

Athanos
Semiotica, Filosofia, Arte, Letteratura

Serie annuale del Dipartimento di Pratiche Linguistiche e Analisi di Testi
Sezione di Filosofia e Scienze del Linguaggio
Diretta da Augusto Ponzio

anno XV, nuova serie, n. 8, 2004

Alle spese di pubblicazione di questo fascicolo ha partecipato con un contributo
l'Università di Bari

Dipartimento di Pratiche Linguistiche e Analisi dei Testi
Sezione di Filosofia e Scienze del Linguaggio
Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere
Via Garruba 6, 70122 Bari
Tel. e fax 0805717460



Meltemi editore
via Merulana 38, 00185 Roma
tel. 064741063 - fax 064741407
www.meltemieditore.it
info@meltemieditore.it

THE GIFT, IL DONO

A feminist analysis

a cura di Genevieve Vaughan

- p. 5 *Presentazione/Presentation*
- 7 Genevieve Vaughan (USA, Italy) *Come Introduzione. L'economia del dono*
- 11 Genevieve Vaughan (USA, Italy) *A brief introduction. The gift economy*
- 15 Genevieve Vaughan (USA, Italy) *Gift giving and exchange: genders are economic identities, and economies are based on gender*
- 39 Kaarina Kailo (Finland) *Giving back to the gift paradigm: another worldview is possible*
- 69 Heide Göttner-Abendroth (Germany) *Matriarchal society: definition and theory*
- 81 Rauna Kuokkanen (Finland, Canada) *The gift as a worldview in indigenous thought*
- 97 Eila Estola (Finland) *Education as a gift*
- 107 Bhanumathi Natarajan (India, Norway) *Biodiversity and traditional knowledge: perspectives for a gift economy*
- 117 Hildur Ve (Norway) *Gracias a la Vida: on the paradigm of a gift economy*
- 133 Susan Bright (USA) *The gift*
- 135 Mari Lahtinen (Finland) *Legitimacy of nursing and caring in Max Weber's frame of reference*
- 143 Mechthild Hart (Germany, USA) *Transnational feminist politics: being at home in the world*

- 161 Ana Isla (Peru, Canada) *Dispossessing the local commons by credit: the struggle to reclaim them*
- 179 Susan Petrilli (Australia, Italy) *Gift-giving, mother-sense and subjectivity in Victoria Welby. A study in semioethics*
- 199 First insert: Visual Images of gift giving by Liliana Wilson (Chile, USA)
- 203 Paola Melchiori (Italy) *Insights on the gift and the insight of the gift*
- 211 Susan Lee Solar and Susan Bright (USA) *Reconciliation: forgiving and healing instead of endless cycles of retaliation*
- 221 Rokeya Begum (Bangladesh) *On the feminism of the gift economy*
- 227 Frieda Werden (USA, Canada) *Radio: gifts of sound*
- 249 María Suárez (Puerto Rico, Costa Rica) *Gift giving in the Net*
- 259 Corinne Kumar (India, Tunisia) *Our gifts are our stories: towards a new imaginary*
- 281 Assetou Madeleine Auditore (Ivory Coast, Italy, Australia) *For the children of the world: let's do something, soon!*
- 283 Linda Christiansen-Ruffman (USA, Canada) *The gift economy in Atlantic Canada: reflections of a feminist sociologist*
- 291 Second insert: Visual Images of gift giving by Liliana Wilson (Chile, USA)
- 297 Lee Ann LaBar (USA) *Stonehaven ranch: a project of the foundation for a compassionate society*
- 301 Jutta Ried (Germany) *The gift economy in my life*
- 309 Leslene Della Madre (USA) *The gift of giving*
- 313 Norma Fernandez (Argentina) *The cries of silence*
- 331 Biographical Notes

Questa raccolta di articoli è il prodotto di un network internazionale di donne che abbracciano, in un modo o nell'altro, l'idea della logica del dono come base di un mutamento di paradigma per il cambiamento sociale. Molte delle donne si sono conosciute, in un primo momento, al convegno tenutosi all'università femminista di Loten in Norvegia nel 2001. Al convegno, organizzato dalla norvegese Berit As e dall'italiana Paola Melchiori, sono state invitate donne dal sud e dal nord per condividere le loro esperienze e le loro idee di cambiamento. Molte di loro erano interessate all'idea dell'economia del dono e diventarono il fulcro di un network che da allora si è incontrato e ha tenuto seminari in diversi luoghi del mondo, e in diverse occasioni, comprese quelle dei Forum Sociali Mondiali in Brasile e in India.

La pratica del dono esiste in molti luoghi ma viene resa invisibile dal capitalismo patriarcale. Essa si esprime nelle strutture economiche delle culture indigene. All'interno del capitalismo, essa è visibile in alcuni fenomeni di vasta scala quali il lavoro domestico gratuito delle donne e le rimesse inviate dagli immigrati alle loro famiglie nei paesi di origine. È possibile anche, ed in alcuni di questi articoli se ne fa l'ipotesi, che la pratica del dono sia la base della comunicazione. Lo scambio, cioè dare per rice-

This collection of articles is the product of an international network of women who embrace in one way or another the idea of the logic of gift giving as the basis of a paradigm shift for social change. Many of the women first met each other at a meeting at the Feminist University in Loten, Norway in 2001. The meeting, which was organized by Norwegian Berit As and Italian Paola Melchiori, brought together women from South and North to share their experiences and ideas for change. Many of the women there were interested in the idea of the gift economy and became the core of a network which has since met and given presentations in numerous places around the world, including workshops at the World Social Forums in Brazil and India.

Gift giving exists in many places but is made invisible by Patriarchal Capitalism. It has structured viable economies in indigenous cultures. Inside Capitalism it can be seen in such large-scale phenomena as women's free housework, and the remittances sent by immigrants to their families in their home countries. A case can be made that gift giving is the basis of communication. Exchange, giving in order to receive a quantitative equivalent, is its determined opposite.

The logic of gift giving forms the basis of a paradigm that is radically different from the

vere un'equivalente quantitativo, ne è l'esatto opposto.

La logica del donare forma la base di un paradigma che è radicalmente diverso dalla visione del mondo basata sulla logica dello scambio. Il vecchio/nuovo paradigma, sebbene non sia riconosciuto, è già ampiamente diffuso e potrebbe essere la base di un'organizzazione sociale migliore.

È appropriata a questa raccolta di articoli, che è espressione del movimento internazionale delle donne, la pubblicazione come volume della rivista *Athantor* in inglese in Italia, con l'aiuto di Augusto Ponzio e Susan Petrilli dell'Università di Bari. Le autrici porgono i loro sentiti ringraziamenti per il dono di ospitalità che le ha accolte in queste pagine. Gli articoli presenti in questa edizione di *Athantor* e il fatto stesso della loro pubblicazione sono esempi della pratica del dono, collettiva e collaborativa, di cui c'è bisogno per creare un mondo migliore.

worldview based on the logic of exchange. The new/old paradigm, though unrecognized, is already widespread and could be the basis of a better way of organizing society.

It is fitting that this collection of articles, which is an expression of the international women's movement, is published as a volume of *Athantor* in English in Italy, with the help of Augusto Ponzio and Susan Petrilli of the University of Bari. The authors extend their heartfelt thanks for the gift of hospitality that has welcomed them to these pages. The articles in this issue of *Athantor* and the very fact of its publication are examples of the collective and collaborative gift giving that are needed to make a better world.

Oggi nel mondo coesistono due paradigmi economici di base, logicamente contraddittori ma anche complementari. Uno è visibile, l'altro invisibile; uno fortemente apprezzato, l'altro sottovalutato. L'uno è collegato con gli uomini, l'altro con le donne. Quello che dobbiamo fare è dare valore a quello collegato con noi donne per causare uno spostamento fondamentale dei valori con cui gestiamo le nostre vite e le nostre politiche.

Il mio primo approccio all'idea del dono, come principio economico di base e come principio di vita, è stato quando lavoravo sul linguaggio e la comunicazione. Più tardi, come femminista, ho capito che il mio lavoro domestico gratuito e il mio lavoro di madre nel crescere i figli era in effetti un dono, e che le donne di tutto il mondo lo praticano.

L'attuale sistema economico, che dicono sia naturale e troppo diffuso per poter essere cambiato, si basa su una semplice operazione a cui gli individui partecipano a più livelli e in momenti diversi. Questa operazione è lo scambio, che si può descrivere come un dare per ricevere. La motivazione che sta alla base dello scambio è egocentrica, poiché ciò che è dato ritorna sotto altra forma al donatore per soddisfare i propri bisogni: soddisfare i bisogni altrui è un mezzo per soddisfare il proprio bisogno. Lo scambio impone l'identificazione delle cose scambiate, come pure la loro misurazione e la dichiarazione della loro equivalenza in modo da soddisfare il criterio che nessuno di coloro che scambiano dia di più di ciò che riceve. Quindi lo scambio richiede più visibilità; attrae l'attenzione, sebbene sia praticato tanto spesso che la sua visibilità è diventata un luogo comune. Il denaro entra nello scambio prendendo il posto dei prodotti e ne riflette la loro valutazione quantitativa.

Quella che sembrerebbe una semplice interazione umana, lo scambio, dato che viene operata così spesso, diventa una sorta di archetipo o di calamita per altre interazioni umane, rendendo se stesso – e qualsiasi cosa gli assomigli – apparentemente normale, mentre tutto il resto è follia. Per esempio, si parla di scambio d'amore, di conversazioni, sguardi, favori, idee.

Ma c'è anche un certo tipo di somiglianza tra lo scambio e la definizione linguistica: la definizione opera una mediazione stabilendo se un concetto appartenga o meno ad una determinata categoria, così come, mediante la monetizzazione di una determinata attività, se ne definisce l'appartenenza o meno alla categoria del lavoro. La stessa visibilità del-

* Offro la traduzione di questo articolo, pubblicato in inglese in *Ms.Magazine* nel 1990, come breve introduzione per i lettori italiani.

lo scambio è auto-confermativa, mentre altri tipi di interazione sono rese invisibili o inferiori per contrasto o per descrizione negativa. Ciò che è invisibile sembra essere senza valore, mentre ciò che è visibile viene identificato con lo scambio che si riferisce ad un certo tipo di valore quantitativo. Inoltre, dato che viene asserita un'equivalenza tra ciò che diamo e ciò che riceviamo, sembra che chiunque possieda di più abbia prodotto altrettanto o dato altrettanto e valga, quindi, in qualche modo, di più di quelli che possiedono meno. Lo scambio mette al primo posto l'ego e gli permette di crescere e svilupparsi in modi che enfatizzano modelli di comportamento competitivo ("prima io") e gerarchico. Questo ego non fa intrinsecamente parte dell'essere umano ma è un prodotto sociale derivante dal tipo di interazioni umane con cui è collegato.

Il paradigma alternativo, che è nascosto – o quantomeno mal identificato – è quello del prendersi cura dell'altro (*nurturing*) ed è orientato verso l'altro (*other-oriented*). Esso continua ad esistere perché si basa sulla natura degli infanti, che sono dipendenti ed incapaci di ripagare il donatore. Se i loro bisogni non fossero soddisfatti unilateralmente, essi soffrirebbero e morirebbero. La società ha attribuito il ruolo di curatrici a noi donne poiché diamo loro la vita e abbiamo il latte per nutrirli.

Poiché una grande percentuale di donne si prende cura dei bambini, esse sono portate ad avere un'esperienza che va al di là dello scambio. Ciò richiede un orientamento verso l'interesse per l'altro. I premi e le punizioni coinvolti in questa relazione hanno a che fare con il benessere dell'altro. La nostra soddisfazione ci viene dalla sua crescita e felicità e non solo dalla nostra. Nel migliore dei casi, ciò non comporta nemmeno il nostro impoverimento o sfruttamento. Dove c'è abbastanza, noi possiamo nutrire gli altri abbondantemente. Il problema è che di solito siamo in presenza di scarsità di risorse, la quale viene creata artificialmente dal sistema per poter mantenere il controllo, così che l'orientamento verso l'altro diventa difficile e ci esaurisce. Di fatto lo scambio impone uno stato di scarsità, perché, se i bisogni fossero abbondantemente soddisfatti, nessuno sarebbe costretto a rinunciare a qualcosa per poter ricevere ciò di cui ha bisogno.

Si dice che attualmente la terra produca abbastanza risorse per nutrire tutti abbondantemente. Tuttavia ciò non può essere fatto sulla base del paradigma dello scambio. Ma è vero che neanche il paradigma dello scambio e l'egocentrismo che esso sostiene potrebbero continuare in una situazione di abbondanza e libero dono. Ecco perché è stata creata la scarsità a livello mondiale con le spese per gli armamenti ed altro spreco di risorse: 17 miliardi di dollari darebbero da mangiare all'intera popolazione della Terra per un anno, mentre nel mondo sprechiamo questa somma ogni settimana per spese militari, creando così la scarsità necessaria perché possa sopravvivere e convalidarsi il paradigma dello scambio.

Ma se noi identifichiamo il paradigma del dono con il modo di essere della donna, vediamo che esso è già diffuso, poiché le donne costituiscono la maggioranza della popolazione. Anche molti uomini in qualche misura praticano il paradigma del dono. Nelle economie non capitalistiche, come le economie indigene, si trovano spesso importanti pratiche di dono e varie ed importanti leadership femminili.

Per esempio, io credo che molti dei conflitti tra donne e uomini in cui sembra trattarsi di differenze personali, in realtà riguardino differenze del paradigma che usiamo come base del nostro comportamento. Le donne criticano l'egocentrismo degli uomini e gli uomini dicono al-

le donne che non hanno il senso della realtà e che sono troppo generose. Ognuno cerca di convincere l'altro a seguire i propri valori. Di recente molte donne hanno cominciato a seguire il paradigma dello scambio, cosa che ha il vantaggio immediato di liberarle dalla bieca servitù economica – ed anche il vantaggio psicologico che è dato dalla monetizzazione che definisce la loro come un'attività di valore. Ma la servitù stessa è causata dal paradigma dello scambio.

Quando le persone passano da un paradigma all'altro, resta probabilmente un residuo del paradigma precedente, sicché le donne che intraprendono lo scambio spesso continuano a prendersi cura dell'altro, mentre gli uomini che cominciano a praticare il dono restano maggiormente egocentrici. Ciò è ritrovabile nel caso delle religioni, nelle quali è l'uomo a legiferare sull'orientamento verso l'altro, spesso seguendo il paradigma dello scambio, ed escludendo e squalificando le donne. Infatti, essi fanno apparire l'altruismo così santo da diventare impraticabile per i più (mentre ignorano che esso è spesso la norma per le donne). Un caso analogo è la sindrome della madonna-puttana, in cui la donna è sopravvalutata o sottovalutata, adorata o disprezzata. L'altruismo viene fatto risultare fuori dalla nostra portata, e spesso sembra comportare un sacrificio di sé (per via della scarsità prodotta dall'economia dello scambio), oppure viene visto come uno spreco; le religioni patriarcali predicano la carità in cambio della salvezza dell'anima.

Il dono che viene dall'egocentrismo dello scambio non funziona, come si può vedere al livello degli aiuti tra nazioni. Ci sono obblighi imposti dalle nazioni donatrici che depauperizzano le nazioni riceventi. Un altro aspetto del conflitto tra paradigmi è che il lavoro domestico o altro lavoro non-monetizzato di donne viene visto come inferiore o come non-lavoro; valorizzarlo sovverte il paradigma dello scambio. Forse il lavoro delle donne viene pagato di meno per mantenerle in uno stato di dono depauperato. Ciò che occorre fare non è pagare di più il lavoro alle donne, ma cambiare totalmente i valori, con la conseguente squalificazione della monetizzazione e dello scambio.

Ma in che modo un paradigma non-competitivo e di cura può competere con un paradigma competitivo? Esso è sempre svantaggiato perché la competizione non è un suo valore, né la sua motivazione. Tuttavia è difficile *non* competere senza perdere, convalidando così l'istanza dell'altro. Un altro grande problema consiste nel fatto che se la pratica di soddisfare un bisogno è gratuita, non si dovrebbe ricorrere ad un suo riconoscimento. Ma proprio non richiedendone il riconoscimento, le donne continuano esse stesse ad ignorare il carattere paradigmatico delle loro azioni e dei loro valori.

È chiaro che il paradigma egocentrico è pernicioso. Il suo risultato è il potere dei pochi ed il depauperamento, lo sfruttamento, la morte e l'invisibilità dei più. Dato che l'ego è un prodotto sociale, in qualche modo artificiale, esso deve essere continuamente ricreato e confermato. Ciò può essere fatto anche attraverso la violenza contro l'altro, inclusa la violenza sessuale. Chiunque sia nella posizione di altro viene ignorato, negato, escluso e degradato per confermare la superiorità e l'identità degli ego dominanti. Vorrei evitare qualsiasi discorso morale su questo punto (infatti, io vedo il senso di colpa come scambio interiorizzato da parte di chi si prepara a ripagare per l'errore commesso) e considerare semplicemente i problemi come conseguenze logiche e psicologiche dei paradigmi. La vendetta e la giustizia impongono una resa dei conti. Ma noi abbiamo bisogno di bontà e cura nei confronti dell'altro. Quando troviamo che l'ottantacinque per cento dei carcerati sono stati vittime

di abusi subiti dai bambini, dobbiamo capire che la vera questione non è la giustizia. Come la carità, anche la giustizia rende umano lo scambio quanto basta per non farlo cambiare. Abbiamo bisogno di un mondo basato sul dare e sul perdonare, non sulla retribuzione.

A questo punto sembra importante creare strutture di transizione nelle quali la pratica del dare possa essere valorizzata. Strategie come, ad esempio, il commercio per una giusta causa (*cause-related marketing*) nel quale i profitti vengono devoluti a progetti per il cambiamento sociale per soddisfare bisogni, impiegano lo scambio per donare. Anche il movimento dei donatori per il cambiamento sociale valorizza il donare, specialmente quando esso proviene da un modello di abbondanza piuttosto che da un modello di scarsità. Ma anche tutte le persone dei movimenti per la pace, il femminismo, la cura e la terapia, che dedicano il loro tempo e le loro energie a soddisfare bisogni umani e sociali valorizzano il dono. Stiamo facendo ciò che è giusto ma non sappiamo perché. Talvolta screditiamo l'orientamento verso l'altro mentre lo stiamo praticando, perché il modello dello scambio è assai radicato e forte. Abbiamo bisogno di dare i nostri soldi, il nostro tempo e le nostre attenzioni al cambiamento di valori e ad alternative economiche, nuove o tradizionali, che non dipendano dallo scambio e dal mercato. Le donne devono capire che i loro valori e le loro energie sono importanti anche al di fuori della famiglia e non solo al suo interno. I problemi sociali sono essi stessi bisogni che noi dobbiamo soddisfare. Il nostro orientamento verso l'altro deve diventare la norma.

Allora il sogno antico che i potenti depongano le armi e i ricchi rinuncino ai loro beni potrebbe avverarsi, sotto la guida delle donne del mondo. Per esempio, possiamo muoverci all'interno del "primo mondo" nel senso del perdonare il debito del "terzo mondo". Richiamo la vostra attenzione sulla parola *per-donare*.

Traduzione di Amelia Rossi-Landi

Two basic economic paradigms coexist in the world today. They are logically contradictory, but also complementary. One is visible, the other invisible; one highly valued, the other undervalued. One is connected with men; the other with women. What we need to do is validate the one connected with women, causing a basic shift in the values by which we direct our lives and policies.

I first approached the idea of giving as a basic economic and life principle when I was doing work on language and communication. Later, as a feminist, I realized that in my free homemaking and child-rearing work, I was doing gift labor – as were women worldwide.

The present economic system, which is made to seem natural and too widespread to change, is based upon a simple operation in which individuals participate at many different levels and at many different times. This operation is exchange, which can be described as giving in order to receive. The motivation is self-oriented since what is given returns under a different form to the giver to satisfy her or his need. The satisfaction of the need of the other person is a means to the satisfaction of one's own need. Exchange requires identification of the things exchanged, as well as their measurement and an assertion of their equivalence to the satisfaction of the exchangers that neither is giving more than she or he is receiving. It therefore requires visibility, attracting attention even though it is done so often that the visibility is commonplace. Money enters the exchange, taking the place of products reflecting their quantitative evaluation.

This seemingly simple human interaction of exchange, since it is done so often, becomes a sort of archetype or magnet for other human interactions, making itself – and whatever looks like it – seem normal, while anything else is crazy. For example, we talk about exchanges of love, conversations, glances, favors, ideas.

There is also a different type of similarity of exchange to linguistic definition. The definition mediates whether or not a concept belongs to a certain category, just as monetization of activity mediates its belonging to the category of work or not. The very visibility of exchange is self-confirming, while other kinds of interchange are rendered invisible or inferior by contrast or negative description. What is invisible seems to be valueless, while what is visible is identified with exchange, which is concerned with a certain kind of quantitative

value. Besides, since there is an equivalence asserted between what we give and what we receive, it seems that whoever has a lot has produced a lot or given a lot, and is, therefore, somehow more than whoever has less. Exchange puts the ego first and allows it to grow and develop in ways that emphasize me-first competitive and hierarchical behavior patterns. This ego is not an intrinsic part of the human being, but is a social product coming from the kinds of human interaction it is involved in.

The alternative paradigm, which is hidden – or at least misidentified – is nurturing and generally other-oriented. It continues to exist because it has a basis in the nature of infants; they are dependent and incapable of giving back to the giver. If their needs are not satisfied unilaterally by the giver, they will suffer and die. Society has allocated the caretaking role to women since we bear the children and have the milk to nourish them.

Since a large percentage of women nurture babies, we are directed toward having an experience outside exchange. This requires orientation toward interest in the other. The rewards and punishments involved have to do with the well-being of the other. Our satisfaction comes from her or his growth or happiness, not just from our own. In the best case, this does not require the impoverishment or depletion of ourselves either. Where there is enough, we can abundantly nurture others. The problem is that scarcity is usually the case, artificially created in order to maintain control, so that other-orientation becomes difficult and self-depleting. In fact, exchange requires scarcity because, if needs are abundantly satisfied, no one is constrained to give up anything in order to receive what they need.

It is said that the earth produces enough at the present time to feed everyone abundantly. However, this cannot be done on the basis of the exchange paradigm. Nor can the exchange paradigm or the kind of dominant ego it fosters continue in a situation of abundance and free giving. That is why scarcity has been created on a worldwide scale by armaments spending and other wastes of resources: \$17 billion would feed everyone on earth for a year and we spend it worldwide every week on the military, thus creating the scarcity necessary for the exchange paradigm to survive and continue to validate itself.

If we identify the gift paradigm with women's way, we see that it is already widespread, since women are the majority of the population. Many men practice it to some extent also. Non capitalistic economies, such as native economies, often have major gift-giving practices and various important kinds of women's leadership.

I believe, for example, that many of the conflicts between women and men that seem like personal differences are really differences in the paradigm we are using as the basis for our behavior. Women criticize men's big egos and men criticize women as being unrealistic, soft-touch, bleeding hearts. Each tries to convince the other to follow his or her values. Recently, many women have begun to follow the exchange paradigm, which has the immediate advantage of liberating them from grim economic servitude – and the psychological advantage that monetization defines their activity as valuable. But the servitude itself is caused by the exchange paradigm.

As people change from one paradigm to the other, there is probably some holdover of the previous paradigm, so that women who take on exchange often remain nurturing while men who take on giving remain more ego-oriented. I see this in the case of religions, in

which men legislate other-orientation, often according to exchange, excluding and disqualifying women. Indeed, they make altruism seem so saintly that it is impractical for the many (while ignoring that it is often the norm for women). This is like the madonna-whore syndrome, where the woman is either over- or undervalued, worshiped or despised. Altruism is made to seem above our reach, often with a self-sacrificing side (because of the scarcity produced by the exchange economy), or it is seen as wasteful, spendthrift; charity is given by patriarchal religions in exchange for the soul.

The gift giving done by the big exchange-ego does not work, as we have seen on the scale of aid between nations. There are strings attached by the donor country, which pauperize the recipients. Another aspect of the conflict of paradigms is that housework or other unmonetized women's labor is seen as inferior, or non-work: valuing it is subversive to the exchange paradigm. Perhaps women's labor is paid less than men's to maintain it in a disempowered gift stance. What we need to do is not to pay women's labor more, but to change the values altogether, eventually disqualifying monetization and exchange.

How can a noncompetitive, nurturing paradigm compete with a competitive one? It is always at a disadvantage because competition is not its motivation or its value. Yet it is difficult to *not* compete without losing, thereby validating the other's stance. Another major problem is that if satisfying a need is free, one should not require recognition for it. But by not requiring recognition, women have themselves remained unconscious of the paradigm character of their actions and values.

Yet clearly the ego-oriented paradigm is pernicious. It results in the empowerment of the few and the disempowerment, depletion, death, and invisibility of the many. Since the ego is a social product, artificial in some ways, it needs to be continually re-created and confirmed. This can also be done by violence against the other, including sexual violence. Anyone in the position of the other is ignored, denied, excluded, degraded to confirm the superiority and identity of the dominant egos. I would like to avoid any moral discourse on this point (in fact, I see guilt as internalized exchange, preparing to pay back for the wrong one has done) and simply see the problems as logical and psychological consequences of the paradigms. Vengeance and justice require a balance of accounts. But we need kindness and nurturing. When we find that 85 percent of people in prison have been abused as children, we must realize justice is not the issue. Like charity, justice humanizes the exchange just enough to keep it from changing. We need a world based on giving and for giving, not retribution.

At this point, it seems that it is important to create transitional structures by which giving can be validated. Such strategies as cause-related marketing, where profits are given to social change projects to satisfy needs, use exchange for giving. The social change funding movement also empowers giving, especially when it comes from an abundance rather than a scarcity model. But so do all the people in the peace, feminist, healing, and therapy movements who devote their time and energy to satisfying human and social needs. We are doing the right thing, but we don't know why. Sometimes, we even disparage other-orientation while we are practicing it, because the exchange model is so pervasive and strong. We need to give our money, time, and attention to the change in values, and both new and traditional economic alternatives not dependent on exchange and the market.

Women need to realize that our values and energies are important outside the family as well as inside. Social problems are themselves needs that we must satisfy. Our other-orientation must become the norm.

Then the ancient dream that the powerful will lay down their arms and the rich their goods might come true, led by women of the world. We can, for example, move within the “first world” to forgive the “third world” debt. I call your attention to the word *for-give*.

The circumstances of my life brought me to begin thinking about communication as based on gift giving as early as the 1970's. In 1963 as a young woman I married the Italian philosopher, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi and moved to Italy from Texas (USA). The following year he was invited by a group of his colleagues to write about language as seen through the lens of Marx's analysis of the commodity and money in *Capital*. He developed a theory along those lines, which can be seen, in his books, *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato (Language as labor and trade)* (1968) and *Linguistics and Economics* (1974). I was completely fascinated by this project and spent a lot of time throughout those years trying to fit the pieces of the complex puzzle together. For me it was as if language and exchange (trade, the market) were in some ways really the same thing – but some of the pieces just didn't fit. There was a sense of sharing and cooperation, a kind of life-enhancing creativity in language that was just absent from most commercial relations as I understood them. During those years I gave birth to our three daughters and was taking care of them. Because I had been concentrating on the comparison between language and exchange I could not avoid noticing that they were learning to talk long before they learned about exchange for money and before they were doing anything that might be called work. Maybe, I thought, it is language that comes first in society and exchange derives from language. It seemed improbable that exchange could have made the same kind of fundamental contribution to our becoming and being human that language did. I knew that the indigenous peoples of the Americas had not had money or markets as such before the European conquest, yet they certainly spoke. Meanwhile I tried not to manipulate my children, or anybody else because that was antithetical to the way I thought human relations should be. The kind of – if you do this, I will do what you want – exchange, seemed to me to be a negative way to behave.

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

I spent two years in the U.S. in the early 70's with my children, and used the free time I had there, to write and think about language and communication. From the work I did then I published two essays in semiotics journals. The first was "Communication and exchange"(1980) where I developed the idea of communicative need, and described words as the verbal elements people use for communicative need-satisfaction. Money then appeared to be a kind of materialized word, used to satisfy the peculiar communicative need that arises from the mutually exclusive relations of private property. The second essay was "Saussure and Vygotsky via Marx" (1981). I had read L. S. Vygotsky (1962 [1934]) and linked his idea of abstract concept formation with Marx's idea of money as the general equivalent. In Vygotsky's experiment any item of a set could be taken as the exemplar for the concept, but it had to be held constant or the concept did not develop as such. If the exemplar varied, the abstraction would be incomplete and the relevant common qualities would not be separated from the irrelevant qualities. I realized that the general equivalent, money could be understood as the exemplar for the abstraction of the concept of value in the market. Money measures the "common quality" of exchange value¹ in commodities and leaves aside as irrelevant whatever does not have that quality. Whatever is not commodified does not have that quality and thus appears to be irrelevant to the market, outside its "concept".

Although I had read Malinowsky (1922) and Mauss (1990 [1925]) as a student many years earlier, I did not immediately see the continuity between gift giving and communication, perhaps because the term used to describe the process in indigenous cultures was gift "*exchange*" and I had made the distinction between exchange and unilateral need satisfaction. However I remember that by 1978 I had made the connection between communication and the gift giving of indigenous peoples. I also realized at the time that market bias was so strong that everyone, including anthropologists, used the term "exchange" without questioning it². There could be a different perspective though, I thought. If communication was based on gift giving, maybe societies that did not have markets, used gift giving for communication. Then maybe exchange and markets could be seen as altered gift giving, altered communication.

In that year also I encountered another important idea, which redirected my thinking. After my divorce from Rossi-Landi, I began going to a feminist consciousness raising group. There I found out that women's free work in the home is an enormous unrecognized contribution that women are giving, both to their families and to the economy as a whole³. Part of that work of course is childcare, the free services that mothers give to children on a daily basis. Satisfying another's communicative need was that kind of thing, I realized, a unilateral gift that, even without an immediate counterpart, establishes a human relation. Even in dialogue, what is happening is not exchange but turntaking in giving unilateral gifts. I speak and you understand what I say, whether or not you reply.

Ferruccio had talked about a kind of inevitability of understanding the verbal products that come ungarbled to one's healthy ears and brain, if one knows the language. It seemed clear to me that if it is inevitable that others understand our words, our giving our words to others and their receiving them will not be contingent upon a reply. If there is a reply, it is couched in the same unilateral gift logic as the previous speaker's words. Even questions, which are asked in order to receive a reply, are verbal products that are given and received

as such, unconditionally. That is, they are understood anyway even if no reply is actually given. In the market instead, one does not give up one's product except in exchange for money. Both seller and buyer necessarily participate in the *do ut des* self-reflecting and contingent logic of exchange.

As the years have passed since the 60's when I first began thinking about all of this, it has become more important than ever to distinguish communication from exchange, and to refuse to see the logic of exchange as the basic human logic. In fact I think that as a society we have believed acritically in the fundamental value of the logic of exchange and we have consequently embraced and nurtured an economic system that is extending itself parasitically over the planet, feeding on the unilateral gifts of all. These are unilateral gifts of tradition, of culture, of nature, of care and of love as well as the forced or leveraged unilateral gifts imposed by exploitation, the gifts of cheap or free labor. If we look at exchange as the basic human logic, those who do it best will seem to be the most "human". Conversely, those who do not do it well, or do not succeed in the market, will seem to be "defective", less human⁴ and therefore more exploitable. In Capitalism the values of Patriarchy – competition, hierarchy, domination – have been united with the values of the market. In order to understand this merger and justify some startling similarities in what are usually considered widely different areas, we need to look beyond both Capitalism and Patriarchy to underlying patterns.

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

This view of the "top" as the exemplar position allows us to see Patriarchy and exchange as embedded not in our brains or chemistry but in our minds and in society, not in something inevitable but in something we can radically change. It allows us to see the problem as our socialization of boys into the male gender in binary opposition to something else: a gift giving process, which is the *human* way⁶. This socialization varies culturally but the problem has arisen particularly intensely with the Euro-American construction of gender,

and its externalization in the economic system of Capitalism. The relation of money, as the exemplar of value, to commodities in the market, is an incarnation of the equivalent position in the concept forming process. This logical structure can extend to all cultures because it is as familiar to them as the way they think. Patriarchy, which puts the father or male leader in the position of exemplar of the human, can infect previously non patriarchal cultures in a similar way⁷.

The exchange paradigm

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

Although Capitalism is now being extensively criticized by the anti globalization movement, a clear and radical alternative has not yet been collectively embraced because the logic of exchange itself has not been identified as problematic. Moreover, the logic of the unilateral gift continues to be unrecognized, discredited, and even sometimes despised. The women’s movement, while decidedly anti Patriarchal, is not in many of its aspects anti Capitalistic. In fact the links between Capitalism and Patriarchy have not been clearly delineated. Instead it appears that only by being absorbed into the work force as persons with economic agency in the system, have women been able to free themselves from domestic slavery⁸, disempowerment and “dependency”. As happens in any situation in which the market takes over a previously free area of the world, causing at least short term improvements for some of the inhabitants, some women who have been effectively absorbed by Capitalism have had an improvement in the level of their lives. They have had an increase in personal freedom but have also become dependent on a market situation that is beyond their control. This state of transition, like the transition from pre Capitalist to Capitalist cultures, gives women a chance to participate in and become conscious of both paradigms⁹. The recognition of a shared gift perspective could link the women’s movement cross-culturally internally. It could also link it externally with movements of indigenous, colonized and ex-

ploited people of both genders who continue to participate consciously or unconsciously in the gift paradigm. This is possible if we can leave aside the biological differences between male and female as the determinants of gender and base solidarity on processes and values coming from economic gender identities.

By recognizing “female” and “male” as economic identities, having to do with the modes of distribution – of gift giving or exchange – we can also look at some cultures as economically ‘female’ and others as economically “male”. The two economic “structures”, gift giving and exchange, give rise to characteristic and distinguishable ideological “superstructures”, which are the value systems and world views that I am calling the gift and the exchange paradigms. That is, the cultures issuing from the practices of gift giving or of exchange have to do respectively with celebration of the other, compassion, and the affirmation of life or on the other hand with subjugation of the other, egotism, competition and the affirmation of “value-free objectivity”. These two cultures co-exist at various levels, and, as I was saying, can also be found within the same person¹⁰. This already complex situation is further complicated by the fact that the two kinds of economic identities are not independent and unrelated but “male”, and especially Patriarchal, economies and cultures are based on the denial and distortion of gift giving and the direction of the flow of gifts towards the dominators. For example, the Global North is now acting as an economic male, attempting to extract the gifts of the South, which it is forcing or manipulating into an economically female position.

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

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