

Mothering, Co-muni-cation and the Gifts of Language by Genevieve Vaughan

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

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

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

Before I try to describe elements of the logic of the unilateral satisfaction of another's need let me say that there is also a logic of commodity exchange for money that lays down a very strong base metaphor or magnetic template that influences us to interpret everything in its image. It is because of this strong pull towards the logic of exchange that we tend to ignore, discredit or over-sentimentalize unilateral gift giving and over-value exchange

patterns. Exchange is a doubling of the gift but has the effect of canceling the motive and motion of the unilateral process. The generalization of exchange results in a very different configuration of human relations than would the generalization of unilateral gift giving.

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

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

In Western culture this pattern of interaction and its criteria are accepted as the normal human way of behaving, diminishing harm to the other while promoting the well being of the self. From economics to politics, the idea of not impinging on the other rules over the idea of helping (giving to) the other. Feminists have embraced the idea of equality with men and shown that they can also embrace the values of patriarchal capitalism. While continuing to identify and give importance to needs, women do not usually consciously step outside the exchange paradigm. Instead they take up a struggle for rights within the system rather than trying to change it altogether. One unchallenged patriarchal ideal for example is justice, which is based on the model of exchange, requires just payment for crime, and is now big business. The values of kindness, and the prevention of crime through the satisfaction of needs are not considered as relevant to the exchange-based discourse of justice and rights. The world view or paradigm of exchange is actually conducting a continuous struggle against a hidden paradigm based on unilateral gift giving, an (ideological) struggle which it is winning. We do not notice the gift paradigm or even know that it exists. Rather we attribute isolated instances of unilateral giving to individual virtue, quirkiness, disguised self interest or even co-dependency.

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

If we can stand back and look at the exchange paradigm critically for a moment, we can begin to recognize the positive existence of the gift paradigm. The exchange paradigm has to dominate over the gift paradigm because the gift paradigm threatens it by making it unnecessary. Indeed if unilateral gift giving were the norm, no one would need to exchange in order to receive what she or he needs. The exchange paradigm requires scarcity in order to maintain its leverage. In capitalism, when abundance begins to accrue, scarcity is artificially created to save the exchange-based system. Agricultural products are plowed under in order to keep prices high. Money is spent on armaments and other waste and luxury items, or cornered in the hands of a few individuals or corporations in order to create and maintain an appropriate climate of scarcity for business as usual to continue. These mechanisms have other advantages which also reward successful exchangers with social status and power and penalize gift givers by making their gift giving (in scarcity) self sacrificial.

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

Indeed I believe that the conflict between paradigms may be an important cause of misogyny. Women bear the brunt of the fact that the unilateral giving which they have to practice as mothers, conflicts with and challenges the paradigm of exchange. In fact, because of the context of scarcity in which many mothers are forced to live, practicing the gift logic may even appear to be a punishment for not having succeeded in the system of commodity exchange. Alternatively it may appear to be the reason for women's supposed 'inferiority'. Women themselves sometimes attribute the source of their oppression to the role of gift-giving rather than to the context of scarcity that has been created by the system based on commodity exchange. They think that by giving up gift-giving and convincing others to do so as well, they can improve their lot. Instead the solution is to change the context of scarcity and the economic system that is causing it so as to make gift giving viable for all.

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

One result of the predominance of the exchange paradigm is that needs have become invisible unless their satisfaction is backed by the money required to pay for them as 'effec-

tive demand'. Looking beyond the exchange paradigm to a theory of gift giving as need-satisfaction would also require an expanded visibility of needs to include those needs for which the people who experience them do not have the wherewithal and those needs which are not part of the monetized economy. Marx's discussion of consumptive production and productive consumption could be used as the basis for such a theory since it suggests how needs can become specific and diversify according to the means by which they are satisfied. (1) New needs arise on the basis of the satisfaction of the old in a dynamic way. For example, a child who first needs only milk begins to need solid foods, prepared with specific cultural procedures etc. A child who was dependent begins to need independence. The gift process in coexistence with exchange gives rise to many needs. As adults living in the exchange paradigm we have complex social and psychological needs having to do with power relations. For example the need to be respected may be more important than the need to receive a gift. Much damage has been done by givers who paternalistically ignore the variety of needs and the creativity of the receiver.

The concealment of the gift paradigm has extended to our terminology, rendering the gifts we are already giving invisible. For example we place the neutral term 'activity' over the loaded term 'gift' in many aspects of life. At the same time we have taken away the loaded terms 'satisfaction of need' and replaced it with the term 'effect'. For example building (or taking care of) a house can be considered satisfying a complex combination of needs by as many activities. I propose that in order to reveal the gift paradigm we reconsider even those activities according to the theme of unilateral gift giving and receiving.

Aspects of the gift logic

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Seven: Gift giving creates a bond between giver and receiver.

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

Eight: Turn-taking occurs when individuals give unilateral gifts sequentially without intending to cause the receiver to give an equivalent in return.

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

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

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

exchange paradigm continually pushes us in that direction. We use this tendency of gift giving to transform itself as evidence that unilateral gift giving does not exist. Mothers, and other people who have done a lot of gift giving on a daily basis, know that it does. Despite this unfortunate tendency the unilateral gift continues to function in the area of mothering, and it has also many developments which have been attributed to other aspects of life and given other names. By restoring the name 'gift' to the developments in other aspects of life we can see that unilateral gift giving is one of the load-bearing structures of society and not just wishful thinking or a good intention transformed into its opposite.

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

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

Exchange relations

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

others are giving free gifts because the 'just' price covers a source of free gifts).

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

Psychological origins of exchange

Nancy Chodorow and other feminist psychoanalysts (2) discuss the plight of the boy child who finds he has to learn or invent an identity that is not like that of his nurturing mother. The boy begins life without knowing he is different. Then he discovers that he has a different gender name, and thus belongs to a different category. But if as I am saying, the fundamental unilateral gift giving that is happening and through which he is bonding with his mother is interpreted as a female characteristic only, where does that leave the boy? What can his identity be? Society has interpreted our physiological differences to mean that we must construct different gender identities, but if the unilateral gift giving way is the core process, what other identity can there be for the boy?

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

If almost everything that little children have is or seems to be a gift from their mothers, the penis would also seem to be a gift, given to boys but not given to girls. It could appear that the boy has been put in the non-nurturing superior category because he has it. Yet because the identity constructed through the gift way with the mother is necessarily more satisfying than an identity of similarity with the father — where he has to compete to be the prototype — he still longs for participation in the gift mode. But since the mother doesn't have a penis and the boy's gender appears to be determined by his having one, castration seems to be the way to return to the nurturing identity and he would desire it. At the same time he would necessarily fear castration, making the whole issue very traumatic. (Also the fact that the boy will never have breasts though he may envy them as the gift of nurturing, would enter into this psychological pattern as well. Thus it seems that the mother is in the opposite and inferior category because she has the gift of breasts for nurturing which he

does not have.) The boy therefore puts himself out of 'dependent' receivership of the cares of the mother and begins to feel that he deserves such care because of the gift of his penis and his name. He sees himself as 'made' or engendered by the father who traveled the same psychological itinerary himself as a child. I believe this childhood pattern repeats itself in many areas of social life in the creation of privileged categories by naming, based on the naming of gender. The privilege involved is the direction of gifts and services by others 'upwards' towards the person who is in the superior category, and the giving of names and commands 'downwards' by the person in the superior category. In this way hierarchies are created and those with important titles in top places, prototype positions, rule with their phallic symbols in hand. From the scepter to the miter to the missile and the gun our leaders are made male again and again. The division into genders due to our physiological differences is an easy mistake for cultures to make. In fact we put things that look different into different categories. The problem is that humans are so sensitive and intelligent they take up their categories and use them as self fulfilling prophecies. This very capacity however would give us a way out, an ability to create ourselves differently, undoing the categories, changing gender expectations.

The transfer of categories away from nurturing and into a relation of similarity and competition with the father is remarkably similar to the change of a product from a use value to an exchange value. The product is taken away from the production process (which could be viewed as a combination of need-satisfying 'activities') placed on the market (the binary opposite of gift giving), compared to the monetary norm and given a 'money name' (a price). (Marx makes a comparison between price and proper names and adds "We know nothing of a man simply because he is called 'James'". (3) I have to differ with Marx. We do know that if he is called James he is male.)

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

Manhood script

According to David Gilmore in his book *Manhood in the Making*, (4) the values which males embrace for the formation of their identities can be seen as having to do with a 'manhood script' which is relatively similar cross culturally. Such values as independence, competitiveness, performative excellence, courage, large size, form the parameters of this script which is embraced and constructed by males so as to distinguish themselves from the nurturing mother. I think that we can recognize that these values are similar to the values of capitalism: autonomy, competitiveness, performative excellence, risk taking and high status due to social 'size': having more wealth or power.

Having given up unilateral gift giving both as a gender and as a mode of production and distribution it appears that it is only through the rule of law or the strictures of morality and religion that men (and women living in capitalism) can be convinced to pay attention

to others' needs. Yet self interest is a psychological dead end. People find their lives without 'meaning'. Searching for meaning individually is an almost impossible task since both in language and in life, meaning has to do with communication, with orientation towards the other. We seize upon the law of the male prototype as the measure of our behavior but this does not bring us back to the gift way, which seems an impossible, unrealistic Eden. Meanwhile the economic way of the manhood script continues to make an anti-Eden creating poverty where abundance should be, rewarding the few with ever greater havings while penalizing the many, erecting a wall behind which the gift giving garden is no longer visible.

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

Language

One attempt that we can make to institutionalize nurturing is to reveal it in areas of life where it has been canceled and made invisible by the paradigm of exchange. I believe that we need to re vision language itself as an ideal gift economy. As such it can function as the missing link between mothering, symbolic gift exchanges and commodity exchange. In my book *For-Giving, a Feminist Criticism of Exchange* and in some early essays (5), I suggest that language can be conceived of as a construction of unilateral gift processes taking its communicative power from the ability gift giving has to create relations. Words would thus be verbal gifts which substitute for co-muni-cative gifts, which humans give to one another to satisfy communicative needs - needs for a relation and for a means for creating that relation regarding something. Unmotivated phonemes and morphemes are combined to make up word-gifts which become common possessions of a community. Word-gifts are made on purpose to create relations, to satisfy communicative needs, not direct material needs. They are put by individuals into contingent so called 'rule governed' combinations, creating momentary present time common relations among interlocutors regarding the many aspects of the human and natural environment. Even the 'rules of syntax' by which the word gifts are combined with each other can be viewed as transposed gift processes.

If it is possible to create a mutually inclusive relation with someone by satisfying her need with a material object, we can also give that gift in order to create that relation. However, need satisfying objects are not always available and there are many parts of the world which we cannot use to satisfy needs directly. Thus we use words, verbal gifts, to satisfy other's communicative needs for a means to create a relation to something. The speaker or giver recognizes the listener's lack of a relation to something in the present and speaks or gives the word which has become the general social substitute gift for that kind of thing in her culture. By combining constant word-gifts she is able to make a contingent word gift - a sentence or group of sentences which expresses the specific relevance of the kind of things in the moment. By satisfying the other's need for a means to a relation the speaker has satisfied her own need for a common relation with the listener in the present. The listener's relation to the means of communication the speaker has given her is at the same time the

speaker's own shared relation with the listener. She has created a mutually inclusive relation with another person regarding a thing or kind of thing by means of combined word-gifts. The listener or receiver has to be able to creatively use what has been given to her - or the relation is not established. According to Marx's idea from the German Ideology, language is 'practical consciousness that exists for others and therefore really for me as well'. (6) What the word-gift is for the speaker is determined by what it is for the listener. The use of the gift by the receiver is as important to the transaction as the giving of the gift by the giver. In fact if we want to communicate we have to speak in a language the listener understands. If even one word is unknown to her we have to define it or give her a different one.

Syntax

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

I think there are two aspects of language corresponding very roughly to Saussure's *langue-parole* distinction. The *langue* side comes from naming and the definition while the *parole* side comes from the use of the words we have gained through naming, definition, and through participating in speech interaction. I think that exchange corresponds to the naming and definition (*langue*) side of this distinction, while unilateral gift giving corresponds to the use of words, sentences, discourses. We usually tend to confuse the two, not realizing that the definition has a structure and implications which are different from non definitional sentences. Thus we believe that by putting things in categories, seeing what they are like or unlike, what the categories include or exclude, we understand them. . By concentrating on categorization we are leaving out the gift motivation and communicative power which could explain how language is connected to the extra linguistic world and how people are connected to each other. The definition is actually a *meta* linguistic gift while language in context functions as a linguistic gift satisfying ongoing and contingent communicative needs.

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

In language the lexicon constitutes a basic abundant supply of word gifts (the constants), a competence which members of a community all possess (specialistic and elite languages of course exist but I am trying to describe the basic case). This supply provides people with a situation of common possession of linguistic means of production. Due to the facility with which we speak we are in the position of having a limitless supply of gifts to give. We are also in the position of producing for others what they could potentially rather easily produce for themselves. This abundance and ease contrasts with the scarcity and the difficulty of procuring and giving gifts in the extra linguistic world. Communicative needs may appear much less stringent and compelling than material needs. Nevertheless verbal communication can have a use value regarding the satisfaction of material needs because humans can use the gifts they receive from it as information upon which to base their behavior. Verbal communication thus has a gift value which creates human relations with regard to things and a use value - which arises from our ability to use these relations as the premise upon which to base further behavior, relations, and interactions. For example if I say 'The book is on the table' your communicative needs are satisfied for the moment and I have satisfied your need to know where the book is. I may have saved you an hour of time looking for the book. Whether or not you asked me, I have unilaterally satisfying your need. My sentence has a use value and also a gift value - because I use it to satisfy your communicative need and your extra linguistic need for finding the book, both of which give value to you by implication.

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

The infinite variety of qualitatively different relations that humans create with each other through language regarding things has had an important gift value for the human commu-

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

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

There are some aspects of language that seem to be reincarnated in gift exchange. For example giving the return gift of the 'same thing' in gift exchange a practice discussed by Godelier (7), could be interpreted as functionally analogous to language where speakers of the same language possess and are able to combine, give and receive the normatively identical words, demonstrating that they belong to the same community. The need in gift 'exchange' to reciprocate with something more than the original gift shows that at least that extra portion of it is unilateral and free. In fact the exchange of gifts could be seen as material dialogue (with some of the same agonistic potential as verbal dialogue.)

The process of substitution of one gift for another itself creates a new area of gift giving with new consequences. It has been said that gift exchange is different from language because gifts are not referential. Substitute gifts however, can be referential. They can bring us back, remind us of the gifts they have taken the place of. In gift exchange not only are the human interactions structured in a similar way, with the second gift transaction reversing the first but the relation between the two gifts is affirmed by their similarity so that the act of giving the return gift refers to the original gift (by repeating it). Beyond this reference the addition of 'more' places the new giver in the position of giving unilaterally again. Thus gift exchanges might be seen as occupying a communicative position somewhere between unilateral gift giving and language proper. I believe this may have happened because language itself is functioning as a deep metaphor upon which humans base other

behaviors not only regarding structures deriving from the relations in Saussure's *langue*, as Levi Strauss showed but in the sense of a parole which is based on satisfying communicative needs through gift giving and from which *langue*, which is after all an abstraction, derives.

As I have been saying, I believe that living in a society based on the exchange paradigm prevents us from seeing the gift giving that is before us. Exchange value appears to be the most important kind of value, different from other kinds of values - moral, linguistic, spiritual values etc. Indeed, exchange value can be seen as a transformation of (unilateral) gift value canceling and hiding it. In fact it is the single-minded concentration on the need of the giver rather than the receiver that cancels the transitivity (inclusiveness, creativity, transmission of a variety of qualitative values) of the gift transformed by exchange. Exchange value is the value of the need-satisfying product — the ex gift or would be gift- for others in the system of alienated mutually exclusive communication which is the exchange of private property. After the commodity has passed through the market its use value has had gift value deleted from it because in fact the gift value was transitive (implying the value of the other). The product which has been exchanged on the market does not give value to the buyer beyond what she or he originally gave. In fact in a mediated way the buyer has given it to her or himself.

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

Marx's semiotics of the market gives us the clue for a semiotics of the unilateral gift, of language, and of gift exchange. All of these areas have to do with human value-conferring activity, activity for others and therefore for oneself (again according to Marx's dialectic of linguistic inclusion from the German Ideology), gift-giving, the activity of satisfying needs at different levels. If we consider the process of commodity exchange as a descendant of language (in its aspects of definition and naming) and language itself as a descendant of gift giving we can understand different kinds of value as variations upon a single theme. Commodity exchange, gift exchange, language and unilateral gift giving continue to co exist however, and reciprocally influence each other. They are difficult to disentangle. By giving attention to unilateral gift giving we can uncover it in many areas where it is called something else or where it is mixed in with exchange.

Marx believed the capitalists' profit came from surplus value, the part of the value of labor not covered by the workers' salary. This unpaid labor can be considered a (leveraged) gift from the worker to the capitalist. Recognizing the gift element in profit reveals that the gift

is the motivating element of the whole system. The exchange economy is sustained by gifts in other ways. The housewife's free labor is a gift to the market system. It has been calculated that if house work were monetized some 40% would have to be added to the GNP in the US, more in some other countries. This unilateral gift is transitive, passing through the household and the salaried worker to the capitalist, giving value to the system itself, and providing its validation.

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

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

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

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

(1) Karl Marx, 1973 *Grundrisse*, tr. Martin Nicolaus. Vintage Books, New York. pp.90-94

(2) Nancy Chodorow, 1978, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, University of California Press, Berkeley. See also William Pollack, 1998, *Real Boys*, Random House, New York.

(3) Karl Marx, 1930. *Capital in Two Volumes: Volume One*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.p.77.

- (4) David D. Gilmore, 1990, *Manhood in the Making*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
- (5) Genevieve Vaughan, 1997, *For-Giving, a Feminist Criticism of Exchange*, Austin, Texas, Plain View Press.
- (6) Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx. 1964. *The German Ideology*. Progress Publishers, Moscow, p.21.
- (7) Maurice Godelier, 1996. *L'enigme du don*. Librairie Artheme Fayard.