

Genevieve Vaughan

Radically Reinterpreting Who We Are as a Species,

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We are in a time of almost terminal crisis. The contradictions become deeper and more adversarial every day. This can lead us to destroy the planet in the short term through nuclear war, in the longer term through environmental devastation and in the mid term through social insanity and a widespread perversion of 'human' values such that the strong feel justified in massacring the weak backed by oligarchies safely pulling economic and military strings from 'elsewhere'. There are many who think this crisis demonstrates that our species does not deserve to survive. I believe instead that it shows that something is deeply wrong not with the species but with who we think we are as a species.

In fact, we think we are *homo sapiens sapiens*, the knowing beings, who know that they know. This is not true. We do not actually *know* who we are and we don't know that we don't know. Patriarchy, now merged with Capitalism, has blinded us to the fact that we are all, women and men, members of a *maternal* species.

Lacking this common understanding, we are interpreting the world and acting in ways that are contrary to our real shared species identity, which continues to be formed by an underlying biological and cultural blueprint or template that is established through the model of unilateral maternal care in our earliest days. The consequence of the lack of such unilateral care is the death of the child, with the evolutionary consequence that all the surviving members of the human species have had unilateral receiving and giving as their first interactive **model**. Thus we begin life as *homo recipiens and donans* and our basic cognitive and communicative structures are established by our experience at that time. These structures last throughout life and make it possible for us to perform the mothering of vulnerable infants ourselves in our turn, when we are adults. In evolutionary terms our capacity for unilateral giving and receiving provides the basis for the survival of the **unfittest** - our very vulnerable children - while the usual concept of evolution, developed by Darwin emphasizes the competitive survival of the **fittest**, the winners of the battle to survive, a more patriarchal and individualistic approach, that is said to have been inspired by the competition among Capitalist enterprises of Darwin's day .

Thus, as a species-specific capacity, human mothering is the potential basis of a world wide social structure that would be congruent with its other oriented logic and its evolutionary success.

At present, however, bilateral exchange, quid pro quo, which is the principle of the market, logically contradicts and overrides unilateral giving-and-receiving at every turn. The spread and dominance of Capitalism displaces gifting into a separate realm and an inferior dependent position, where the gifts of the many are made to nurture the market. That is, the gifts of free, 'unwaged' work outside the market, of the domestic 'sphere', of surplus labor time of the proletariat inside the market, of low cost natural resources and of the still remaining free gifts of Nature like air and sunlight, all flow together into the profit of capitalist gift-takers. These are called by different names: housework, exploited work, cheap products, but to the capitalist they are free gifts, even money s/he has *made*, gifts of profit that by h/er ingenuity and effort, s/he believes s/he has *earned* ie. that s/he has given to him or her self. The language of the market does not acknowledge unilateral gifting and this constructed blind spot keeps the still existing maternal *systemic presence* subjugated, inaccessible and unknown.

Let's go back to the pre market, pre patriarchal time of every child's life even in Capitalism. This is the time before children understand quid pro quo exchange, an understanding that only begins at around age 3 and develops over childhood into competence in adolescence

The interpersonal neuropsychology of infancy now shows how basic interactive structures in the brain are established epigenetically by the child's experience after birth, and how they are 'sculpted' as s/he grows older by 'pruning', the cell death of neurons in pathways that are not actually stimulated by the child's experience. From this I understand that children's repeated experiences of having needs and receiving appropriate satisfaction of their needs by their motherers, are sculpted *into* the neural pathways and form the basic pattern of their human interaction. I believe that this basic pattern of unilateral receiving and giving lasts throughout life, though it is also varied in many ways some of which, like the interaction of exchange itself, are deeply contradictory, with the consequence that the continued existence and importance of gifting is not recognized. The pattern is very simple: A gives to B and B receives from A. Each participant has to perform h/er part. The giving is not complete if the gift is not received and of course the receiver cannot receive if the gift is not given. This may seem obvious but in practice either side may fail to perform, with significant consequences that show the importance of the actual completion of the interaction, which also has important psychological implications. By giving unilaterally to satisfy the other's needs, the giver implies the receiver's intrinsic value, and this attribution of value potentially enhances the receiver's self esteem. Not giving to satisfy the need may produce the opposite effect.

The care that is necessary for the young child's life: feeding, cleaning, regulating the temperature etc. is given unilaterally by motherer(s) and received unilaterally by the

children. In the early part of life, the child does not and indeed cannot give back an equivalent for what s/he has been given in an exchange of *quid pro quo*.

The trajectory of the gift

As soon as a child is born, s/he receives the gift of air and the care of her mother(ers). Nursing at the breast is the first experience and physical sensation of direct interpersonal giving and receiving and it occurs between mother and baby when each physically experiences the giving and the receiving of the other. The baby feels the mother's giving and her own receiving while the mother feels her own giving and the baby's receiving. Mirror neurons also facilitate each one's knowledge of the experience of the other. This is an original postnatal experience of integration with the other, a kind of merging. Bottle feeding is similar but in that case, experience of the other is felt more through holding and touching, eye contact, pheromones etc. Later, the distance between motherer and child increases when the motherer feeds the child semi-solid food.

I call the bridging of the distance between the giver and the receiver the trajectory of the gift. This trajectory is immediate in breast feeding where gifting is grounded in physical sensation on both sides¹, similar when bottle feeding (without the immediate physical sensation of the mother), and grounded again in the many different activities of care, during which, as the baby grows, each participant can alternately experience the roles of giver and of receiver. The baby also experiences herself in the role of gift when the motherer gives her to someone else to hold.

In family gatherings babies may be passed around to many. I read about a tribe in Africa where the members would sit in a circle and pass the child around lovingly, each one holding h/er for only a few minutes. The child must have felt h/erself as a gift given again and again.

The experiences of early childhood establish patterns and relations that continue in important ways throughout life. Implications of the value and intrinsic importance of the other are established through giving and receiving that create knowledge of the other and reciprocal self esteem, bringing the individuals and the community together. Giving unilaterally to the other to satisfy h/er need gives value to her (recognizes her intrinsic value) by implication. Passing the gift on to still another implies her value as well. And a syllogism can be identified here - If A gives to B and B gives to C then A gives to C.

¹ A variation on this takes place when the child sucks h/er own fingers, feeling both sides of the activity, though there is not any actual transfer of nurturance.

Passing the gift on, giving it forward , unites the givers and receivers through the implication of each one's intrinsic value by means of the gifting relation to the others and to and through the gift.

Early experiences of the maternal gift economy resonate throughout life and the interpersonal logic of the gift continues to create meaningful relations at many levels. I will talk later about the continuing underlying template or blueprint of gifting that I believe structures much of our later experience.

Unfortunately, as older children and adults in Capitalism, we are all looking through the glasses of an antithetic economy based on *quid pro quo* monetized exchange. Quid pro quo actually contradicts the interpersonal gift value implications of the intrinsic value of the 'other', giving value instead to the products as use values and exchange values as expressed in money. The coexistence of the two economic logics of gift and exchange means that we are living in a divided world made of a domestic sphere and a market sphere.

Moreover, the context of the market economy in which unilateral giving usually has to take place, often make maternal gifting difficult and even self sacrificial because the gifts to be given are not immediately available. They have to come through market mechanisms of previous exchange before they can be given free to the child².

The nuclear family, the lack of community, and the widespread condition of single mothering make it difficult for many mothers to practice the maternal gift economy because, indeed, often no one gives to *them*. Many blame mothering itself for this, but it is actually the capitalist socio-economic *gift-extracting context* in which mothering has to take place that is forcing the mothers to self sacrifice.

Early childhood gifting and its encounter with commodity exchange

I believe that some of the encounters between the market and the gifting interactions that take place in early childhood facilitate the take over of the gift economy by market exchange and patriarchy.

Studying the typical development of children in early childhood, researchers at Harvard have found that as early as 3 - 6 months of age babies begin to engage in mutually imitative social games with their motherers that, using an analogy with tennis, the researchers call 'serve and return'. These games, which are facilitated by mirror

² Of course the mother's ability to produce breast milk also depends on her well being, which depends on products she buys in the market.

neurons, provide the infants with a way of understanding the other by responding to and at least partially repeating what the other is doing.

I believe that this widespread early interactive communicative structure based on giving and receiving can be 'invaded' and 'occupied' by the similar quid pro quo exchange structure later when the child begins to understand and engage in exchange, beginning at around age 3. This makes exchange seem natural and allows economists and philosophers (if they think about it at all) to project the market backwards into infancy, so that it may seem that there is no maternal gift economy and even no communication that is not 'transactional', quid pro quo..

In fact most academic economic thinking that considers early childhood allows us to see the giving and receiving life-sustaining model without recognizing it as such, believing it is only an as yet underdeveloped moment of exchange. My contention is that the maternal gift economy is not only different from exchange but that it establishes basic human relations that continue throughout our lives even when they are later overshadowed, co opted, contradicted and colonized (!) at almost every turn by *quid pro quo* exchange- based relations.

Early childhood takes place in a maternal gift economy because the child *cannot* give back to the motherer an equivalent of what s/he has been given (even if s/he is expected to take care of her parents in their old age, the child does not know it nor does s/he know it if a nanny is being paid to take care of h/er)..

I do not deny that capitalism and patriarchy have created a complex system and that it is necessary to trace capitalism's many developments in order to understand it. However, the simpler beginning of life in the unilateral gift economy and its subsequent contradiction by quid pro quo exchange has not been investigated as such even though the contradiction of gifting and its replacement by the profit (ie gift) - taking market is a watershed change of direction in the individual's life and in the life of society at large. Many consider exchange to be a natural human capacity and to have always existed, I believe that is because they do not recognize the prior existence of the unilateral gifting economy, considering it instinctual or a kind of saintly moral behaviour.

I grew up in the USA during the Red scare, the Macarthy Era, when anti Communism was rampant. In 1963, in my early 20's I married an Italian philosophy professor and moved to Italy where I encountered Marxism and began reading Capital, which was a life-changing experience for me. Then, during a period of about 10 years, I gave birth to our three daughters and spent most of my time doing mothering. I continued to read Marx and Marxist authors along with books on how to do child care.

In the 70's when I encountered the Italian feminist movement and learned about the approach of 'partire da sé ' (starting from oneself), it became clear to me that Marx had left out my experience as a mother and my children's experience as babies and young children. Even my philosopher husband said that what I was doing every day was not work, it was 'activity'.

In fact, Marx's discussion of economics already begins with exchange, with the product seen as use value and exchange value, without any analysis of the maternal gift economy of childhood and the implications of what I am calling 'gift value', the intrinsic value of the receiver, which is implied and attributed by the giver's satisfying the receiver's needs unilaterally. From the point of view of the maternal economy, exchange and the market are *stage two* in contradiction with an invisibilized gifting *stage* that precedes exchange in every life.

This overtaking of a stage one gift economy by a stage two exchange economy is not a one time historical happening, in the individual life or in society. It is ongoing, structural, the way the market functions and the way economists see the market.

In fact the market is second both historically and in individual life. It diametrically contradicts the maternal gift economy and infused by Patriarchy, subjugates it, its principles and its gifts. This can be clearly seen historically in the European invasion and occupation of the Indigenous Americas as well as more recent Colonialism that has created situations in which subjugated countries, continents and hemispheres now give unilaterally to Patriarchal Capitalist countries, international markets, and financial enterprises.

The maternal economy and the onset of patriarchy and exchange

The economy of (mostly female) motherers and infants is not *quid pro quo* but it attributes intrinsic value to the receiver by satisfying h/er needs directly. Among adults it also attributes value to the community by satisfying group needs. The giver too has value as a supporter of life. Though pathologies can occur, the model of the motherer, unilateral recognizer of and appropriate responder to the needs of the child (even if imperfect), is available for assimilation and imitation not only by all children but also by the mature members of the community.

In contrast, in Patriarchy the boy learns that he is in a different gender category from his female mother and so has to find a different model.

I just described above how the mother-child interaction of 'serve and return' can be invaded and occupied by *quid pro quo* exchange, making exchange seem natural and overshadowing or cancelling the gift interaction and its value implications. I believe a similar situation occurs in Patriarchy when a boy child realizes he has a different model and is in a different gender category from his gift giving mother. He has to identify

himself with a father or other male, who usually does not participate directly with him in the life-sustaining maternal gift economy.

Like the *quid pro quo* relation that invades the game of serve and return, making the game seem to be an early example of exchange, the boy's change to a non maternal model for his identity also takes him away from the gifting practice with his mother, who is the model on which he is dependent. In this new male identity, which Patriarchy defines as superior, he understands that he is like his father or other male, and will never be like his giftgiving mother. He does find that there is a look-alike and substitute for gifting which is hitting, an action that crosses the interpersonal space like a gift and is made to be received by the other person. However it is not for nurture but for harm and domination.

I believe that the change of category model of the boy from the mother to the father (or other male), is similar to the change of category from a gift to a commodity in exchange that I mentioned above.

I mentioned above how the serve and return game is invaded by exchange, and assimilated to the exchange interaction model. These two false identifications combine to reinforce the privileged construction of Capitalism and Patriarchy and the diminishment of the model of gifting and Matriarchy. This similar but mistaken change of category happens both at the individual level and the level of society, seeming to validate exchange over gifting and males over females, privileging males as more appropriate market actors than females. Instead, it is the market itself that is the problem!!

We could look for the contrast between gift and exchange also in the bigger picture, nationally in the contrast between welfare state and oligarchy and internationally in the contrasting policies of foreign aid versus investment, both of which appear to be more gifting than the control of other nations by war. This kind of investigation could find a place in the discussion of intersectionality.

The model of the motherer, unilateral recognizer of and appropriate responder to the needs of the child, is available for assimilation and imitation by every child in early infancy, though pathologies of behavior can occur when this model is distorted or incomplete. Unfortunately, there can be cases of pathological cruelty towards children by parents, older children, paid caregivers, dysfunctional orphanages and even governments that slaughter 'enemy' children by bombs and starvation as is happening now in Israel's genocide of Gaza (statistics were 50,000 children killed even before Israel's recent bombing and starvation policies after it broke the ceasefire). By not allowing mothering to take place and the gift mode to be established in children's lives, the Israelis backed by the Americans are destroying the gift-web of life, mutilating future generations of Palestinians. Many psychological studies are done on pathological or

incomplete mothering and its effects on children and adults in later life. If this war is the consequence of the Nazi's genocide of the Jews, what will be the consequence of Israel's and the USA's genocide of Palestinians? Rendering mothers impotent to give unilaterally to nurture the lives of their children risks producing a model of depravity for the next generations. It changes our species-being by eliminating the gift relation and gratuitously "giving death".

I think of psychotherapist, Hungarian Jew Gabor Maté, whose mother gave him away as a baby to a woman on the street to save him from the pogroms. She gave him life twice, the second time by giving him to another motherer. Understanding that gift to him of someone else's maternal giving, Maté has become a great giver of psychological understanding and council.

The gift logic as the basic human mode of being and its distortions

In this second part of my talk I want to describe what I consider to be the template of the gift in order to show the continuance of the gift logic and experience as a basic human mode of understanding and engaging with the world. Because in Capitalism the maternal gift economy is underground and our attention is directed not only onto the market, but onto the market of ideas of a philosophy that has excluded maternal thinking for centuries, we do not recognize the gift template that undergirds our thinking and we interpret the world in 'neutral' giftless ways, in terms of bodily life experiences that are to some degree removed from gifting but still maintain its patterns. An example of this would be throwing and catching a ball but there are many others, some of which I will mention later.

My hypothesis is that the patterns of giving and receiving established in early childhood are reused in pan human adult capacities like language (or ball throwing and catching), but seem *sui generis* because we don't recognize the maternal gift economy as their origin.

If we make the effort to recognize the gift economy in the experience of the child and the mother, we can recognize it in the underlying human schema, our 'common template' or 'blueprint' or 'cognitive wiring' but also in the other free/unpaid aspects of the economy: surplus value, unwaged work, low cost products. We may consider these cases of exploitation but they also have a positive aspect for the exploiters/ receivers who get the work, the products and their value free or partly free, as something that to them is a gift. One part of society is nurturing - gifting to - the other and this increases the capitalist receivers' self esteem.

Economists study the economy as market exchange and they exclude the prior, necessarily free, maternal economy so their analysis is always skewed. They start with

step two instead of step one, gifting, which is the step that is necessary for the survival of the species, first by bringing up children, but that continues in all the unpaid gift work that permeates and sustains the market. There are many feminist economists now who do study gift work as care work but their aim is usually to give it a monetary value and bring it into the exchange economy. My alternative is to start the economy (and economics) over again basing it on unilateral maternal gifting and eventually phasing out the market and instating a society that recognizes that we (both men and women) are a maternal species.

Two 'tiers' not two 'spheres'

Bilateral exchange, *quid pro quo*, giving only in order to receive an equivalent or superior value, is the logical contradiction of unilateral giving and receiving. Since in our market-based societies we practice both contradictory economic logics, giving and receiving on the one hand and market exchange on the other, in order to live together, we have developed a two-tiered system, with the unilateral economy unrecognized below and the market exchange economy above in full view. Thus, it is not clear to the viewer that the bottom tier is giving to the top.

The maternal gift economy has been 'disappeared' and distorted in a number of ways. Economists locate it as beside the market in a parallel 'domestic sphere', hiding its much more widespread presence as the tier below and beyond the market, an external context from which free gifts are given to the market tier. These are the gifts of exploitation that I have mentioned, as well as the gifts of the workers themselves, products of the gift labor of their motherers and of the gifts of nature.

Unilateral giving has often been made to seem saintly or godlike, or it has been brutally forced as slavery, or renamed exploitation or manipulated and preyed upon as the province of fools or perhaps seen as nature in the form of the garden of Eden. It has been seen as women's duty in the domestic 'sphere' as opposed to the 'real' economy of the market sphere. Instead, unilateral giving and receiving is very commonplace because it derives from the economic model of our earliest days and we continue to do it in many ways without recognizing it. And we don't recognize it because in our two-tiered economy the bottom tier *gives to* the top tier, the gift economy *gives to* the exchange economy, which dominates it and takes the gifts of nurture and profit from it.

As gifting beings we have adapted to exchange, and we look at the market from the gift perspective in order to know what the exchangers need - our gifts - so that we can exchange with them to give again to those closest to us. As capitalist beings we look at the gift economy from the exchange perspective to see what we can leverage. We give gifted work other names 'surplus labor' 'unwaged work' 'cheap labor', 'cheap products'. These all eliminate the gift aspect. Cheap Nature or free Nature is also not seen as a gift but as another asset or means of production functional to profit.

If we realize that capital itself is made of gifts from the Earth and from the many to the few, and that these gifts are then added to previously accumulated capital making it grow like some quantitative child, we can understand the psychological peculiarity of capitalism as the denial and exploitation of the gift giving maternal economy. Unfortunately, it is a puzzle, a social mechanism, a trap that we are all caught up in now, but we need to solve it by recognizing and naming the maternal economy and practicing it for the good of all, not giving our gifts to the gift-taking capitalist system.

Feminist economists, Marxist and non-Marxist have addressed the problems of women in the economy from the viewpoint of stage two and have tried to get equal pay for equal work as well as wages for housework and economic recognition of the care economy. They or shall I say we, though I am not actually an economist, do not usually stand far enough outside the market paradigm to recognize the maternal gift economy, because, however well intentioned and radical any of us may be, economists are usually employed in what some call the Academic-Military-Industrial-Complex and have to participate competently in a patriarchal intellectual tradition that for centuries has excluded the point of view of the maternal gift economy or has captured it in ethical or religious and symbolic categories.

Many people do not realize that making more women successful in Capitalist Patriarchy does not solve the problem of the exploitation and the capturing of the gifts of billions of other humans who live in other parts of the world (or other parts of town) as well as the gifts of nature, and that this is a large part of what is leading us to this time of planetary and human devastation and tragedy, a worldwide ripping and tearing of the web of life. Nevertheless, I still believe it is possible that feminists who understand the situation can change it from within, joining with their feminist sisters (and brothers) locally and in the Global South and East to quickly cause a necessary worldwide peaceful revolution.

Unfortunately, the branding of maternal feminism as 'essentialist' has slowed down this process. Instead, I am proposing a view of the human species as having not an essence but a common basic template or blueprint that functions through giving and receiving, which we all *learn* by being unilaterally *gifted to* as infants during early epigenesis when the basic neuron connections are being formed and which are strengthened afterwards in our many gifting/gifted interactions.

The *model* of unilateral gifting is necessary for children's survival, and they learn it from the giver. Although we learn exchange later, beginning around 3 years of age and form new neuron connections for that, we do have a relatively long period of time in which to establish the basic gift template before we learn to practice its *quid pro quo* logical contradiction.

The Template

So it is in the period of infancy and early childhood that this human *species experiential and cognitive template* is formed, that we learn to talk and understand, to receive words and to give words to other people who can receive them and to give words to other words in syntax, merging them, making sentences. . And we learn to walk, to create a trajectory by giving ourselves as a gift moving from a starting place to a receiving place. We do this by giving one foot forward to the Earth which receives it, then giving the other foot. We put something on the table and the table receives it. We give the water and the vegetables to the pot and the pot receives them. Then we give heat to the pot, which receives the heat and transmits it to the water and the vegetables and then we give the food to the family who give us their smiles of appreciation.

That is, although we don't recognize it, giving and receiving is *a* or possibly *the* root metaphor or underlying template for a very large part of what we do in life. I mentioned above that there is a kind of veil between the market and the gift economy that does not let us identify gifting as such so we see it in more neutral experiential or abstract terms.

There is a field of study called cognitive linguistics started by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in the 1980's that has brought forward the importance of metaphors for our understanding and view of the world. Some of the most common metaphors, such as 'Path to goal', 'going out of or into a container' and 'source to target', map directly onto giving and receiving and the trajectory of the gift. I believe that the hypothesis of the fundamental importance of giving and receiving lets us see these phrases not mainly as metaphors but as referencing the deep gifting structure of a very large and important part of our human experience.

Finding these correspondences restores an underlying, already interpersonal, meaning-making structure to what seems to be a *sui generis* hodge podge of activities and perceptions. As I suggested above with breast feeding, meaning follows the trajectory of the gift from giver to its grounding in a receiver and the receiver actively elicits the gift.

I believe that the tracing of the basic gift structure answers the objection of essentialism because it displaces the attention from a focus on the duty and moral value of nurture to a practical and mutually interpretable schema of actions in the world, which is practiced not just by motherers but by everyone who began life as a mother's - or motherer's- child. In other words, it is the common template or blueprint of the maternal species, of *homo donans*.

Putting the gift template back into our explanation of the world

As I have been saying, the structure of exchange is different from the structure of gifting and, somewhat like naming, makes meaning based on a *quid pro quo* replacement within a trajectory (giving something to a receiver *for* or *in the place of* something else)

while giving and receiving words **to each other** creates the kind of unification (of words and of concepts) that linguist Noam Chomsky calls the principle of 'merge'.

Recently, I have started imagining concepts as shared mental receivers or receptacles to which we mentally give thoughts and perceptions of a similar kind. As a receiver/receptacle the concept or category or kind has a name (sometimes several names :)). And these category names can sometimes contain other category-receptacles placed in binary opposite relations, which themselves belong to other categories: for example 'good' and 'evil' (morality), big and little (size), more and less (quantity), with important consequences for an item's being placed in (given to) one category or the other. And there can be consequences for transitioning from one to the other as in transitioning from good to evil or vice versa. Ethics or morality is the category- mental receptacle- that receives thinking about the concepts of good and evil, etc.

Recognizing the mental maternal unilateral giving-receiving origin and structure of concepts would have important consequences for our concept of thinking itself as well as for the importance/value we attribute/give to mothering and thus also to the people who do the mothering.

This opens the way to an investigation of thinking as based on gifting: giving our attention to something, perhaps merging that attention with attention to something else, and creating a trajectory towards something else again, towards a receptacle or "conceptacle" where it is 'grounded', received, at least for the moment, provisionally or finally accepted as permanently associated/located there.

Revealing the gift template in many different aspects of human life and seeing it in nature as well (the Earth receives the sunlight through plant photosynthesis for example) removes the idea of nurture as 'essence' and replaces it with an objective social and natural process, a repeatable template that is learned by children through the experience of receiving and giving in early epigenesis because the alternative to experiencing it is the death of the individual child. Thus, it is evolution - natural selection - not metaphysics that has provided our species with this common experiential template.

In capitalism gift economies seem to be primitive - that is because they are based on the maternal model - *prima* means 'before' and gifting does come '*before*', at the beginning of every life. It also comes before the market historically and in terms of so called 'civilization'. The gift economies of indigenous matriarchal people are *prima*-tive and **positive** developments of the maternal gift economy that thrived *before* their logical contradiction by the market took over. Thus, they can be desperately needed models for us in these times of traumatic and perhaps terminal Capitalism.

What to do now

We need to start trying to see, normalize and validate gifting everywhere it exists. Free gifts can have a very positive effect on the receivers because they are the foundation of early life, and really of life itself. Recognizing them is empowering to ourselves as givers and receivers and empowering to the gift paradigm.

We should identify and question exchange

When exchange takes over in adolescence and/or through colonization, the gift is denied or postponed and the transfer of the product is made conditional on an equal return. This causes a change in purpose from gift giving to gift *taking*.

Suspending the gift's implication of the intrinsic value of the receiver, replacing it with the abstract use value and exchange value of the product and making market exchange the necessary connection for life, is turning us into *homo economicus* who abstractly takes as many gifts as possible in order to prevail over others and occupy the top tier of the two-tier market/gifting construction. This *devolved* species takes from and exploits *homo donans*, the original and still underlying species of the bottom tier that gives unilaterally and creates community. And it is the market with its dominance and displacement of giving that does not let us acknowledge Nature as giver and see the multitude of gifts, the innumerable micro organisms, plants, insects, aquatic and land animals and birds that have evolved to be and to give and receive each others' gifts.

Some first steps

My suggestion of a solution to the crisis we are experiencing is to begin to make the hypothesis of the existence of the maternal gift economy and to find ways of making it visible and validating it. We can also recognize it when we are practicing it and know that it has been there all along - we have just not been naming it because we have all been looking through the glasses of the exchange paradigm. The values of what Marx calls the 'superstructure' of the maternal economy, still exist within us all, though they have been captured in the mental 'receptacles' - concepts - of ethics and religion as 'good and evil', 'right and wrong' and capitalist patriarchal mental receptacles of 'success or failure' by which we seek to control ourselves and each other.

We continue to do this because our underlying maternal giving/receiving economic structure is hidden even from ourselves, discounted and exploited, with the consequence that we cannot access the kind of validation we would have if we knew that our original other-orientated gifting is our species-specific behaviour.

Mothering has been relegated to the background of history but it is brought to light again, reborn with every child. Although it has been exploited, sanctified, misunderstood, ignored, traumatized and blamed, it still holds the key to who we are

and what we must do as a species, especially at this time when Patriarchy and Capitalism are destroying the gift giving planet. All humans already have the template of the maternal economy within us. We can access it to know what to do, what gifts we can give and when.

Matriarchy Now

There are many experiments with gifting in alternative communities and eco villages, but they are not consciously connected with mothering. The well-intentioned, even heroic - women and men who are practicing the gift in these alternative ways need to see the maternal root of what they are already doing and transition towards the matriarchal models that are already there and as revealed in Heide Goettner-Abendroth's work and in this movement of Matriarchy Now

Recognizing the unilateral maternal gift economy as providing the basic templates of human life, allows us to understand quid pro quo market exchange and its parasitic capitalistic developments as the source of our aberrant values and behaviour. This can lead us out of the end-of-the- world situation to which Capitalist Patriarchy has brought us and lead us home to a Matriarchal Future.