ON THE SPIRIT OF THE GIFT

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Le but de cet essai est de proposer l'intégration de deux attitudes épistémologiques à l'égard du don: la sociologie de l'échange et la phénoménologie de l'amour. La théorie occidentale de l'échange est tout d'abord présentée à partir du texte célèbre de Marcel Mauss, *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques* (1924), dans lequel les diverses modalités du don sont perçues par rapport à une échelle de valeurs allant de l'altruisme fonctionnel au simple calcul égocentrique. Sont aussi examinées dans cette perspective, la théorie de l'échange généralisé de Claude Lévi-Strauss et les thèses sociobiologiques de E. O. Wilson concernant la signification de l'altruisme. Le commun dénominateur de ces attitudes épistémologiques est que le phénomène du don y est décrit "objectivement," du point de vue principalement matérialiste et en fonction d'un égocentrisme de base. Cette interprétation est alors comparée à l'approche phénoménologique selon laquelle le don est au contraire appréhendé de l'intérieur, par une intentionnalité et une expérience transpersonnelle qui aboutit à une réalisation existentielle. Cette attitude rejoint le point de vue des cultures et des sagesses orientales dont la compatibilité avec les concepts turnériens de "flux," de "drame rituel," de "totalité" et de "communitas" est soulignée. En conclusion, une théorie intégrative du don est suggérée, théorie dans laquelle à la fois les données sociologiques et les données phénoménologiques seraient prises en considération.

This essay is an exercise in merging two frames of reference: the sociology of exchange and the phenomenology of love. It first presents the modern Western theory of giving as found in the seminal essay by Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1924/1969), where giving is perceived along a scale from functional altruism to ego-centered calculation. Lévi-Strauss's generalizations on exchange theory, as well as E. O. Wilson's explanation of altruism in terms of inclusive fitness, are also examined as parts of this general perspective which approaches the universal social behavior of giving from an objective, and mostly materialistic, egocentric point of view. This interpretation of giving is compared to and contrasted with the phenomenological approach where giving is experienced and intuited as an existential self-re-

alization. Giving and love in Eastern cultures is examined in exemplifying this attitude, whose congruence with Victor Turner's concepts of "flow," "ritual drama," "holism," and "communitas" is emphasized. In conclusion, an integrative theory of giving is suggested, which would merge both the sociological and phenomenological approaches.

> The obligation to give is no less important. If we understood this, we should also know how men came to exchange things with each other. We merely point out a few facts. To refuse to give, or to fail to invite, is —like refusing to accept—the equivalent of a declaration of war; it is a refusal of friendship and intercourse. Again, one gives because one is forced to do so, because the recipient has a sort of proprietary right over everything which belongs to the donor. This right is expressed and conceived as a sort of spiritual bond. (Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* 1969:11)

INTRODUCTION

This essay is an exercise in merging two frames of reference: the sociology of exchange and the phenomenology of love. The essay explores the tantalizing question raised by Marcel Mauss (1969) concerning the connection between spirit and gift; for herein lies a key to understanding how a balance between the biologically natural processes of individualization and socialization makes society possible (see Burridge 1979). This exercise is particularly challenging, because all too often theorists have posed thoroughly materialist explanations of exchange while ignoring the psychological and cosmological implications of giving. Even where psychology is addressed, it is commonly seen as a rationalist psychology of decision making. By contrast, the incorporation of a broader, more transpersonal view of the psychology of exchange provides a much clearer perspective regarding the role of exchange in human social life. This is not an attempt to reduce materialist explanations to the psychological. Instead, it is an attempt to broaden the scope of inquiry and to incorporate concepts and data from both the sociology of exchange as encountered in anthropology, and from the phenomenology of love and giving as encountered in Western and Buddhist psychology.

The necessity for integrating these two frames of reference derives in large measure from different orientations of the author during anthropological fieldwork. From 1969 to 1970, research among the So of northeastern Uganda focused on the material aspects of human adaptation, especially those concerning exchange (Laughlin 1974a, 1974b). This orientation was adopted in

response to the fact that the So were undergoing severe deprivation due to drought. Later, the author concentrated on symbolism in neuroanthropology (Laughlin, McManus, and Stephens 1981), on symbolism in cognition (Rubinstein, Laughlin, and McManus 1984), and on symbolism in the phenomenology of Tibetan mysticism and meditation (Laughlin, McManus, and Webber 1984).

This essay begins by defining love and exchange in such a way that the two concepts can be linked. To accomplish this, the essay will at first move back and forth between two seemingly different frames of reference.

LOVE

In his book, *The Art of Loving*, Erich Fromm writes:

> Love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an *attitude*, an *orientation* of *character* which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not towards one "object" of love. If a person loves only one other person and is indifferent to the rest of his fellow men, his love is not love but a symbiotic attachment, or an enlarged egotism. Yet, most people believe that love is constituted by the object, not by the faculty. In fact, they even believe that it is a proof of the intensity of their love when they do not love anybody except the "loved" person.
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> . . . Because one does not see that love is an activity, a power of the soul, one believes that all that is necessary to find is the right object—and that everything goes by itself afterward. This attitude can be compared to that of a man who wants to paint but who, instead of learning the art, claims that he has just to wait for the right object, and that he will paint beautifully when he finds it. If I truly love one person I love all persons, I love the world, I love life. If I can say to somebody else, "I love you," I must be able to say, "I love in you everybody, I love through you the world, I love in you also myself." (Fromm 1962:38)

This essay focuses on the experience of love as unconditional beneficence toward one's fellow humans, as well as toward the rest of the world. As real and as fundamental to the human condition as this experience is, incorporating the phenomenology of love into scientific explanations of economic behavior may seem incongruous despite attempts by substantivists such as Marshall Sahlins (1965) and others to include the greater psychological dimensions of exchange in their theories. As Ashley Montagu states:

> It is curious that while so much has been written on love by poets, playwrights, philosophers, and theologians, social and behavioural scientists should have paid so little attention to so important a subject. The mention of the word in such quarters still seems to cause the kind of embarrassment that the word "sex" used to produce, not so many years ago, in "respectable" circles. Most social and behavioural scientists still tend to shy away from the subject, although there have always been some outstanding exceptions. (Montagu 1975:1)

The heavy commitment of anthropology to positivistic and materialistic procedures, in both observation and the construction of theory, has tended to inhibit the incorporation of more phenomenological data into models of social interaction, even when such data abound. It is now time for a more balanced treatment of materialistic and phenomenological aspects of interaction. In this vein, the notion of exchange will be examined using the classic works of Mauss and Sahlins. Following this, the phenomenology of love will be examined and the two perspectives will be linked together in such a way as to demonstrate the relevance of each concept to the other.

EXCHANGE

In his *Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*, (1924; first published in English in 1954 under the title *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*), the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss defined the essential structure of exchange in society. Recognizing that the giving of gifts among people is culturally universal, Mauss reasoned that the act of giving must perform crucial functions both for society as a whole, and for the psychological well-being of each society's members. As a structuralist, Mauss looked beyond the surface details of gift giving. He knew that human beings will give each other an enormous variety of things ranging from money to houses, from food to parcels of land, from songs to services, and from goats to people themselves. *What* is given varies enormously, but *why* gifts are given is another matter. Mauss demonstrated that gifts are given to establish and maintain social bonds through mutual obligation. That is, if I give to you, you are then obliged to give to me.

Mauss' most famous student, Claude Lévi-Strauss, has reasoned that institutions such as marriage exist for the purpose of linking otherwise distinct and potentially quarrelsome kindreds together into cooperative networks (Lévi-Strauss 1969). If my daughter or sister becomes your wife, I am then obliged to provide you with certain goods and services, and you are likewise obliged to give to me. Because we are involved in these ex-

changes, we are less likely to resort to such extreme measures as feuding if we have a disagreement. But exchanges related to marriage can also be mere formalities, as in the case of the Nayar of southern India, where matrilineal groups were linked through the formalized "marriages" of their members. These formalized "marriages" may or may not have been initially consummated and never involved married couples living together, although a "husband" could later become one of his "wife's" many lovers (Gough 1961).

According to Marshall Sahlins (1965), there are three types of exchange: generalized exchange, balanced exchange, and negative exchange. The first type of exchange, or *generalized exchange*, occurs when there is giving with no expectation of immediate or equal return. Here, no one measures the reciprocal value of gifts given and received. Instead, there is giving in response to either the dictates of tradition or the recognition of need. The second type of exchange, or *balanced exchange*, involves giving with the expectation of relatively immediate and equal return, but without any profit motive. Concern is with the equality of reciprocity and with give and take rather than with getting the better of one's partner. The third type of exchange, or *negative exchange*, is giving with a profit motive. Here, each partner in the exchange is interested in coming out ahead in the transaction.

For a number of reasons, these three types of exchange can be seen as part of a continuum where generalized exchange is at one extreme, balanced exchange lies somewhere in the middle, and negative exchange is at the other extreme. The principal factors determining the type of exchange and its location on the continuum involve the psychology of the parties who are participating in the exchange. If the focus of consciousness is on cooperation, then giving will be toward the generalized pole. However, if the focus is more upon maximizing return to the giver, then giving will tend to be directed toward the negative pole. Thus, it is not surprising that human societies show correlations between type of giving and social and geographical proximity of the parties involved in exchange. Parties which are socially and residentially close are more likely to direct their giving toward the generalized pole. There is also good evidence that the incidence of each type of giving will vary in response to stress (Laughlin and Brady 1978). For example, people under severe drought conditions, such as the previously-cited case of the So of northeastern Uganda, may become increasingly more miserly until, in a real pinch, generalized giving becomes limited to the immediate family (Laughlin 1974b). There are also cases where societies have been so beset by deprivation that generalized exchange breaks down within the family, and those who are most at risk for survival (e.g., young children and old people) may be cast out to fend for themselves (see Turnbull 1972, 1978 on the Ik).

Cases involving extreme deprivation and hoarding are notable precisely because they seem to violate our sense of what it means to be human. It is human to give, and to give is to be human in the most fundamental meaning of the term (cf. Lancaster 1978). The sharing aspect of humanity is reflected in the fact that most societies place constraints upon how far a person may go in serving self at the cost of the commonweal. For instance, one of the common impediments to the spread of entrepreneurship among non-industrial societies has been the widespread social taboo against hoarding sufficient wealth to build capital.

Gifts to the Gods

It is important to note that a great deal of exchange in human societies takes the form of sacrifice, offerings, and alms given by living people to the gods, to the dead, or to classes of living persons, such as the clergy or the poor, who are seen as cosmologically auspicious. Although Marcel Mauss admits that his speculations are tentative and based upon partial data, he nonetheless makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the connection between this kind of giving and the more mundane kind of giving mentioned above (Mauss 1969:12ff). He explains this connection by viewing humans as a blend of corporeal existence and spirit. Humans incorporate the spirits of the dead and other supernatural beings into their own being. This is seen in cultures where living people bear the names of supernatural beings and dead ancestors, or where people enact the dead or the gods in masked ritual (ibid.:13). In such cultures, wealth is seen as owned by supernatural beings, and sacrifices or offerings give to the gods what is rightfully theirs in the expectation that the gods will look favorably upon humans and return such gifts with even greater abundance (ibid.:14). In other words, giving to the gods simulates generosity expected of the gods. Furthermore, the gods look favorably upon alms-giving because humans thereby transform sacrifice or offering into a redistribution of divine wealth to the poor and other auspicious classes (ibid.:15).

Counterbalancing the Human Ego

Socially sanctioned exchange is one of society's most potent mechanisms for counterbalancing the potentially involutional effects of the human ego. The concept of "ego" is not defined here in any strict Freudian sense, but rather as the set of natural adaptive processes developed by every human being for purposes of protection. Through its ego, the human organism views itself, its position in the world, its goals, and its wants and needs. As such, the human ego is *self*-serving, goal-directed, and aimed at maximizing means to ends. The ego protects the integrity of the human organism so that each individual is safe enough in the

world to grow and mature. But if unconstrained by society, the tendency of the human ego would be to take rather than to give, particularly under conditions of stress. This is because the human ego is developmentally motivated by, and is fundamentally a product of, *fear* and *desire*—as for example fear of individual dissolution, of non-being, and of death; and desire for continued existence, well-being, and nurturance.

The formation of the human ego is thus a natural and even biologically "wired-in" process. Throughout the thousands of millennia of our evolution as a complex social species, the human ego no doubt emerged and developed its adaptive functions within the greater context of social evolution. Tension has probably always existed between selection for a more advanced, self-serving ego and selection for a more advanced, other-serving sociability (cf. Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1972). Without counter-balance to the self-serving forces of the human ego, society could not exist. To see this, all one needs to do is compare the behavior of a minimally social animal such as the red fox with that of a highly social animal such as the wolf (see Fox 1975). Altruistic behavior is virtually absent among the former, but quite advanced among the latter.

Exchange as Ritual

Societies counter-balance the potentially involutional tendencies of the human ego by requiring that members participate in various exchanges. These exchanges often occur as ritual. By participating in the rituals of exchange, members of societies inculcate the structure of the gift, and perhaps even what Mauss refers to as the spirit of the gift. Ramifications of the structure of exchange reach well beyond the strict confines of ritual.

In *The Spectrum of Ritual: A Biogenetic Structural Analysis* (1979:28ff), D'Aquili, Laughlin, and McManus demonstrate that ritual is a type of formalized behavior which is specialized for its communicative functions. Although the rituals which are practiced by human groups are notably more complex, ritual is found among all the higher social animals. Structurally speaking, ritual is a form of communication which functions to facilitate social coordination. It is a process which involves both *intraorganismic* coordination (coordination of physiological and psychological events within each participant) and *interorganismic* coordination (coordination of events between participants) (ibid.: 30).

While interorganismic coordination always requires some degree of intraorganismic coordination, the latter entails regulation of affect. In other words, in order for people to participate effectively in ritual, some reorientation of feeling, along with perception, cognition, arousal, etc., must occur. This pro-

cess of reorientation is called *synchronization* (Chapple 1970). Among other processes, socially sanctioned exchange is a form of ritual involving the synchronization of affect which is necessary for increased sociability and decreased ego-centeredness.

The "Gimme" Society

A serious problem for modern mass society is an emphasis on the involutional ego combined with a dearth of social rituals which could synchronize a healthy balance between give and take. Compared to many other cultures, modern mass society provides a largely non-sharing or "gimme" environment. This emphasis on need gratification for the individual amounts to an over-balanced focus on negative exchange. In many other cultures, this would be appropriate only for the activities of a dependent child. As M. E. Seligman (1975) and others have pointed out, the socialization of members of modern mass society conditions us to an inordinate state of helplessness. This, in turn, exacerbates the fear/desire-driven, involutional, and self-serving activities of the ego.

Stated simply, members of modern mass society are placed in the position of being adult infants whose attention is perpetually focused on personal and psychological survival. This point can be illustrated by a story which Charles DeGaulle once told André Malraux. As a youth, DeGaulle asked his aging priest if he had learned anything after hearing confessions for fifty years. "Yes," replied the old priest, "there's no such thing as a grown-up." In fact, many current world crises, such as the arms race, are largely due to the synergistic effects of everyone taking as much as they can while giving as little as possible in return, combined with the perception that this is the proper way to behave.

But it is not so much our intention to condemn modern mass society as to understand its structure. The key to understanding this structure is sensitivity to the tension between self-serving ego-centeredness and other-serving sociability. Members of modern mass society tend to be encumbered by egos born of frustrated desires and fearful, often traumatic, stress. Such egos have typically developed in response to extraordinary pressures for achievement and social acceptance. As a consequence, individuals in modern mass society are encouraged to equate feelings of dependency and sexual desire with "love" and mature social intercourse. Because they tend to perceive the world through conceptual and affective filters commensurate with over-balanced ego-centeredness, they often lack the undifferentiated beneficence that is true and mature love. Many are perhaps unable to appreciate the significance of that state of consciousness in its compensatory role as mediator between ego and sociability.

THE SPIRIT OF THE GIFT

Western enculturation does not prepare scientists and others for serious comprehension of Eastern mystical tradition. As Carl Jung has repeatedly emphasized, Western enculturation concentrates upon the development of discrete ego identities, whereas Eastern descriptions of transcendental consciousness extol the essential, *egoless* nature of that experience. In order to study Eastern mysticism, anthropologists must seek a transpersonal state of self-knowledge that seems to be the exact opposite of the gimme-oriented ego of modern mass society.

Fromm notes that the full realization of love requires sustained and intense concentration (Fromm 1962:81). In addition, meditation upon love is central to many of the world's spiritual traditions (c.f. Johnston 1978 on the Christian mystical tradition). For example, Buddhists meditate upon the four *brahma viharas* or "divine abidings": love (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkha*) (see Vajiranana 1962, or any translation of the *Visuddhimagga*, which in English is titled *The Path of Purification*). Using a number of techniques that predate Sakyamuni Buddha, meditators are led to generate and experience a state of love which can then be projected outwards to infinity. This love "energy" may be experienced as connecting all beings and objects in an undifferentiated field of benevolence. When able to hold this undifferentiated state of love, the meditator concentrates on the suffering of beings everywhere. This effort eventually leads to the realization of compassion. The meditator is then told to concentrate upon the development—including the growth, unfolding, and progress—of human beings. This practice leads to the realization of sympathetic joy at the unfolding of self and others. Finally, as love, compassion, and joy mature, one gains the realization of equanimity in the face of all phenomena arising in the human consciousness. Equanimity is a state of consciousness that is antithetical to the ego-dominated consciousness which is essentially reactive in response to phenomena.

The most auspicious state of consciousness for mystical exploration in the Buddhist tradition is held to be one of love-filled equanimity. Since a state of mature love disallows fear and greed, this is probably also the case for all mature spiritual paths. Thus, it may be reasoned on phenomenological grounds that the human consciousness ranges along a continuum from fear/desire-driven, involutional ego-consciousness at one end, to love-filled, equanimitous consciousness at the other. We may further suppose that the consciousness of most people in most cultures will normally fall somewhere in the middle, in what can be called the range of "traditional benevolence."

The degree of traditional benevolence which is characteristic of any person or group varies according to a number of fac-

tors, including appropriate responses to such circumstances as stress, social roles and expectations, pressures, sanctions, rituals, and personal awareness. Cultures have critical interests in controlling the range of states of consciousness and benevolence of their members. Together, cultures and socialization processes are so organized that few members will fall below the level of traditional benevolence which is needed for minimal social cooperation. This is why social groups place heavy emphases on mutual obligations. Nevertheless, socially-sanctioned cooperation and giving sometimes fail to reinforce social solidarity, as for example among the Ik described by Turnbull (1972, 1978). Even in the best of times, the more common forms of ritualized and socially-sanctioned exchange are limited in their capacity to evoke phases of consciousness which are permeated by anything like the mature love sought by Buddhism and other religions. Although Marcel Mauss was cognizant of the connection between gifts between humans and gifts from humans to the gods, his descriptions of various cultural interpretations of this connection are offered at the most concrete level of mythological realization. In addition, whether or not participants in cosmological and mythological rituals of exchange actually experience "higher" states of consciousness is a question which is not easily answered. This was certainly not a question commonly entertained by the sources available to Mauss. However, mysticism clearly states that when the human consciousness is permeated by a total state of love, people will give spontaneously out of intrinsic compassion, and do not require a conditioned sense of obligation. As one sage said, "Love and do as you will!"

It is inaccurate to state that socially-sanctioned exchange *replaces* love. People may simply go through the motions of exchange, but in most ethnographically documented cases it is useful to think of socially-sanctioned exchange as a ritual field of activity that is conducive to the evocation of love, even when love is limited and object-bound. This concept refers to the *spirit* of the gift or the "spiritual bond" mentioned by Mauss in the quotation at the beginning of this essay. Generalized and balanced exchanges may be interpreted as a mechanism which evokes and channels love-energized action. At the level of social action, this mechanism reflects the mutual feedback that exists between action and affect in the psychology of human events. That is, one may give out of a state of love, or one may give one's way *into* a state of love.

GIVING AND LOVE IN EASTERN CULTURES

The mutual inter-causality between love and giving is clearly acknowledged in the psychology of Eastern cultures, particularly in Buddhism. Although sacrifice may be carried out at solely a mundane level of awareness, Eastern cultures do not regard it as merely a transformation upon obligatory exchange. Rather,

there is an understanding that higher states of consciousness may be realized in the act of giving.

Gift and Giving in Hindu Tradition

By the time of the epic Hindu vedas around 2,000 B.C., people in that culture recognized a transcendent aspect to giving. For example, the epic *Raghuvamsa* tells of the king, Raghu, who carried out the high ceremony of giving after he had conquered all of his enemies. The text of the *Raghuvamsa* states that ". . . the acquisition of the noble-minded men is only for giving away, just like (the water of the) cloud" (Kalidasa 1977:91-92). It then goes on to describe benefits which befall generous people, including reconciliation with the kings Raghu had just conquered and who then freely prostrated themselves at his feet.

Similarly, the *Katha Upanishad* tells the story of a young man named Nachiketas who saw his father give only his least-prized possessions with an eye for gaining merit during a similar sacrificial ceremony (Mascaro 1965:55ff). Nachiketas then suggested to his father that he, himself, might be sacrificed. The father then became angry and gave Nachiketas to Death. During a subsequent dialogue with Death, unconstrained giving is portrayed as associated with wisdom, while craving and amassing wealth is associated with foolishness. Wealth is portrayed as impermanent, while Death is the final goal. Thus, the wise give everything in order to see the truth of immortality.

The epic *Rgveda* dates from about 3,000 B.C. and clearly associates giving with wisdom, and hoarding with ignorance:

To Dana (Charity or Liberality)

1. The gods inflict not hunger as a means to kill:
   Death frequently befalls even satiated men.
   The charitable giver's wealth melts not away;
   The niggard never finds a man to pity him.

2. Who, of abundant food possessed, makes hard his heart
   Towards a needy and decrepit suppliant
   Whom once he courted, come to pray to him for bread:
   A man like this as well finds none to pity him.

3. He is the liberal man who helps the beggar
   That, craving food, emaciated wanders,
   And coming to his aid, when asked to succour,
   Immediately makes him a friend hereafter.

4. He is no friend who gives not of his substance
   To his devoted, intimate companion:
   This friend should turn from him—here is no haven—

And seek a stranger elsewhere as a helper.

5. The wealthier man should give unto the needy,
Considering the course of life hereafter;
For riches are like chariot wheels revolving:
Now to one man they come, now to another.

6. The foolish man from food has no advantage;
In truth I say: it is but his undoing;
No friend he ever fosters, no companion:
He eats alone, and he alone is guilty.

7. The plough that cleaves the soil produces nurture;
He that bestirs his feet completes his journey.
The speaking *brahmin* earns more than the silent;
A friend who gives is better than the niggard.
(Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957:29-30)

Dana Yoga: The Yoga of Giving

Dana yoga, or the yoga of giving, is difficult to practice, and requires special qualities if practitioners are to reach anything like the full realization of its essence. The practice of this form of yoga requires perspective, patience, effort, discipline, perseverance, and awareness. These principles are carefully taught. For example, the yoga exercises themselves teach perspective; students learn that since the process of mastering *dana* yoga is developmental and takes time, it teaches patience; they know that since practice of the yoga involves a great deal of energy and concentration, it will take effort; that since action must be matched to aspiration, they will learn discipline; that since they must continue to practice the yoga through thick and thin, they will learn perseverance; and that since they must be prepared to recognize patterns as they occur in consciousness, they will learn awareness. Of these qualities, patience is often emphasized because it is recognized that the instructions for mastering patience do not immediately impart compassion in self-seeking individuals. Thus, the various versions of *dana* yoga seem to have a developmental orientation.

In order to see the inter-causality of love and giving in this type of yoga, it must be examined more closely. Because *dana* yoga requires a clear awareness of the dynamics of mind involved in giving, a certain degree of calm is required before learning can begin. Most people should develop a background of regular, well-disciplined, and calming meditation before attempting the yoga. Meditation on love (*metta*) is particularly useful as a preparation. Women who are experiencing the neuro-endocrinal changes associated with pregnancy and infant care have a special opportunity to deepen their realizations on the path of *dana*. When the nurturance which commonly arises during motherhood is

paired with awareness, the result can be profound leaps of insight regarding flow, relatedness, and totality. Although the actual practice of *dana* yoga is much more complex, we will imagine six initial stages of realization:

1. **Embracing the Spirit of the Gift.** The spirit of the gift begins with the realization that one is off-balance in the direction of involution and "gimme-ness." Recognition of the need to reverse this tendency in favor of growth and greater self-awareness leads to the intention to do whatever is required to effect this goal. There is then an increased awareness of the actual dynamics of consciousness involved in the process of giving. One becomes aware that even when giving, the real focus is usually upon what will be received in return and that one's interaction approximates negative exchange. In order for the practice of *dana* yoga to develop beyond this stage, students must drop any tendency to feel guilty for being what they are. Effort is expended only on the growing awareness of giving and the aspiration to reverse the predominance of "gimme-ness" in relation to the world.

2. **Projected Need Versus Real Need.** Practitioners of *dana* yoga soon realize that in order to give freely with giving rather than receiving in mind, they must be able to recognize the real needs of other people and become aware of the extent to which their own needs are projected upon others. The old story about six boy scouts helping an old lady across the street is relevant here. When the scoutmaster asked why this took six scouts, he was informed that the old lady did not want to cross the street. In *dana* yoga, one needs to see clearly who needs to go, and where, and then help them on their way as cleverly as possible. At minimum, this requires the realization that one ordinarily cannot discriminate clearly between projected needs and the real needs of other people. Although at this stage, taking predominates over real giving and an individual's ego is still heavily involved in the transaction, an awareness of the dynamics of giving and taking is increasing.

3. **Balanced Giving and Taking.** At this stage of the practice of *dana* yoga, students willfully impose and then realize a balance between giving and taking. They recognize that although the human ego still predominates, they must push the limits of giving outward so that they are giving in equal measure to what they are receiving. At this point, the practice of *dana* yoga begins to approximate the type of transaction which was defined earlier as balanced exchange. Practitioners are no longer interested in making a profit, but in equalizing flow between self and world. By the time this balance is attained, practitioners should be relaxed in their interactions with people and the world. They may ex-

perience freer give-and-take, and perhaps an increase in joyful states of mind, at least within the milieu in which the practice of *dana* yoga is being carried out.

4. **More Giving Than Taking.** At this point in the practice of *dana* yoga, the balance tips in favor of giving over taking. Practitioners are now more oriented toward giving than receiving, and their interaction with people and the world increasingly approximates generalized exchange in the sociological sense. But despite more giving than receiving, practitioners are aware that their egos still require something in return. They are now somewhat able to reverse such negative states of mind as selfishness, pique, envy, and jealousy by giving as freely as possible to the recipient of negativity. Thus, hostile and defensive states of mind are transformed into benevolent and open states of mind, as practitioners of *dana* yoga become more "open to the world."

5. **Giving with Giving as the Sole Reward.** Ultimately, the practice of giving leads to the realization that giving is its own reward. Practitioners of *dana* yoga discover that the state of consciousness which has evolved as a result of giving is more valuable than any conceivable reward received from the outside. Fully free giving becomes associated with great joy and bliss, and a child-like, free-swinging interaction with the world. The giver realizes that "it all comes back" and that the energy needed for giving is virtually unlimited; the giver experiences a kind of "second wind" phenomenon where a new and seemingly boundless source of energy is tapped. This energy feeds further giving, which leads to further energy, and so on in an ever-expanding cycle. At this stage in the practice of *dana* yoga, giving transcends realizations which are commensurate with prescribed, ritualized giving such as generalized exchange. In fact, social rituals may aim for this state of joyful and relatively projection-free exchange. At this level of consciousness, there is an awareness of the truth of cosmic totality and the realization that all beings are expressions of a greater being. Inherent in this realization is the knowledge that to give to any being as an aspect of the greater being is to give to the self. This stage in the practice of giving is equivalent to the full-on experience of love (*metta*) of the *brahma vihara* meditations described above. As a consequence, one understands that giving can be used to counter one's fear, that giving in the appropriate way leads to an increase in love, and that love counters fear. As mentioned previously, a human being experiencing full-on love is virtually fearless.

6. **Auspicious Giving.** The previous stage of giving was defined by the realization of the *spirit* of the gift. The next stage of giving, *auspicious giving*, is marked by the refinement of

the *wisdom* of the gift, or a higher esoteric meaning of the concept of *danadharma*, the "law of the gift," as noted by Mauss in his discussion of ancient Hindu exchange (Mauss 1969:53). Since this is an example of the anthropological interpretation of essentially esoteric processes couched in concrete, exoteric terms, it can be shown that such an interpretation misses the point of the native concept of giving.

At this stage in the practice of *dana* yoga, practitioners enter a maturity of giving. Through enhanced awareness, they learn to direct giving to those ends which are most auspicious to the development of the self and others. For instance, practitioners of *dana* yoga may realize that the giving of support, service, or aid to their spiritual teachers is equivalent to nourishing the development of that part of one's own self which is symbolized by the teachers. This may also be the case where giving is directed toward a group focused on spiritual development, as in the example where Gurdjief considered service to the group to be an advanced level of practice in "the work" (Walker 1972). Auspicious giving may even be termed "surgical giving" when it helps to heal neurotic splits in consciousness and ameliorate ambivalence toward other people. Likewise, phobic states concerning such nonhuman beings as snakes, dogs, or spiders may be eased by systematic giving to those beings. In short, many kinds of splits in consciousness which are energized or motivated by fear can often be eased by auspicious giving. This stage of the yoga of giving is equivalent to the realizations of both compassion (*karuna*) and joy (*mudita*) in the *brahma vihara* meditations. Although there are more advanced realizations in the yoga of giving, further discussion would not serve the purpose of this essay.

DISCUSSION

There are several points about the relationship between the sociology of exchange and more esoteric explorations of love which can enrich our understanding of social intercourse. These will now be considered.

Fear and Realization

As stated, egos are self-concepts which serve the process of adaptation. As such, egos are "creatures of fear and desire." Yet fear and love are antithetical to each other. Furthermore, it is impossible for fear to arise in a state of mature love, and it is difficult to love in any true sense while terrified. Responses to the world energized out of fear tend to serve the self rather than the commonweal, whereas responses energized out of love and

compassion tend to serve everyone. It is very significant that the greatest single block to the realization of advanced insights in *dana* yoga and other spiritual disciplines is fear. Nevertheless, persistence in the practice of *dana* yoga inevitably and lawfully reduces fear. Thus, it may be argued that the universality of socially-sanctioned and ritualized exchange in human societies is partially explained by reference to the causal relationship between love, benevolent cognition, and the act of giving on the one hand; and between fear, self-serving cognition, and the act of taking on the other. In that case, socially- sanctioned and ritualized exchange would significantly benefit the survival of human groups through promotion of the first type of behavior and control or minimization of the latter.

Biology and Altruism

We may further argue that there is a biological relationship between affect (love or fear) and action (giving or taking), and that this biological relationship has a genetic predisposition in the organization of various neuro-cognitive and neuro-endocrine systems. Because of the structural similarity of this organization among the higher social animals, the explanation linking ritualized exchange and feeling may also apply to similar rituals among nonhuman social animals. An example might be the "gift" ritual among wolves, where the leader of a wolf pack "will seize some food item or an interesting object such as a bone or a piece of caribou skin and parade with it before the entire pack; then he will approach the pack, drop the object, and leave it. The entire pack briefly investigates the 'gift' and then ignores it" (Fox 1974:39). Another example might be the chimpanzee ritual of meat exchange (Teleki 1973:146). For further examples and a more thorough discussion of this point, see Laughlin and McManus 1979.

By conceiving of the biology of exchange and affect in neuro-cognitive terms, the behavioral structures underlying exchange can be placed in a global perspective which involves human and nonhuman beings alike. At the same time, extreme explanations of biological determinism, such as E. O. Wilson's attempt to explain Mother Teresa's charity by reference to inclusive fitness (1978: 165), can be avoided.

Flow, Totality, and the Spirit of the Gift

The two characteristics which are most often found in descriptions of so-called higher states of consciousness are *flow* and *totality*. Flow is described as:

> . . . the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement, a state in which action follows action according to an internal logic, with no apparent

> need for conscious intervention on our part. Flow is experienced in play and sport, in artistic performance and religious ritual. There is no dualism in flow. While an actor may be aware of what he is doing, he cannot be aware that he is aware, or the flow will be interrupted. Flow is made possible by a centering of attention on a limited stimulus field, by means of bracketing, framing, and often a set of rules. There is a loss of ego, the self becomes irrelevant. Flow is an inner state so enjoyable that people sometimes forsake a comfortable life for its sake. (Turner 1979:154; see also Csikskentmihalyi 1975)

The experience of flow (*jhana*, *samadhi*, or "absorption" in Buddhist psychology) involves both the unconstrained movement of energy through consciousness and a nondualistic connectedness with the world—i.e., precisely that state of consciousness which results from the practice of *dana* yoga. As the above quotation from Victor Turner states, there is an emphasis on loss of ego constraints. Since ego reaction is essentially dualistic and energized out of fear and desire, it is antithetical to the experience of flow. Ego reaction is associated with distress, flow is associated with bliss.

The experience of flow is commonly paired with the experience of totality (Chang 1971:12-13). Whether experienced as infinitely great or infinitely small, the universe is seen as a cosmos or unfragmented whole composed of microcosms within microcosms, all of which reproduce the essential nature of the macrocosm within themselves (see Bohm 1980). It is likewise possible to experience reciprocal intercausality between microcosms as well as between any microcosm and the macrocosm. In summary, the transformation of any part of the macrocosm is reflected by transformations in other parts and in the whole. Time is perceived as a characteristic of totality, and is equated with the experience of flow itself.

From this perspective, giving and the social institutions which are constructed around the act of giving are seen as "signposts" which point toward the potentialities of flow and totality in human experience (i.e., as the *real* spirit of the gift). Humans practice giving not so much to "establish social solidarity" or to "enact the ideal social order" as to directly experience the "solidarity" (flow and totality) which operates perpetually and is perceivable in the nature of the universe, as well as to gain an appreciation of the actual nature of the universe while carrying out their affairs.

Transpersonalism and Data on Exchange

Most ethnographic data display a systematic bias with reference to the relationship between ritual and states of consciousness. In general, ethnographies present copious details about the behavioral aspects of rituals while recording little or nothing about the states of consciousness which are being sought or attained by participants in the rituals (see Laughlin, McManus, Rubinstein, and Shearer 1985). Even where alternative states of consciousness are mentioned, they are often labelled as "trances," "possession states," "dissociative states," and the like. All of these labels are meaningless to the average researcher with limited experience with the alternative states of consciousness being recorded. Phrases such as "he entered a trance" or "she became dissociated" may actually be behavioral terms which label the peculiar or exotic behavior being observed while communicating little information about the actual experiences of the practitioners. These terms may gain transpersonal, scientific meaning when efforts are made to record practitioners' own reports of their experiences. It is quite clear from transpersonal data that the levels of experience realized by different participants in the same ritual may vary enormously. However, ethnographic descriptions often make it impossible to determine the levels of sophistication which are either intended by a ritual or experienced by participants.

Anthropological data on exchange present similar problems. Data on exchange are particularly vulnerable to observer bias, which can result in distortions of interpretation because it is precisely in the economic domain where ethnography and theory are often strongly materialistic. A classic example may be found in the data and theoretical interpretations of the potlatch among Northwest Coast Indians. In his reconstruction of the meaning of the Kwakiutl potlatch from secondary sources, Walens (1981:4-5) is sensitive to this point when he charges earlier ethnographers with being slanted towards materialist concerns while avoiding intellectual, philosophical, and religious concerns. Interpretations of the role of the potlatch in Northwest Coast society have rarely considered the experience of participants, and instead have tended to focus on social function (Barnett 1938) and ecological adaptation (Piddocke 1968).

The potential for transpersonal experience leading to the actualization of flow and totality is clearly implied in treatments of potlatch. Walens writes:

> Ultimately, Kwakiutl ritual results in a fundamental change in the role of humans in the world, for at some ineffable point they discover that they need no longer kill for food, no longer kill because they are hungry. Instead, a human kills because it is his responsibility to kill, his responsibility to eat, his responsibility

> to be the vehicle of rebirth for those beings, human and otherwise, with whom he has a covenant. (1981:162-163)

The "fundamental change" and "ineffable point" to which Walens alludes is far more than an intellectual choice. Perhaps the intent of a great deal of human ritual drama is a profound experience of the totality of the world, including the self (cf. Turner 1982:89ff).

The more transpersonal aspects of potlatching are evidenced in the reports of participants recorded in Ulli Steltzer's book, *Children of the Good People: A Haida Potlatch* (1984). Steltzer's book describes one of a number of potlatches given by a Haida artist named Robert Davidson, who in this case gave a potlatch to adopt his friend and fellow artist, Joe David, and to allow other people the opportunity to give traditional names to their children (Marjorie Halpin, personal communication). A number of comments from Steltzer's book are poignant indicators of the importance of experience in understanding the potlatch:

> It's the feeling of power and life, the energy and the love that Robert is sharing with me, that is around me like the light around the sun, and me bringing it to my people and shining in front of them, to give them that knowledge, that love, that energy, that's what it is all about. (Joe David in Steltzer 1984)

> . . . That's what you are there to do, to share that feeling with people. To strive for that harmony and unity is how you learn to be a correct human being. (Joe David ibid.)

> . . . At the potlatch you clean house and give gifts to all the people you feel indebted to from the past. You clean house and you have a fresh start. (Robert Davidson ibid.)

> We were broke after it was all over, but the return comes hundred-fold, as they say. Spiritually I feel really rich, rich to have experienced it. You open a door and there are ten more doors, and you open them and there are new ideas for new directions. (Robert Davidson ibid.)

This is not an attempt to understand potlatching by reducing it to transpersonal or psychological explanations. Instead, it is an attempt to interject a transpersonal perspective into an understanding of both the potlatch and all such institutions where such a perspective is appropriate. By understanding that potlatching involves transpersonal intentionality as well as social, economic, and ecological factors, a more complete interpretation

of the data on exchange relations among Northwest Coast peoples may be possible. In addition, it may be possible to gain a clearer understanding of the causal relationships between realms of experience, modes of cognition, and forms of action in the world. That is, it may be possible to see how interaction with the environment is related to knowledge about the world, as well as how knowledge is a function of experience. While experiencing the world as a nonfragmented totality may result in holistic cognition, holistic cognition may in turn result in action in the world which is appropriate to a nonfragmentary view. Potlatching may well have been a ritual drama which was intended to bring participants to such actualizations.

Fear, Ego, and Totalitarianism

A final implication of the ideas presented in this paper involves the causal relationships between giving, love, sociability, flow, and totality on the one hand; and taking, fear, ego response, and fragmentation on the other. Any social system which engenders fear as a predominant quality of consciousness in its members, particularly in the development of infants, children, and young adults, is unlikely to foster love. Hence, such systems will operate in ways which thwart the realization of compassion and other qualities associated with higher states of consciousness. If writers such as Czeslaw Milosz (*The Captive Mind* 1953) are any indication, this seems to be the state of affairs in any totalitarian system. Such systems would be expected to encourage a predominance of involutional ego-centeredness and selfishness over growth and benevolence. The spirit of the gift will not flourish under fear-engendering regimes. As a consequence, rituals of exchange that perhaps once counter-balanced the forces of ego-centeredness and made society possible begin to lose their functional efficacy. Rituals of social exchange are then replaced by increasing coercion by the state. Increased coercion reinforces the general level of fear, and this further erodes the spirit of the gift.

NOTES

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