

## Language as Gift and Community by Genevieve Vaughan

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### The gift hypothesis

In 1963, when I was 23, I married Ferruccio Rossi-Landi and left my native Texas to go to live with him in Milano. A few months after we were married I went with Ferruccio to Bologna to a meeting of philosophy professors and psychiatrists (including Gianni Scalia, Pietro Bonfiglioli and Agostino Pirella) who wanted to publish a journal dedicated to the application of Marx's analysis of the commodity and money to language. I was young and American (I remember how impressed I was at hearing Scalia say that as a philosopher Marx was "as big as Aristotle") and the prospect of applying Marx's economic analysis to language completely bowled me over. In fact I was even more enthusiastic than Ferruccio was about the idea, and have remained enthusiastic until today. Although in the end, the journal did not come about, Ferruccio developed his theory of language as labor and trade during the first years we were married, before going forward in other directions. I did some translations for him at the time, so I got to know his thinking well. He would write during the day and then bring home what he had written for me to translate. He corrected it almost phrase by phrase as I was doing it and we discussed it a lot.

As I was going through the development of Ferruccio's work with him, I was raising our little children. Taking care of them showed me that they were able to learn language long before they could understand money or exchange. I could see that language and the economics of exchange were similar but because I was convinced that language came before exchange both for the individual and historically, I wondered what the similarity was due to. I kept working on the idea myself for years, turning it around and around, first with Ferruccio as my 'tutor', later on my own. Now some 40 years after that first meeting in Bologna, I am still working on it. I realize that it is an unusual privilege to have been able to keep thinking about an idea for such a long time, especially for a woman and a non academic. What I have come up with is different from Ferruccio's interpretation of language and economics — and from Marx's. I believe it is a feminist or woman-based perspective on language and the market.

In 1974-75 I spent two years with our children in the US while Ferruccio was working to get his '*cattedra*' in Italy. I used the free time I had to write and think the ideas through. On the basis of that work I published two essays "Communication and Exchange" (1980) and "Saussure and Vygotsky via Marx" (1981). These essays and the work I did at the time have been the basis of the theory I developed later. What I try to show in "Communication and Exchange" is that communication is not based on exchange, but that exchange is a kind of aberrant material communication in a situation of private property. Money functions as a single material 'word' that facilitates this communication. I realized that the communication that was not exchange was based on satisfying the other's communicative need and that need-satisfaction has a logic of its own that unites the communicators. This logic is

simpler than the logic of exchange but it is actually more creative and informative. I also understood that Saussure's idea of value did not fit with Marx's and that money as the General Equivalent was similar to the function of the word and the 'sample' in Vygotsky's experiment on concept development. (Vygotsky 1962) The challenge then for me was to compare money and language. I looked at money as a one-word quantitative language (containing a sequentially ordered *langue* of prices) and having abstract labor value as its 'signified'. I compared it to language proper composed of *langue* — a collection of qualitatively different words with qualitatively different 'values', and combinatory rules, and *parole*, the ongoing process of communication — made of words from *langue* combined, in act. By looking at communication as need-satisfaction and the market as communication in a situation of private property, I could consider the market as alienated communication. By looking at money as a material word I could consider it as a one word 'alienated language'. As such money gives us the possibility of a non — or only partially — linguistic term of comparison for language.

The dimensions of money and language are very different. The market is macroscopic, and its one word language speaks for everything again and again. Money is material. You can keep it in your pocket. You have to give it up when you buy something. Words in language proper are airy, small and fleeting in comparison. You cannot keep them in your pocket in the way that you do money (though of course you can write them on a piece of paper which can go in your pocket). You can easily reproduce words. They have a very many qualitatively different values. They can combine qualitatively, modifying each other, while money combines quantitatively in a different way to make a sum.

It seemed to me that it would not be surprising if human beings had used the same process to communicate materially that they used to communicate linguistically, when the need arose because of private property, a material situation similar to that of private minds. I had learned to analyze poetry in college. Finding the similarities and differences between money and language was like analyzing at a huge real poem, with meanings on different levels. Yet why did the need for the market arise? Why did we have private property? Were people just greedy? The Left in Italy at the time was very radical and I considered myself part of it even though I had private property myself. I was quite clear about the fact that there was a huge oppression and exploitation of people going on at all levels. The picture of the market and language that I was developing was so strange that I began to wonder if the market, exchange and money were not causing the problems themselves as a sort of alienating mechanism. I was reading Freud at the time and going through psychoanalysis so the possibility of the market as a psycho-symbolic alienating mechanism appeared credible to me.

Ferruccio and I were divorced in 1978 and I became a feminist shortly thereafter. From my consciousness raising group I learned about the value of women's unpaid housework. Later I learned that housework would add some 40% or more to the GNP of most economies, if it were monetized. From this I began to see how much unrecognized free labor is actually being given to the market. I already had the hypothesis that communication was based on need satisfaction so I saw that women's free labor could be understood as material communication which was not alienated — at least not in the same way that the market is alienated. I had read Malinowsky and Mauss in college. Their work dealt with symbolic gift 'exchange', but because I was making the hypothesis of language as communication

without or prior to exchange, I tried to see symbolic gift giving in that light, as an extension of material and linguistic communication rather than as a foreshadowing of some aspects of the market. I was also doing gift giving at many levels in my own life, especially as a mother. It occurred to me that perhaps the communication and language that were prior to exchange were derivatives of mothering. Indeed mothering, like language, is something all human groups have in common. It is a social practice that is necessary in all societies and epochs. Perhaps I thought, this hypothesis had not been made because mothering had been considered instinctual. I was certain that it is intentional however both because of the way I was doing it myself and because the feminists I was talking to were quite clear on that point. It was around 1978 then that I began to think of communication, and language, as gift giving deriving from and in continuity with mothering. If this were the case it would follow that symbolic gift 'exchange' could be considered a variation upon communication and even upon language, and if language was an extension of mothering then so would symbolic gift giving be (even in cases where it is practiced exclusively by men). Perhaps then, communication prior to exchange could be considered as gift giving and an extension of mothering. In that case market exchange, as alienated communication, could be seen as an alienation of mothering.

In the early 1980's, I participated in a course on women and language held at the Virginia Woolf Cultural Center in Rome. The course was directed by a friend Alma Sabatini and by a professor at the University of Rome, Marina Camboni. During the years prior to that time, I had had a number of psychological problems and for years had taken psychotropic medicines, the effects of which had convinced me I would never write again. Fortunately I gave my articles in semiotics to Marina Camboni who thought they were important enough for me to give a couple of sessions of the course. I am still grateful to her for giving me that chance. (Indeed I am grateful to a number of women academics who have made space for me over the years according to their own deep feminist inclusiveness). I wrote a paper in Italian in which I addressed some issues around feminism and language that I had not thought of before. There I first had the idea that the boy child has to change standard from mother to father, and that this has to do with exchange for money. I got this idea from Marx's footnote "the human being does not come into the world bringing a mirror with him...The man Peter grasps his relation to himself as a human being through becoming aware of his relation to the man Paul as a being of like kind with himself." (1962:24). Well, I thought, he may not come into the world with a mirror, but he does come with a mother! The child identifies with the mother first. It is only later that Peter has to see himself as a male through his relation to Paul, in the same way that a commodity has to find its value reflected in money. It was then that I first began to think of the market as a derivative of an artificially non nurturing male gender construction. I developed this idea extensively later (1997), and coined the term 'mascultation' for the process in which the boy child is alienated from his identification with his nurturing mother, and has to create an identity based on categorization itself, with the father or other significant male as exemplar of the category. The boy then has to compete to become the exemplar, and the female model is eclipsed. The daughter continues her identification with the mother but also has to accept the mother's eclipse and therefore her own. The mother then preferentially and contradictorily nurtures the males more than the females, including herself, because the males have given up nurturing.

In 1983 I went back to the US with my theory of gift giving and communication in mind and with the intention of trying to create social change. It was already clear to me at the time that Capitalism is Patriarchal and that we needed to work for change according to women's values — that is, according to gift giving. In the US I encountered Lewis Hyde's book *The Gift, Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (1979) which convinced me I was on the right track. I tried to talk to some friends about the idea of gift giving and the critique of the market, but they didn't understand it. Perhaps I was not able to explain it very well and of course living in the US, they had never studied Marx nor did they know anything about Ferruccio. It seemed to me that other people there were never going to understand the theory. I decided I had to try to change reality with practice. If theory came from practice, I thought, by changing the practice, at least my own, that is, by communicating materially at the level of money in a way that was not exchange, I could make a material basis for the theory, a material basis which would contradict exchange. I started a feminist activist foundation — which is another story in itself — and after quite a number of years of the practice, I went back to writing the theory. In 1997 my book, *For-Giving, a Feminist Criticism of Exchange* was published. My idea of the market as alienated material communication has been hard to transmit to people until recently when, with globalization, it has become quite clear that the gifts of all are being taken away and de natured by commodification. Now, almost miraculously it seems, I have a network of international women activists and academics who are interested in the idea, working together with me on it.

My approach is different from that of others who write about gift giving, such as Lewis Hyde and the *MAUSS Revue*, or critics of the structures of Patriarchy such as Jean-Josef Goux, or even feminist writers on women's values like Carol Gilligan. The reason is that my hypothesis comes from looking at 1) communication as gift giving, based on mothering; 2) language as communication — gift giving — at the verbal level; 3) monetized exchange as material gift giving/communication which has been altered and alienated by incarnating a process similar to naming (see below); 4) (male) gender as the artificial construction of biological males as not mothering, not nurturing; 5) the market as the projection of the non nurturing role onto (so-called 'developed') societies' modes of production and distribution of goods; 6) housework and surplus labor as unpaid gifts that are given to the capitalist and the market as a whole, to create profit. My approach is different also because 7) I consider gift giving as a project for social change. I have the hope that by undoing a false construction of gender and its projection and validation, we can develop a society based on gift giving, on nurturing rather than domination, on women rather than men, or I should say, on both sexes to whom their gift giving capacities have been restored, re-visioned as *homo donans*, not just *homo sapiens*.

## Linguistic Work

Although I had the same point of departure as Ferruccio, I ended up with a different perspective on almost everything he addressed. For example, I believe that linguistic work is not *per se* primarily work for exchange. The market presupposes a comparison with money and the abstraction of labor — the finding of a common quality — among the products that are brought to the market to be sold. This common quality is a social one, exchange value, caused by the fact that we do not share our products by giving them directly to satisfy needs but exchange them, *do ut des*. If a product is not exchangeable, it does not achieve semiotization as a value of that kind. That is, it is not communicable as part of the alienated

communication that is the market. Linguistic work is not primarily work for the market, labor that will become abstract by being compared with all other labor on the market — though of course it can be, as happens with the work of advertisers or academics. Rather linguistic work produces linguistic gifts which satisfy the non (or less) alienated communicative needs of other human beings, which arise with regard to every part of our world due to our ongoing experience. These are needs for verbal gifts that establish mutually inclusive human relations among interlocutors, creating our subjectivities as beings of a like kind who are similarly varied givers and receivers, capable of creating infinitely numerous kinds of qualitatively different communicative gifts regarding all the endless variety of living on earth. As humans we are a category that constitutes itself from within by giving and receiving gifts at a variety of levels. Our collections of qualitatively different verbal substitute gifts, can be re combined in innumerable ways, according to syntactic patterns also having to do with giving and receiving. Words are 'constant' verbal gifts used to create human relations regarding stable or repeatedly relevant kinds of things which may themselves be considered possible relation-creating gifts but which at the moment may or may not be giveable. The speaker satisfies the need of the other to be put into relation to a non verbal gift item, situation or event by giving her a word-gift s/he could h/erself give but is not at the moment giving. In doing this the speaker transforms h/er own relation to the non verbal gift item, situation, or event into a relation which has an equal in the relation of the other. By combining constant verbal gifts in contingent and variable gift relations through syntax, we are able to create new sentences which convey and create newly understood and changing relations among cultural items, situations and events, as gifts among human beings, community-forming gifts, newly related to the listener's communicative needs in every sentence, by the speaker.

I believe syntax, the combinability of words, can be seen not as homologous to production of and with tools as Ferruccio thought or dictated by a Universal Grammar as conceived by Chomsky but as repeating gift patterns of the verbal plane. In fact it is because we cancel social gift giving and the work of the mother that we keep looking at a biological inheritance (gift) instead of a social one, or even a tool based articulation instead of a gift based one. We need not look at language to make this point but at material production itself. Tools can of course be used as gifts but more importantly here, their internal relations can also be seen as gift relations. Many of the patterns we see in tool making and use can be seen as transposed gift patterns. Hitting first of all is transposed giving and it creates a relation of dominance between hitter and the receiver of the blows. (Knives made by hitting rock against flint used to kill animals, transport the blow in a pass-through from making the knife to killing the animal). However, many other aspects of 'fit' between pieces of tools can be seen as permanent giving of one piece to another and the establishing of ongoing 'relations' between them. The fit between the head of the hammer and the handle, or between the sole and the upper of the shoe can be seen as permanent gift relations, while the relation between the shoe and the foot is a gift contingent upon changing needs. We can thus translate tool work to gift work — work which already has included in it the idea of establishing relations. All tools serve some purpose, satisfy some need. On the other hand, gifts are all 'tools' for establishing relations, though they may not always be used that way. Even if we were to accept the homology of production we could find the deeper source for the similarities between material and linguistic production in the gift patterns underlying both of them.

Characterizing linguistic work as gift giving locates it with the communication that is prior to exchange. In fact, any behavior in which a need is freely satisfied may be understood as extended gift giving, from perception of sense 'data' to breathing free air, to constructing a building, giving a floor to walls and walls to a ceiling, a ceiling to a space, and a protected environment to people.

I believe that linguistic gift giving takes place on the basis of abundance. In communication we build on the fact that we can have the same (albeit verbal) things, not that we can't have them. Communicative needs are needs for human relations regarding the internal or external world that arise in an ongoing way from experience. Linguistic labor is other-oriented relation-creating labor which, by satisfying the communicative needs of others, transforms the world, bringing forward its gift aspects. It does this by giving combinations of verbal gifts substituting for potential, permanent or contingent gifts on the non verbal plane.

### Naming and Exchange

I believe exchange itself derives from some aspects of language: naming and the definition, both of which are gift processes of a kind which is somewhat different from speech. In naming and definition, someone, a definer, gives the gift of a word to someone who does not have it. That is, s/he gives what may be considered a meta linguistic gift, a gift of language that satisfies someone's need for a means for creating relations regarding some kind of thing. The definition and naming point out gifts on two levels. On one level they focus on some part of the environment as having some value for others as a possible gift, and on the other level they give a word that can take its place as a communicative gift. The non verbal gift may in fact not be given at the moment (or ever) while the verbal gift is given to the other in its stead as a means of creating human relations in its regard. The relations among human subjectivities that would otherwise have been created by material gift giving and receiving are recreated at the level of language. These are human gift relations coming from the satisfaction of the needs of one by the other. Once someone has learned the name of something she can give it to others herself in *parole* to satisfy their communicative needs arising in regard to that kind of gift on the non verbal plane and they will understand it because it is a word-gift they already have and could use themselves to satisfy someone else's communicative needs. (The use of a word in a sentence is thus no longer a meta linguistic gift as it was in naming but a linguistic gift proper.)

One of the reasons linguistic labor looks like labor for the market is that they use the same 'pieces' arranged in different ways. In labor for the market we produce in order to receive an equivalent in exchange. In linguistic labor we give to others the verbal gift 'equivalent' of the non verbal gift, for the purpose of creating common gift relations with them. The relations we create in this way are very much the opposite of the mutually exclusive relations of exchange. They are mutually inclusive and as qualitatively varied and quantitatively simple as the values of exchange are qualitatively monolithic and quantitatively complex. The variety of linguistic gifts and the possibility of combining them through syntax, creating human relations which are specified according to each communicative interaction, allow the transmission of information along with the relations.

On the other hand, the transmission of goods and services in exchange contradicts the variety of human relations and allows only the single mutually exclusive relation of private property to be bridged and re occur. In exchange as in naming, we put forward something as valuable for the other, but we do this not to give a substitute gift to the other, but rather to get the money substitute 'gift', the material name for ourselves (or vice versa we give the material name, the money substitute 'gift,' in order to get the material gift or service for ourselves.) The interaction of exchange is divided differently from the naming interaction and the roles of the 'actors' are somewhat different from the roles of definer and listener, even their opposite in some moments. Nevertheless exchange is like naming in that it gives a money-word that the other doesn't have, at a meta-communicative level, and establishes a relation of mutual inclusion regarding something of value to both parties, the one thing they have in common: their relation of mutual exclusion as embodied in private property.

Exchange can be seen as material communication — gift giving — in a situation of private property, that is, of not-giving. Because of private property the kind of sharing that takes place in language cannot take place materially in the market. What does happen is paradoxically a sharing of not sharing, a giving of not-giving. Money is a meta-communicative 'gift' regarding this contradictory communication. It regards the only sharing that does take place in the market, the sharing of a non giving framework, and allows commodities to be named in that way as portions of everything that is held and 'transmitted' in that contradictory common-uncommon relation.

In fact there is a value of things in that relation, as they are transmitted without giving, because indeed we are dependent on the market as a whole for our goods and livelihoods. The market does give to us without giving. If language proper gives us substitute gifts, verbal value tokens, for all the variety of elements in our world which we can share as gifts and values, money gives us a substitute (not-) gift for all the not-gift products there are available to us on the market which indeed we do not share as gifts. The amount of money given for a commodity names the commodity quantitatively as a not-gift with respect to all the other not-gifts on the market. Prices function as a sequentially ordered quantitative *langue* within which the quantity of exchange value of the particular not-gift is expressed. Money is a meta-communicative gift because the common human relation to the mutual exclusion of the market is singular and contradictory. The gift in this situation is only the not-gift, exchange, and the value that comes from it. There is also no other 'word' that can stand together with money to make a '*langue*', and no syntax which would combine other 'words', to make '*parole*'. Thus the money-word stands alone the only word in this meta-communicative process, used over and over, given up each time it is 'spoken'. The reason for this singularity is that the not-gift contradicts on a very deep level the pervasive gift giving that allows us to attribute and recognize value in life and in language.

I believe that because of its similarity to naming, the process of exchange for money has a strong magnetic effect on our thinking, making us see everything in its image. It reverses the logic of communication, making us give to not-give, give to keep or to take, even in non economic areas, from our individual psychologies to politics, religion, philosophy, semiotics etc. Where gift giving is other oriented, exchange is ego oriented. One gives to receive an equivalent, to satisfy one's own need, not the need of the other. Thus in our thinking we learn to over value equivalents, equations, equality and categorization while

not thinking of or valuing giving to needs. Even when we may be actually doing gift giving ourselves we do not validate it. In fact it does not even come into our consciousness. It remains unnamed, uncategorized, perhaps because indeed, it does not require an equivalent.

In the market, what looks like an equal exchange actually contains many hidden gifts of free and surplus labor and of free or low cost raw materials. The 'equal' exchange for products and for labor serves as a pass-through (like a nautical lock in a canal) for gifts to move from a 'lower' to a 'higher' level and back again, as they are transformed into commodities and monetized in terms of all the other exchanges in that branch of production, then bought and de monetized, becoming 'merely' use values.

As use values coming from the market process, products also lose their connection with their original producers. There is a syllogism of gift giving: if A gives to B and B gives to C then A gives to C. In this process, value is transmitted by the giver to the receiver by implication (that the receiver was important enough for the giver to give to h/er). When A exchanges with B, each gives only in order to receive, to satisfy h/er own need so the syllogism is contradicted and the implication is cancelled. The gift to the other is cancelled by the necessary return of its equivalent by the other. Thus the use value that comes out of the exchange does not contain the implication of value of the other, gift value. It may acquire a new gift value when it is used as a means of giving for further gifts, feeding one's family for example, but its connection with its original producer is lost. Gift giving and gift value are transitive; exchange is intransitive.

Exchange value is calculated according to the abstract labor contained in different branches of production for the market and the portion of any of those branches constituted by the individual commodity, taking into account the costs of production (Marx 1962). There is an equation between the commodity and money, expressing the equality of their value. This equation, exchange and the market as a whole are embedded within a cornucopia of free gifts that are not seen — because they are not categorized as commodities. There are many previously free gifts and services that are now becoming commodified and therefore visible. We see them as we are losing them, as they are being categorized as exchange values and absorbed into the market. For example: water was free; seeds were free; species were unpatented and free; transmission of knowledge of husbandry, household and health care by parents and grandparents (pre advertising) was and is sometimes still free; the clean air we breathe in order to be able to produce and consume is/was free — until it has to be filtered etc. All of these gifts also contributed to the market from the outside because the capitalist did not have to pay for them. Now however, they are being privatized, absorbed into the market and the public has to pay their 'owners' for them.

Many of those aspects of life which make us human, and therefore good producers of surplus value, are free. Our access to our sense data is free (unless we are blind or deaf); our work of learning and exploring the world around us is free; the basic functioning of our languages is free. Housework and surplus labor are gifts to the market, as we have been saying. To them we need to add the differences in level of life between countries of the South and the North which allow the price of labor in the South — the salary that provides the 'means of giving' for the reproduction of the worker — to be so much lower than the



price of labor in the North. The products of labor of the South bring prices in the North that are determined by the level of life in the North and therefore contain a large profit for the capitalists, that is a large gift of surplus value which is given by the people living in the economies of the South where living conditions and goods are so much poorer and thus cheaper. The level of life does not improve because the many gifts are taken elsewhere and even the capital accumulated locally does not remain in local banks.

These gifts and others pour in to profit beyond the equation of value because they are its uncategorized context, allowing equal exchange to take place and unequal gifts to be given at the same time. Gifts of weather, purity of water and air, availability of raw materials and energy sources, circumstance of location, and synchronicity of timing also influence the production and sale of commodities, as well as the effective demand, the ability of buyers to pay. When we use money to name the exchange value of something in the contradictory communication of the market we ignore the context of gifts, just as when we name something with words and categorize it, we leave in the background all the free gifts and services (both verbal and non verbal) in which that category is embedded. This includes all the gifts of nature and culture as well as our own free linguistic labor of categorization and syntactic combination, our free labors of perception and learning which ready us as competent communicative receivers and givers, and our free labor of communication proper. The context of any act of naming — the posing of an equivalence between a verbal gift and a non verbal gift — is the use of that word and that kind of thing in the linguistic community and the human community, not as a co presence of categories but as part of a great collective interactive web of gift giving and receiving. In this web, categorization, the identification of non verbal and verbal gifts can be usefully foregrounded while the web itself is in the background. Equating items on the two levels — verbal and non verbal — and thinking of things as kinds can give us a clearer picture of the way we think, but it is also similar to the market operation of finding the price of commodities, without thinking of all the gifts in the background. On the other hand, words previously acquired through naming become gifts in new ways in ongoing *parole* where things of a kind are seen as similar in relation to the word which stands for them but they are also seen in their gift relations with other things as implied by the syntactic relations among verbal substitute gifts. Without the ability to use words in combination to make new gift sentences and discourses naming and categorizing would be uncommunicative, uninformative. The specific usefulness or gift character of naming and the names it provides thus becomes dependent on syntactic gift giving. That is, the meta linguistic gift of a name does not suffice in itself but its gift capacity depends on its actual use in sentences. Nevertheless in the study of language, the naming and defining, categorizing side of language often takes over from the gift side, in concert with the male model taking over from the female and the materialization of the word in money taking over from gift giving. In fact we do not acknowledge the gift character of language at all; it is hidden from sight together with other kinds of gift giving.

I am suggesting that we consider words as substitute gifts and syntax as gift giving among words, while at the same time as speakers and listeners we give and receive sentences and discourses. In this way we make visible an iconicity among the verbal, non verbal and interpersonal levels that functions to hold the linguistic communication together. On the other hand, taking a word out of the communicative flow to give a name or a definition creates a situation that is unusual with regard to the rest of language. Children usually do

begin to learn language that way, with naming, and as adults we can go back to it whenever we want to, but after language has been learned naming does not stand alone. Because naming has been transferred into exchange however, the logic of naming becomes overly influential in our thinking. In fact, in exchange for money we have created a material interpersonal area which is iconic to naming though not to gift giving and which is nevertheless necessary for survival. Not only does this iconicity validate the market but I believe it gives rise to areas of academia based on naming and re naming. Generative grammar for example is based on re naming or re writing. Once we have named and categorized something we believe we know it but our analysis does not give us the motivation, that is, the movement of thought among the names or the justification of their relation to each other. We humans are putting that motivation into our sentences but we are not looking at it. In fact it is gift motivation, gift energy, energy that moves toward the other.

Naming as validated by exchange also has a particularly negative side in that we devalue those who don't use or have the 'right' names or belong to the 'right' categories. Sexual, racial, national, and religious naming or 'labeling' is a way of dominating others by categorization, just as labor is dominated by naming it — or not naming it — with money in a salary of a certain quantity. Free housework has been dominated also by not naming it 'work' as well as by not having a sense of gift giving labor which would validate it outside the market. Thus it seems that the way to validate housework is to give women a salary for doing it while instead we need to stand on the ground of its free gifts to critique and dismantle the market.

Goods and services are dominated by naming them with money and putting them in the category of exchange values. Alfred Sohn-Rethel's idea of the 'exchange abstraction' (1965) shows a 'freezing' of the product in a timeless and spaceless moment as it waits in a store to be bought. In this timeless moment both giving/receiving and exchange are suspended, a circumstance which I believe contributes not only to abstraction but to the 'reification' of the world around us. The step-aside from speech into naming and definition creates for language something similar to the exchange abstraction, holding our attention on the exemplar and its name, in a moment outside the flow of verbal giving. The coincidence of naming and exchange focuses our attention on categorization as the process of knowledge and creates a parallel between knowing and owning. In our use of monetized exchange, it is as if we had in a functional image of part of the way we think, buried deep within our material practice, broadcasting and validating itself surreptitiously (like a piece of radioactive shrapnel) at many other levels, and feeding back into our thinking.

## Syntax

We can look at the relations among words as transposed gift relations and the relations among things, from which they are transposed, as gift relations (which we have recognized among them or attributed to them). Adjectives modify nouns by being given to them and as such they correspond to situations on the non verbal plane where something has been given to something else. 'Red balloon' is a phrase in which 'red' is given to 'balloon' because on the reality plane the color [red] has been given to the [balloon] and is its 'property'. (This is not mutually exclusive private property, but a property that 'belongs to' the balloon and is shared with other red things.) 'Red balloon' is given as a combined gift to

listeners to satisfy their communicative needs arising from red balloons. The definite or indefinite article is given to the noun phrase in order to specify the kind of substitute gift that phrase is, and what kind of communicative need it satisfies, that is, whether the gift regards a specific balloon or one among others. In the sentence 'This is a red balloon' the demonstrative pronoun is used to indicate or foreground a red balloon — or even just a picture or a sign for a red balloon — and it is united with 'a red balloon' by 'is'.

Singling out something from a background by pointing can be considered a physical icon for perceptual singling out. In pointing, one item, the index finger, is foregrounded while the other items, the fingers of the hand, are drawn back, backgrounded (see Vaughan 1997). In 'This is a red balloon', 'this' can be considered a substitute gift for a red balloon's being singled out from a background. This sentence would satisfy the listener's communicative need arising from the context, for a description of the present non verbal gift, and indeed the balloon could be a gift, if someone were to give it. Although the sentence could be used to give the name — the word-gift used for balloons and/or the color — in this case probably the speaker is not naming or defining something but is just using words the listener already has as a gift, to create a relation to the balloon for h/er which is also an interpersonal relation with the speaker. That is the verb 'to be' is not being used here to transmit a meta linguistic or meta communicative gift as it is in naming and the definition (and exchange), rather it is being used to construct a linguistic gift. Logical connectives are used to specify the kinds of gifts that are being given. 'And' specifies that two gifts are being given together. 'Or' specifies that not both gifts are given together. 'Not' gives us the gift of the absence of the gift. Tenses allow for gifts in different time frames. 'If/then' makes one gift necessarily contingent upon the other, and so on.

In naming, the name is given as a verbal substitute gift for a non verbal gift/exemplar, and there are therefore two levels in play. In defining, a *definiendum*, a single word-gift/exemplar, takes the place of a *definiens* which is the contingent constructed word — gift describing — given as a substitute gift for — a possible exemplar of a kind, and given in terms the listener already 'has': ('A cat is a four legged feline that says meow' or 'A cat is an animal like Aunt Mary's pet'). Thus in the definition there are three levels in play: two verbal levels, a name and a description, and a non verbal level in which an item is singled out as an exemplar having a gift value or character. In the description there are only two levels again, the verbal and the non verbal. The copula allows the description to take the place of the deictic 'this' which serves as an empty wrapping which the substitute gift 'a red balloon' can fill. Like wrapping paper, 'this' singles out something from the background as a gift. In both cases, the definition and the description, the copula allows the substitution of one part of the sentence for another in its function as the verbal substitute gift for a non verbal gift.

In a basic transitive noun-verb-complement sentence such as 'The girl hit the ball' there is a giver, gift or service and a receiver. In other words, the noun-verb — complement structure is the structure of a gift interaction. In a passive sentence 'The ball was hit by the girl' the structure is the same but our attention is focused on the receiver rather than the giver. There may of course be many kinds of gifts or services that do not appear to be positive for the receiver, such as 'The cat ate the mouse', where the [mouse] would not consider [being eaten] as a gift, nevertheless on the functional verbal level, gift giving can be seen as the

matrix of transitivity as the giver/subject gives the gift or service to the receiver/complement.

I believe a combination of transitive and intransitive structures involving gift giving within the sentence, substitution between gifts at different levels and substitution between elements of the sentence, can account for much of the way language works. We can extend the sense of gift giving to a much wider area than it is usually seen to cover and a very many things can be seen as kinds of gifts or aspects of gift interactions communicated at the verbal level, creating relational iconicity at the different levels. We can take this perspective if we are not actively blocking gift giving from our field of vision by focusing on the self reflecting equations of exchange. It is because we take exchange and exchange-based naming and categorizing relations as the norm, with their own reiterative iconicity or 'self similarity' (see Vaughan 1997) that we do not perceive gifts when they are there, or validate them in language and in life. We blind ourselves to gifts by validating exchange which opposes and cancels gifts. From that altered perspective we attribute giftless objectivity to the human and non human world around us.

*Homo donans or Homo economicus*

With its contradictory relational logic, exchange promotes opportunism and greed. Patriarchal Capitalism, our present mode of production and exchange, creates scarcity, one might say almost intentionally, by wasting wealth on armaments (see [www.osearth.com](http://www.osearth.com)), and other non nurturing expenditures. The reason for this is that exchange and the market require scarcity in order to function. Gift giving in community requires and creates abundance. If everyone were living in abundance, exchange would fade away; there would be no need to exchange in order to survive. One's own or other's needs could be freely satisfied and the market would have no leverage. In a way, looking at language as gift giving and at the market as alienated language, allows us to imagine the kinds of relations that would exist in a gift economy in abundance. Giving and receiving in order to communicate, not just when they are necessary for survival, have implications of caring, information and play above and beyond the giving and receiving that take place in scarcity.

If the capacity for creating human relations and forming subjectivities is a fundamental characteristic of the linguistic and material communication which are so important for our being human, then exchange relations and the market are damaging to our humanity. In the market we do not give and receive, but only trade the materialized name and the socialized object — establishing relations of commonality only to the mutually exclusive exchange process and giving value to ourselves, not to each other. Exchange is harmful because it creates or re enforces the independent atomistic subject, who establishes gift relations only in order to break them or take them back, who manipulates in order to receive more, whose commonality with others lies in the agreement to exchange and not give. The exchange interaction has a logic, the logic of a supposedly rational subjectivity created by and for the market, the subjectivity of *homo economicus*.

The kinds of egos envisioned by economists from Adam Smith to the present, maximizing self interest, coincide with the egos of the patriarchal agenda and are functional to, even creatures of, the market mechanisms. In order to promote accumulation of wealth in the

hands of the few, thereby creating the scarcity for the many which is necessary for the exchange mechanism to function smoothly, the market needs and rewards greedy subjectivities which will carry out the accumulative roles. Patriarchy supplies the non-nurturing values and the motivation to dominate through accumulation of wealth and power which prepare the individual to take his or her place in the market mechanism. Individual personalities formed in this way spur the accumulation of capital and the expansion of markets. Of course not everyone who is greedy is lucky or clever or cruel enough to get to the top, and many do not make the grade. Perhaps there are also some who are not particularly greedy but who arrive at wealth through simple industry or the hand of fate. However for the functioning of the mechanism it is enough that many strive to accumulate, and that enormous accumulation is rewarded and validated as an important value by the society. Symbolic trappings, usually phallic symbols, reward the successful few with fast cars, skyscrapers and stratospheric bank accounts, as achievers both within the patriarchal agenda and within the capitalist agenda. Phallic symbols are also used to defend the various accumulations of money and power as guns and missiles point at each other, giving death and causing more accumulation through their manufacture. These symbolic and real aggressions are symptoms of social systems deeply infected with the sickness of anti-nurturing gynophobia.

Now corporations, non-human collective entities, continue to carry out the motivation of greed in the service of the capitalist mechanism, independently of the individual actors who are involved in them. Sometimes individuals at the top are revealed as excessively greedy, having lied and deceived investors and workers. Sometimes they are not discovered but get away with murder. However it does not matter. The corporations themselves remain, held up by their collective importance within a network of corporations, their combined and separate *raison d'être* being to make the largest possible amount of money.

This is particularly dangerous because individual human beings, even when they are deeply infected with the patriarchal agenda and the values of capitalism, have other aspects of their lives in which they are also gift-givers. To begin with, they receive sense data from the world around them, and they speak and listen, write and read. Secondly they have families to whom they give in ways which do not contradict the patriarchal agenda. They have friends; live in solidarity with others in some ways, even in the business world (Similarly, soldiers share a sense of solidarity and community with each other while they are engaged in enormously destructive behavior towards the enemy). Corporations do not have these mitigating aspects. The hungry self-interested ego of the patriarchal capitalist agenda becomes even hungrier when it is transferred into a collective non-human legal entity like a corporation.

A corporation's hunger cannot be satisfied because its mandate is double: on the one hand it must make as much money as possible, and on the other it must create the scarcity for the general population which gives it the 'ecological niche' in which to survive and thrive. Both aspects are necessary for the functioning of the patriarchal capitalist system. The arms business is particularly appropriate for this purpose because it produces expensive products which have no nurturing aspects and which cause devastation and scarcity by their use. Thus as far as the nurturing, need-satisfying, economy is concerned, arms production is a waste of wealth, and the use of those products actively causes scarcity. Many even

suspect that wars are fomented in order to create markets for more armaments.

The genius of arms corporations lies in making enormous amounts of money from something that contributes nothing to the general good and feeds off of institutionalized male violence. Moreover because corporations are institutions and labor is divided within them, individuals do not have to take responsibility for the agenda of the whole. They remain gift giving in some aspects of their lives, which humanizes them individually and may even make them happy and well adjusted, while in the bigger picture the corporations are perpetrating death and devastation. A similar thing happens with much of the patriotic population in war-making nations. People can remain gift giving on an individual level while, by identifying with the their nation's struggle for dominance, they can vicariously satisfy their own patriarchal motivations.

The motivation for the accumulation of wealth may be seen in the patriarchal agenda's focus on competition and the use of wealth for power and phallic symbolic self aggrandizement. Many motivations or at least justifications for war also come from market exchange. Justice is seen as the payment for crime and creates a situation in which revenge is validated. A right military exchange seems to give the right name, categorize the action firmly as wrong, and restore 'balance' based on the equation of value. It seems to cancel the crime, as exchange cancels the unilateral gift in the market, though here the gift has been transformed into harm and one retaliation usually gives rise to another. So we have Bin Laden attacking the US to create justice and Bush attacking in revenge to create justice, both acting according to the patriarchal exchange mode. These reciprocal attacks will not create peace. Looking for the causes and solving them by satisfying needs will.

Positive unilateral gift giving can take the place of exchange at many different levels, from the mercy movement of families of crime victims who forgive their perpetrators to the solidarity movement, from the restoration of indigenous people's lands, to the restoration of seeds to farmers and of genetically sound unmodified organisms to all of us. Acting beyond the profit motive for the good of all or for the good of the individual constructs our human subjectivities as gift givers and receivers, aligning us with the gift aspects of language and life which we are now beginning to validate. We need to project the mother onto the universe; a mother liberated from her subservience to a sick patriarchal agenda, a mother who can be the model of the human for men as well as women. Another world is possible. Giving value to gift giving is the way to get there and a gift economy is the basis of a better world.

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