss.; see also Petrilli 1998b, 2006; Petrilli and Ponzio 2003, 2005: chp. 2) calls “primary sense.” Welby proposed the term “mother-sense,” or “primary sense,” for a capacity that is common to men and women as much as it may be sexually differentiated in our patriarchal-capitalist society. Mother-sense is commonly referred to with a series of stereotyped terms including “intuition,” “judgement,” “wisdom.” In any case, mother-sense is common to men and women even though it may be particularly alive in women owing to the daily practices they are called to carry out in their role, for example, of mother or wife. The allusion is to practices oriented by the logic of otherness and responsibility, practices based on giving, and responsibility for the other, care for the other. Welby also underlined women’s responsibility, as the main custodians of mother-sense in the development of verbal and nonverbal language and, therefore, in the construction of the symbolic order. With the concept of “mother-sense” or “primary sense,” Welby also signals the need to recover the human capacity for criticism, for gift logic subtending inferential procedure (in

particular abduction), otherness, and dialogism, for unprejudiced thinking, for shifts in the orientation of sense production, for prevision and anticipation, for translation (understood in the broadest sense possible of this term, that is, for translation across space and time, across the order of signs and the axiological universe with which the latter are interconnected).

Finally, *individual identity* itself may be indicated as a place of the gift. The individual may be described, as does Welby (2006; see also Petrilli 1998b; Petrilli and Ponzio 2005: chp. 2) as a dialectical, indeed dialogical, relationship between the “Ident” and the “Self.” The Ident is a generative center of multiple *selves* and at once a multiplicity inhabiting each one of our selves. The Ident is a dialectical and open unit with respect to the sum total of its parts, its multiple selves. With respect to the self, the Ident represents an overflow, an excess value, a gift:

In order to Be—and really to Be is to be Given—what is impotent for fertile being *is* not; there *must* be overflow, there must be in some sense gift. True that in the arithmetical sense the bare unit may be added to and may multiply. But that is just because it has no content and no identity, as it has no fertility. Full identity is generative, is a Giver of its very self. (Welby 2006 [1907]).

The Ident is an orientation toward the other, toward the self insofar as it is other; a continuous transcending and transferral of the limits of the subject as it is, of the *hic et nunc* of subjectivity. The self represents that which to a certain extent can be identified, measured, calculated; instead the Ident can only be approached by approximation, tentatively and hypothetically—but never captured—and only by working through the means at our disposal, that is, our selves.

In Welby’s description and similarly to Peirce, the human being is a community of parts that are distinct but not separate. Far from excluding each other, these parts, or selves, are interconnected by a dialogic relation of reciprocal dependence. In other words, they are founded in the logic of otherness and of non-indifference among differences, which excludes the possibility of non differentiated confusion among the parts, of levelling the other on to self. As says Welby (2006), to confound is to sacrifice distinction. Therefore, to the extent that it represents an excess or an overflow with respect to the sum of its parts, the I or Ident is not the “individual” but the “unique” (Welby 2006 [1907]). What Welby understood by “unique”—which has no relation to the monadic separatism of Max Stirner’s (1844) conception of the unique, of singularity—may be translated with the concept of “non relative otherness,” as understood by Levinas (1961), or with his concept of “significance,” which is also theorized by Welby (1983 [1903]; see also Petrilli 1998a, 1998b, 2004; Petrilli and Ponzio 2005) in the context of her own theory of meaning. In fact, she proposed a meaning triad that distinguishes between “sense,” “meaning,” and “significance”:

...for we may represent the Unique. That is the word which might well

supersede the intolerably untrue “individual.” It is in fact just our dividuality which constitutes the richness of our gifts. We can, but must not be, divided; we must include the divisible in the greatest of Wholes, the organic Whole, which as risen to the level of the human, may crown each one of us as unique. (Welby 2006 [1907]).

From Welby’s (1910) theoretical perspective, the self is also described as a way and not as an end; and in this sense it may be considered as “individual,” that is, a way without interruptions to life and knowledge.

The ether, as science is revealing, is the unfailing way, the medium, whereon and whereby the light itself reaches us. Now “Self,” again, is properly a Way, a Medium through which we energize and act, though alas, with our unconscious selfishness, we turn it into an End and identify Man with that. Yet, even as it is, we do not praise a man when we call him selfish. One who knows his self not as end but as means alone understands the highest form of identity. For the true Man is first and last the way through truth to life in a mentally Copernican sense, and through consciousness and tested observation, to knowledge. In such a way there must be no flaw, no slit, no gap or chasm. In this sense Man as a way is individual, that is, not divided or broken. (431)

According to Welby (1887), the secret of life is the concept of life as the gift, which means also the gift for truth, knowledge and interpretation. In her own words from her early papers: “The power of the Gift ... was vitalizing all truth, interpreting all problems, unifying all nature” (1). The gift is described as the human capacity to perceive life in all its expressions, to experience nature, the world at large, the universe in their dialogic relations of interconnection and vital interdependency; the capacity to experience, to know and be conscious of the existent in a Copernican or heliocentric perspective, indeed, even more broadly, in a cosmic perspective. And to live and experience the relation among signs and senses in their dialogic and intercorporeal dynamism and interdependency, in their capacity for change, transformation, and continuous development, in their capacity for creative interpretation, also means not only to recognize but also to enhance the human capacity for critique and radical change.

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and with Augusto Ponzio, *I segni e la vita. La semiotica globale di Thomas A. Sebeok* (2002); *Semioetica* (2003); and *Views in Literary Semiotics* (2003).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Includes writings by Welby and writings on Welby by Susan Petrilli. The volume also includes her correspondence with important figures of the time, and a small reader in signifiics with papers by signifiicians influenced by Welby.

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## The Biology of Business

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### Crisis as a Gifting Opportunity

As an evolution biologist, it is obvious to me that we humans are part of Nature and that Nature has been doing business for billions of years, if we take a broad definition of business to be the economy of making a living, of transforming resources into useful products that are exchanged, distributed, consumed, and/or recycled. So, to talk about the biology of human businesses, I could simply point out that all our businesses are systems made up of people, who are living beings, and that therefore businesses are living systems or biological entities. However, to say something more useful I need to go back through history to show why most human businesses, despite being made up of people, do not function like living systems, at least not like healthy living systems. Those few that do are swimming upstream against the norm, usually with great difficulty, and that just should not be, need not be, and must not continue to be.

Our businesses, unlike those of other species, are organized and run in a socio-political cultural context, and that context has a history. Historical context has a great deal to do with what we believe about ourselves and our world, and when I sort through that socio-political history looking for the most salient influences on contemporary business from my own perspective, I am naturally drawn to the history of science.

Four very important publications by two great nineteenth-century scientists have so strongly shaped our beliefs about our world that they affect everything about human culture including our definition of human nature and the way we do business. They are: Rudolph Clausius' *On the Motive Power of Heat, and on the Laws Which Can Be Deduced from it for the Theory of Heat* (1850); Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859); Clausius' (1865) paper on Thermodynamics reformulating the fundamental laws of the Universe as energy constancy and entropy; and Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871).

I will argue that Clausius' model of a universe running down by entropy and the Darwinian model of biological evolution as an endless competitive struggle for scarce resources both give us half-truths about Nature that seemed appropriate in their historical context, but are now seen to be fundamentally flawed, thereby seriously misleading us and holding up our own natural evolution. The full truth—including the other half of a more holistic view in physics and biology

respectively—reveals that Nature is on our side in role-modeling the evolutionary leap that would rapidly bring about an energy efficient and globally beneficial human economy that functions like a truly healthy living system.

The bottom line of human experience is that it all takes place within our consciousness and that our minds form the beliefs on which we act by collectively creating a uniquely human world. Change those beliefs and that world changes accordingly.

How could science have *failed* to rectify hugely important flaws in nineteenth century science even in the twenty-first century? I believe the answers lie in the fact that science, for all its protestations about being value-free, has never been an independent cultural endeavour free to pursue unbiased inquiry into Nature. Science was raised to the status of a secular priesthood—in the sense of being given the mandate and power to tell us how things are in our universe and who we are within it—by an even more powerful political economy, in turn for the great power of science in its engineering applications that keep that political economy in power.

Our world is now in sufficient crisis that transparency in all our endeavours is critical to our survival. Light shed on the relationship between science and political economy can, I believe, show us the way to true freedom and a healthy economy for all the world's people. It is Business that will lead the way, providing it, too, adopts transparency and belief in the mission of creating value for all stakeholders from people to planet.

### Science and Political Economy: in which God Gives Way to Man

Only a few centuries ago in Europe, a new alliance of industrial entrepreneurs and scientists forged the industrial revolution, bringing the modern age successfully into being and replacing the prior cultural hegemony of the alliance between Church and State. Let me address a few details of this process, while noting here the current attempt to reinstate the Church/State alliance in the U.S. at present.

Over the past few centuries, science became far more than a vast research enterprise that gave us an advanced technological society with more commercial products than any previous culture could possibly have imagined, along with “progress” at a breakneck pace that leaves us breathless and wondering if we can even hope to catch up with our own children and grandchildren. Science, in addition to spawning that technological society, also became the cultural priesthood appointed to give us our cultural worldview: our beliefs about How Things Are in this great universe of ours, and on our planet Earth in particular. This is a relatively new and very important historical phenomenon in the history of civilization, as the priesthods of most previous civilizations (large organized sociopolitical entities with urban centers), with notable exceptions such as China, were religious, getting their worldviews more from revelation than from research.

The scientific worldview founded by Galileo, Descartes, Newton, Bacon, and

others was of a non-living, non-intelligent mechanical universe—a clockworks projected from human mechanical inventions to God’s as the “Grand Engineer’s” Design of Nature in which humans were just complex robots, the males alone imbued with a piece of God-mind, according to Descartes, so that they, too, could invent machinery. As models of celestial mechanics, the Newtonian motion of stars and planets, became more elaborate, social institutions as well were increasingly seen and modeled on mechanism, and expected to run like the well-oiled machines of factories. Time/motion efficiency studies of workers turned people themselves into machines as Charlie Chaplin movies so well caricatured. Most of today’s businesses are still conceived, organized, and run as hierarchical mechanics.

As men of science had come to feel increasingly competent and knowledgeable about the physical world, and in consequence felt themselves to be in control of human destiny, they had formally abandoned the “hypothesis” of God, thereby removing any notion of Nature, including humans, as existing through sacred creation. Rather, Nature was redefined as a wealth of natural resources to be exploited by Man, the pinnacle of accidental, natural evolution.

One of the most pervasive and persistent cultural beliefs we have been given by science is the concept of this godless universe as non-living, accidental, purposeless, and running down by entropy, with life defined as a transient “negentropy” opposing this force of decay, yet never overcoming or even balancing its inevitable slide into heat death. To me, this is like describing the life of any one of us as a one-way process of decay toward death, with a negdecay process of birth and growth opposing it, though overall unsuccessfully.

This dreary view of life made me wonder deeply about the very concept of non-life, realizing in the process that it was invented by western science. All cultures have understood life and death, but non-life is something that never was or will be alive—a concept that came into human culture with the invention of mechanism in ancient Greece and resurfaced some dozen centuries later in a new era of mechanics. Was it really appropriate, I asked myself, for science to force life to be defined within a context of non-life? Could one really explain the existence of living things as accidentally derived from non-living matter? Could one derive intelligence from non-intelligence, consciousness from non-consciousness as I was consistently taught in the graduate science departments of several universities and research institutions?

### Entropy Reconsidered

It was German theoretical physicist Rudolph Clausius, who first formulated the two basic laws of Nature in 1865—exactly halfway between Darwin’s publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859 and *The Descent of Man* in 1871—as:

*The energy of the universe is constant.*

*The entropy of the universe tends to a maximum.<sup>1</sup>*

Clausius' work on the thermodynamics of entropy, openly acknowledged by Maxwell in England, was based on Sadi Carnot's experimental work with energy transfer in the closed mechanical systems of steam engines and applied (by Clausius) to the universe as a whole with no evidence that the universe was a closed system in which such extrapolation might be valid. Yet these two "inviolable laws," along with the more basic conceptualization of the universe as purposeless non-life, have persisted since as absolute dogma in physics and all other areas of science.

But this model is a less satisfying conceptualization from scientific observation than the ancient Taoist, Vedic, and Kotodama model of a universe built on fundamental dualities within the Oneness of Cosmic Consciousness. Dualities are essential to the process of creation and the primary duality is often described as outward/inward, centripetal/centrifugal, expansion/contraction, translating in contemporary western science to radiation/gravity as the most fundamental forces or features of Nature.

Elsewhere (Sahtouris 2001), I have cited Walter Russell (1994 [1947]), as well as Nassim Haramein and Elizabeth Rauscher (2004), for their models of a universe in which entropic radiation and *centropic* gravity are in a perfect dynamic balance of expansion and contraction that constitutes a unified field. Haramein and Rauscher's theory is so conceptually and mathematically elegant that universal forces are reduced from four to two and the need to postulate hypothetical dark matter and energy in the universe is eliminated. In short, the work has been done to show that a universe of unified opposites satisfies our observations better than a one-way entropic universe, and shows that the universe is *not* running down at all.

The still "official" entropic universe, conceptualized after Einstein as beginning with a Big Bang and deteriorating ever since, is in sharp contrast to previous worldviews of Nature as alive and vibrant with intelligent creation and purposive direction—a view closer to my own model of a self-organizing, living universe in which planetary life is a special case of extra complexity, now actually measurable as being halfway between the microcosm and the macrocosm, where "upwardly" and "downwardly" spiraling energies collide on physical surfaces where such life can evolve (Sahtouris 2003).

Historically, the social consequences of the proclamation of an entropic universe by the scientific establishment were enormous, giving rise, for example, to belief in the Malthusian struggle for existence in a world soon to end (see below), interpretations of Darwinian evolution theory as a "dog eat dog" world, and a philosophy of existentialism extending this view of the purposeless and hopeless human struggle into psychology, art, and western culture at large. Such beliefs fostered the growth of our current consumer society with its "get what you can while you can" outlook in which advancing in the "job market" to increase power to consume became the driving force of modern and post-modern western civilization. Humanitarian social values and morals were left to religions with lesser persuasive clout than science, which came to openly pride itself on being value-free, and therefore even more *scientific* (read: unassailable in its conclusions about How

Things Are.) Small wonder that businesses carried out the competitive struggle justified as “social Darwinism” and deemed inescapable.

### Darwin, Global Conquest and Evolution

Darwin himself had concluded with great elaboration in his magnificent opus on *The Descent of Man* (1871), that humans must exercise their evolved capacity for moral behaviour, as David Loye has so beautifully pointed out in his book *The Great Adventure* (2004), but this aspect of Darwin’s work was not promoted by the science that took up his theory of evolution, focusing rather on his explanation of struggle in scarcity as the driver of evolution, which is best understood as rooted more in Darwin’s historical context than in Nature itself. Had Darwin been able to see beyond that context, he might have noticed that highly evolved natural systems evolved long before humans display cooperation, mutual support, altruism and other features we define as ethical, but that is getting ahead of my story.

Columbus’ voyages in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries had inspired commerce between Europe and the New World, including such feats as Pizarro’s plunder of 24 tons of treasure collected for the Andean Inca Atahualpa’s ransom before his murder—exquisite art works of master craftsmen that were melted into gold bricks for transport to Europe—and trade in African slaves that were used to build colonial infrastructure, care for the colonists, etc. The American colonies were, in fact, settled by a corporation—the Massachusetts Bay Company, chartered by King Charles in 1628 for the purpose of colonizing the New World and its commercial ventures (Debold 2005).

Magellan’s global voyage in the sixteenth century had established that all the world’s territories were finite and could be owned, and the East India Company was founded in 1600, Queen Elizabeth granting it monopoly rights to bring goods from India to challenge the Dutch-Portuguese monopoly of the spice trade. Eventually the East India Companies of eight European nations functioned as the world’s first great multi-national corporation or multi-national cartel of corporations. Though it incited American colonists to riot in the Boston Tea Party rebellion of 1774, Betsy Ross was commissioned in 1776 to sew the circle of stars representing the first thirteen states of the new union over the British emblem in the top corner of an East India Company flag to create the first U.S. flag. To this day we retain its thirteen red and white stripes with a blue corner field.

In Darwin’s day, Thomas Malthus had been commissioned to inventory the Earth’s natural resources as head of the Economics Department of the East India Company’s Haileybury College. Malthus concluded from his work that the world would end soon because human populations would overwhelm food production, causing an inevitable dying off of humans. This prediction justified the East India Company’s “us or them” policy of assaying and acquiring all the Earth resources possible for Europeans so that they, at least, could survive.

Darwin, after doing his own Earth inventory work as a young shipboard scientist, could find no better way to explain the driver of evolution for his theory

than simply to adopt his family friend Malthus' theory of human competition in scarcity and apply it to all of nature. This came to give scientific validity to our socioeconomic vision of scarcity and fierce competition for resources, of humanity doomed permanently to win/lose economics and warfare. As Darwin put it in *The Origin of Species* (1859):

...Nothing is easier than to admit the truth of the universal struggle for life, or more difficult ... than constantly to bear this conclusion in mind. Yet unless it be thoroughly engrained in the mind, I am convinced that the whole economy of nature, with every fact on distribution, rarity, abundance, extinction, and variation, will be dimly seen or quite misunderstood.... As more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence.... It is the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms; for in this case there can be no artificial increase of food, and no prudential restraint from marriage.

Thus, Darwinian theory as Darwin *himself* established it, not just through later misuse as “social Darwinism,” was very essentially rooted in political economy, which was itself rooted in a scientific worldview of a godless, mindless, coldly mechanical universe ever running down.

### From Competition to Cooperation

My own work as an evolution biologist shows a very different picture of How Things Are in Nature and in our human world. Once I adopted Francisco Varela, Humberto Maturana and R. Uribe's (1974) definition of life as *autopoiesis*—that a living entity is one continually creating itself in relation to its environment—and Vladimir Vernadsky's (1986 [1926]) definition of life as a disperse of rock (which I paraphrased as “life is rock rearranging itself”), I quickly recognized that the Earth itself qualifies as a living entity. Its crust continually creates itself from erupting deep magma and recycles itself back into that magma at the edges of tectonic plates; its pervasive biological creatures are continually formed from and recycled into that same crust—all this in relation to Earth's Sun star, moon, other planets and greater galaxy.

Further, oceans, atmosphere, climate, and weather are all global systems, while biological creatures from bacteria to mammoths and redwoods are created from the same DNA, the same minerals and largely from the same proteins. Therefore, evolution is better understood as the biogeological process of Earth as a whole and the changing species patterns, both physiologically and behaviourally, over time within that larger context.

This leads me to include in my view of evolution the observations that the process of biological evolution goes well when individual, species, ecosystemic, and planetary interests are met simultaneously and reasonably harmoniously at

every such level of organization, and that human behaviour is as much a part of biological evolution as is the behaviour of other species.

Nested levels of biological organization were called holons in holarchy by Arthur Koestler (1978), and are a useful contrast to the hierarchies humans have tended to model in machinery and build into socio-cultural organizations. In a healthy holarchy, no level is more important or powerful than any other; rather, all are vitally important, so none can dictate its interests at the expense of interests at other levels. All levels must continually negotiate their interests with other levels. In our bodies, for example, cells must negotiate their interests with their organs, organ systems, and the body as a whole, just as families (the next level of holarchy beyond individuals) must negotiate family interests with family members. A clear violation of healthy holarchy occurs when cancerous cells cease to negotiate and consider only their interests in proliferation at the expense of the body as a whole. This is, of course, a self-defeating strategy on their part.

The process of evolution is universally recognized as leading from the simple to the complex. Early Earth was a homogenized mass of mineral elements and evolved to the extremely complex planet of which we are part. Its first organisms were invisibly tiny archebacteria, while we ourselves are vastly more complex multi-celled creatures. Multi-celled creatures are relatively huge cooperative enterprises that could never have evolved if individual cells had been doomed to a struggle in scarcity, so they cannot really come about at all by the Darwinian hypothesis. Even the single nucleated cell—the only kind of cell other than bacteria—is now known to be a cooperative enterprise evolved by once hostile bacteria.

Note that I said, “once hostile.” Indeed it seems that the first half of Earth’s life in which bacteria had the planet to themselves, was for much of its existence indeed a Darwinian world of stiff competition, great crises caused by the archebacteria themselves and wonderful technologies they invented in the course of it, not at all unlike the human world’s current situation. In fact, the archebacteria harnessed solar energy, invented electric motors (now coveted by nanotechnologists), and nuclear piles. They even invented the first World Wide Web in devising their very productive and universal information exchange in the form of DNA trade, as I have described in great detail in my book *EarthDance: Living Systems in Evolution* (2000). Eventually, however, as we know through the work of microbiologist Lynn Margulis (1993), they created the collaborative nucleated cell, turning these very technologies to good use in cooperative ways and streamlining themselves, as well as committing to community, by donating some of their DNA to the collective gene pool we call the nucleus.

What (r)evolutionary learning process made this shift from competition to co-operation possible? The key to answering this question and developing a complete model of biological evolution is suggested by the standard classification of natural ecosystems into successive Type I, II, and IIIs. A typical description of succession—defined as the replacement of species with other species—is as follows:

Ecosystems tend to change with time until a stable system is formed ... pio-

neer organisms modify their environment, ultimately creating conditions... under which more advanced organisms can live. Over time, the succession occurs in a series of stages which leads to a stable final community called a *climax community*. This community may reach a point of stability that can last for hundreds or thousands of years.<sup>2</sup>

Type I ecosystems are populated by aggressive species establishing their niches through intense, sometimes hostile, competition for resources and rapid population growth, while the species in Type III ecosystems tend toward complex cooperative or collaborative systems in which species feed or otherwise support each other to mutual benefit. Type IIs generally lump together various “transitional” ecosystems. It seems reasonable to ask where the “more advanced” species that can “build stable final community” come from? How did they evolve? Logically, there must have been a time when only pioneer species existed, yet somehow evolution led to the existence of mature, cooperative species. It would seem there had to be some kind of evolutionary learning process in which species discovered through their experience that cooperation pays!

Why *not* recognize the evidence for this ancient learning process revealed in the different types of ecosystems? We are certainly familiar with learning and maturation processes human life, especially the transition from immature adolescence, so often feisty in its competitive stance, and socially cooperative maturity in adults, who at their best become wise elders role-modeling the finest in human behaviour. The ancient adage “as above, so below” has proven itself again and again in seeing the similarity of patterns at different levels of Nature from simple to complex, from microcosm to macrocosm. It is in the similarity of its patterns that we see the true elegance of Nature.

We know the stages of evolution in the archebacteria, from intense competition to their huge leaps in cooperation forming nucleated cells. We also know *these* cells’ collaborative process in evolving multi-celled creatures, all the way to our own highly-evolved bodies containing up to a hundred trillion cells, each of which is more complex than a large human city, each containing some 30,000 recycling centers just to keep the proteins of which they are built healthy.

Again and again our close looks at Nature show this sequence from intense competition to the discovery that peacefully trading with competitors, sharing with them, feeding them, providing homes for them, even helping them reproduce, all the while collectively recycling resources and ever enriching the shared environment, is the most efficient and effective way to survival, and even thrival, for all.

It is in this mature cooperation that we find the ethics Darwin thought could only be evolved by humans. Indigenous tribal peoples learned such ethics by recognizing them in Nature, copying reciprocal gifting and insuring food and shelter to all tribal members, even working consciously to ensure tribal and ecosystemic well-being seven generations hence. Like most Indigenous peoples, ancient Greeks advised cooperating with Nature by giving back as much as we take from it, yet our advanced civilization seems to be the last to learn this. We seem stuck where



Darwin was stuck, believing we are doomed to remain in hostile competition forever. How fond we are of repeating, “you can’t change human nature” without ever really looking clearly at the nature of Nature itself.

### **Glocalization as an Evolutionary Leap**

For some eight to ten thousand years up to the present, much of civilized humanity has been in an empire-building mode that is immature from the biological evolution perspective. From ancient empires ruled by monarchs we progressed to national expansion into colonial empires and more recently into multi-national corporate empires. All these phases have increased our technological prowess while also increasing the disparity between rich and poor that is now devastating the living system comprised of all humans, as well as the ecosystems on which we depend for our own lives.

As we have seen, healthy, mature, living systems are dynamically cooperative because every part or member at every level of organization is empowered to negotiate its self-interest within the whole. There is equitable sharing of resources to insure health at all levels, and the system is aware that any exploitation of some parts by others endangers the whole. Clearly, internal greed and warfare are inimical to the health of mature living systems, and humanity *is* now forced to see itself as the single, global living system it has become, for all its problematic, yet healthy, diversity.

Therefore, I see the formation of global human community—including but not limited to economics—as our natural evolutionary mandate at this time. We are actually achieving quite a few aspects of this process in positive, cooperative ways; for example, in our global telephone, fax, postal and Internet communications, in air travel and traffic control, in money exchange systems, in the World Court initiative and international treaties on environment and other issues, in most United Nations ventures, through ever more numerous and complex collaborative ventures in the arts, sciences, education, and sports, among religions and the activities of thousands of international NGOs. Yet the most central and important aspect of glocalization, the glocal economy, is still following a path that threatens the demise of our whole civilization.

Let me draw once again on the historical context of the alliance between science and industry. Hazel Henderson (2005) points out that Adam Smith related his famous theory of “an invisible hand that guided the self-interested decisions of business men to serve the public good and economic growth,” as set forth in his 1776 book *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, to Newton’s great discovery of the physical laws of motion. Also, that economists of the early industrial revolution based their theories not only on Adam Smith’s work, but also on Charles Darwin’s,

... seizing on Darwin’s research on the survival of the fittest and the role of competition among species as additional foundations for their classical eco-

nomics of “laissez faire” —the idea that human societies could advance wealth and progress by simply allowing the invisible hand of the market to work its magic.... This led economists and upper-class elites to espouse theories known as “social Darwinism:” the belief that inequities in the distribution of land, wealth and income would nevertheless trickle down to benefit the less fortunate. Echoes of these theories are still ... propounded in mainstream economic textbooks as theories of “efficient markets,” rational human behaviour as “competitive maximizing of individual self-interest,” “natural” rates of unemployment and the ubiquitous “Washington Consensus” formula for economic growth (free trade, open markets, privatization, deregulation, floating currencies and export-led policies). (Henderson 2005)

All these theories, as Henderson points out, underpin today’s economic and technological globalization and the rules of the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, stock markets, currency exchange and most central banks.

When the Bank of Sweden’s economics prize, incorrectly but widely considered as one of the Nobel prizes, was awarded in December 2004 to economists Edward C. Prescott and Finn E. Kydland for their 1977 paper purporting to prove, by use of a mathematical model, that central banks should be freed from the control of politicians, even those elected in democracies, there was a wave of long-building protest. Scientists, including members of the Nobel Committee and Peter Nobel himself, demanded that the Bank of Sweden’s economics prize either be properly labeled and de-linked from the other Nobel prizes or abolished on the grounds that economics is not a science, but a set of increasingly destructive policies.<sup>3</sup>

It seems high time for our dominant western culture, especially the United States, to learn the economic lessons that were learned by many an other species in the course of their biological evolution. In human economic terms, Henderson (1981) long ago made the analysis of the relative costs of destructive wars and constructive development, showing clearly how making war to destroy enemy economies was vastly more expensive than peaceful development of economies.<sup>4</sup> More recently, Ben Cohen of Ben and Jerry’s beloved ice cream company made an animated video for the web-based organization True Majority using stacked Oreo cookies to show the amount of money the U.S. Pentagon requires for its military and the comparatively trivial amount it would take to feed all the world’s children, build adequate schools, and provide other basic services at home and abroad.<sup>5</sup>

The unsustainability of present economics has now become widely discussed around the world, but it is still not clear we understand deeply that the word *unsustainable* means *cannot last*, and therefore, *must be changed*. Knowing how and why current economic policies are unsustainable is not enough; we must become more conscious participants in the process I call *glocalization*, rather than letting a handful of powerful interests and players lead us all to doom.

Capitalist free markets can only succeed in the long run if a) they really are free, which is not currently the case; and b) if that freedom leads more and more towards

friendly (rather than hostile) competition and increasing collaboration—not as exploitative cartels, but as ventures consistent with global family values. Profits *can* be increased by treating people well and forming cooperative ventures such as Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE), a scheme I helped pioneer in the Social Venture Network (SVN) that is dedicated to building alliances among locally networked businesses for the common good.<sup>6</sup>

Reclaiming human communal values and acting upon them in ways that renew our economies while reversing the ravages of colonialism, and what John Perkins calls the “corporatocracy’s” more recent predations as he so horrifically describes them in his new book *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (2004), is absolutely necessary if we are to turn our economies from unsustainable paths of destruction to sustainable paths leading to thrival.

Fortunately life *is* resilient, and we are witnessing a growing tide of reaction and dialogue on the present nature of economic globalization. These natural and healthy reactions have in common the recognition that communal values have been overridden in a dangerous process that sets vast profits for a tiny human minority above all other human interests. For a World Trade Organization to dictate economic behaviour that does not meet the self-interests of small, struggling nations, as it is increasingly discovering, would be like trying to run a body at the expense of its cells. We *are* living systems, whether we like it or not, and the only way to build a healthy world economy—to *glocalize* successfully—is Nature’s way. (I use the terms *glocalize* and *glocal* economy to indicate all levels of economic holarchy from local to global.)

Economic success has so far been measured in monetary terms rather than in terms of well-being for all, focusing on GNP/GDP accounting rather than on quality of life accounting such as that pioneered by Henderson (2005) and now taken up by many progressive economists and at least one nation—Bhutan—by decree of its king, while others, notably Brazil, are leaning in that direction.

## The Biology of Business

In my book *EarthDance* (2000), as well as in my article “The Biology of Globalization” (1998), I set out the Main Features and Principles of Living Systems, as:

1. Self-creation (autopoiesis);
2. Complexity (diversity of parts);
3. Embeddedness in larger holons and dependence on them (holarchy);
4. Self-reflexivity (autognosis—self-knowledge);
5. Self-regulation/maintenance (autonomics);
6. Response ability—to internal and external stress or other change;
7. Input/output exchange of matter/energy/information with other holons;
8. Transformation of matter/energy/information;
9. Empowerment/employment of all component parts;
10. Communications among all parts;

11. Coordination of parts and functions;
12. Balance of Interests negotiated among parts, whole, and embedding holarchy;
13. Reciprocity of parts in mutual contribution and assistance;
14. Conservation of what works well;
15. Creative change of what does not work well.

This list was derived from my observations, as a biologist, of living systems from single cells to complex multi-celled creatures, and of healthy ecosystems. These features should also be present in any healthy human system from family to community, business, government or other social system up to our global economy. But it became quickly clear that few businesses show these features.

Note that numbers 9, 10, 12 and 13 on the list, in a business that functioned like a healthy living system, implies the active empowerment and participation of every employee of that business in what it does and how it is run, with open communications among all. This, in short, means full inclusion and transparency, features totally abused in recent cases brought to public light, such as Enron and WorldCom, which glaringly highlighted what happens to businesses that see themselves in fierce competition rather than as healthy, collaborative aspects of their greater (stakeholder) communities. In sharp contrast, Bill George, former CEO of Medtronic and author of a book called *Authentic Leadership* (2003), once made headlines by boldly declaring that shareholders came third, *after* customers and employees. In his address to the World Business Academy annual meeting in 2004, George expanded on this, saying, among other things, he had told all employees on becoming CEO that none of them would be fired on his watch. In a time of unprecedented job insecurity at all levels of employment up to the top, this was bold leadership toward a very healthy company, whose shareholders had no complaints on his watch either.

The Internet, which is playing a huge role in business now, is a vast boot-straping, self-organizing system that, however young and chaotic, shows all 15 of the features in one way or another and must therefore be considered a real living system. One of the big problems remaining to be worked out on the Internet is its ethical self-governance. A *Wired Magazine* article on Wikipedia, the phenomenal self-organizing web-based encyclopedia that rapidly outstripped—in numbers of articles—existing encyclopedias fashioned by experts over very long periods of time, showed it to be an exciting example of how this self-governance is now coming into practice. While anyone with web access is free to initiate, amend, or extend articles at any time, fleets of dedicated contributors monitor the changes and quickly catch malicious insertions. As reported in the March 2005 issue, the average time it took to detect attempts to sabotage Wikipedia's integrity was 1.7 minutes!

Cooperation, collaboration, and community empowerment are, as Nature role-models them and as I cannot repeat too often, more efficient and effective ways of doing business than living in fear of drowning in a competitive race or

wasting energy and resources on beating down the competition.

Tachi Kiuchi, former CEO of Mitsubishi Electric, and Bill Shireman, an ecologist, put it this way in their important book, *What We Learned from the Rainforest* (2001): “There is no problem ever faced by a business that has not been faced and solved by a rainforest.” A rainforest is a Type III ecosystem in which mutual support among all species has proven more efficient and effective than spending energy to make war among species. (Note that predator/prey relationships are actually cooperative when seen from the ecosystem level of holarchy because prey feeds predators while predators keep prey species healthy.) The rainforest (like a prairie or coral reef) creates enormous new value continually by very complex production and trading systems as well as by recycling its resources very rapidly.

Kiuchi (2003) has proposed a clear program for corporate accountability that he calls “The Eightfold Path to Excellence.” The eight steps of this path, related to the rainforest lessons, are:

1. Adopt a bold and visionary *corporate mission*, one that envisions how your company will
2. Conduct a regular *assessment* of your success in maximizing return to stakeholders, and
3. Develop *incentive structures* that reward the creation of real stakeholder value on behalf of the corporate mission.
4. Adopt *management systems* to help you manage the company toward maximum stakeholder return, and measure your step-by-step progress.
5. Establish a *stakeholder engagement system*, to monitor and solicit feedback from
6. Create value for the *poorest* in the world, the stakeholders through whom the greatest mutual benefit can be delivered.
7. Issue an *annual report to stakeholders* that is as systematic as your annual report to shareholders.
8. *Live* the mission of your business. Make *that*—not your 90-day earnings report—the map to guide your course.

From an evolution biology perspective, globalization is a natural, inevitable, *and* desirable process, much broader than economics and already well on its way—the latest and greatest evolutionary instance of cooperative collaboration in a living system. Consider all the collaboration required for global communications from telephone and fax to television and the Internet, for money exchanges across all cultures, for international travel, scientific cooperation, world parliaments of religion, the many global activities of the United Nations, and so on. All these instances of cooperation remind me of the formation of the nucleated cell a few billion years ago, when the technologies invented by archebacteria in their hostile competitive phase were put to cooperative use in building the new communal cell. This globalization process is not reversible, though it certainly could fail, with the consequent destruction of human civilization as we know it. The critical link

will prove to be how we change the way in which we carry out our economic, business activity as a global species.

As we have seen, unopposed universal entropy and Darwinian evolution through struggle in scarcity, presented as official scientific Laws of Nature, have prevented us from seeing them as half-truths requiring completion from a more holistic perspective. The entropy of radiation balanced by gravitational “centropy” is, at the biological level of Nature, the life/death recycling process that creates overall abundance—on Earth some 4.8 billion years of value creation despite huge accidental extinction setbacks. Darwin’s struggle in scarcity is, therefore, not permanent for any species, because young pioneering species can and do learn to share, recycle, and support each other. We humans are such a young, pioneering species, and I believe we now stand on the brink of our own evolutionary maturity, ready to do business as it is done in the rainforest.

Once we convert our economies to more natural ones showing the features of healthy living systems, it will not be so big a step to move into the ultimate economic phase of the gifting economies proposed by Genevieve Vaughan (1997).

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See Rudolf Julius Emmanuel Clausius, 1822-1888. December 2000. Online: <http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/Mathematicians/Clausius.html>
- <sup>2</sup> See <http://regentsprep.org/Regents/biology/units/ecology/ecological.cfm>
- <sup>3</sup> Op-Ed in Sweden’s main newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, December 10, 2004.
- <sup>4</sup> Henderson co-created the *Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators*; see [www.calvert-henderson.com](http://www.calvert-henderson.com) and is Executive Producer of the new financial TV series, “Ethical Marketplace,” airing on PBS stations in March 2005.
- <sup>5</sup> See BenCohen’s animation video for True Majority Action. Online: <http://www.truemajorityaction.org/oreos>.
- <sup>6</sup> See BALLE, online: <http://www.livingeconomies.org>

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