

Gift and Commodities in Repetition : The Viti Kambani Movement in Fiji

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Introduction

The contrast between gift exchange and commodity exchange seems to dog anthropological research on money. In reality, money marks the border between the gift economy and the commodity economy, travelling back and forth across that border and, at times, rearranging it. However, following meticulous studies of the penetration of money into various societies, and further as new types of wealth and service have manifested themselves, warning bells have been sounded in the field of money research against the absoluteness of this kind of contrast [Hart 1986][Gregory 1997][Robbins & Akin 1999]. Now the ideological nature of the contrast itself is called into question [Maurer 2005]. Nevertheless, leaving aside suspicions concerning binary contrasts, the terms gift exchange and commodity exchange remain useful. For example, although arguments that emphasize non-commodity exchanges in commodity economies are correct, Marx's analysis of commodity exchange [Marx n.d.] is still helpful when studying the activities of corporations. On the other hand, although numerous formalist interpretations reduce gift exchange to acts for the maximization of profit, the various characteristics of this form of exchange indicated by Mauss [Mauss 1990] continue to assure its particular status.

This paper will put a certain distance between itself and the familiar binary contrast, and attempt to study the single, intertwined phenomenon of gift exchange and commodity exchange, with particular attention to the gift aspect. The study does not aim to redefine gift exchange, but rather to offer it once again as an object of study whose place is difficult to nail down. Derrida has accurately indicated the impossibility of any unitary meaning for gift-giving [Derrida 1992]. However, as Deleuze argues, it is a condition of human thought that meaning differentiate from meaning itself. In order to think about this difference as difference, it is necessary to understand the distinct-obscure as it is, and not to attempt identification by means of concept. In Deleuze's words, it is necessary to observe difference placed on the inside of Ideas, which are, "a form of eternally positive differential multiplicity." [Deleuze 1997:288] And one should then think of it as "an internal problematic objective unity of the undetermined, the determinable and determination." [p.170] The attempt to study the undetermined character of gift-giving inside the "Idea" avoids both identification and opposition. In short, this study ought to unfold at a level unrelated to binary contrast. In spite of which, it does not entirely escape the phantom of binary contrast. As long as one uses the terms gift exchange and commodity exchange, it often happens that the deviant meaning generated on one side calls forth the other side, in attempt to find an appropriate position. Used carelessly, binary contrast may become prey to deconstructionism; however, careful confinement can make it unexpectedly effective. In its unmarked state, the side of the contrast that received no attention will probably call up various images in our minds, and may even manifest itself as something uncanny.

In an attempt to make new use of the above binary contrast and "Idea-" related thinking, this paper will examine the native Fijian movement known as the Viti Kambani. Although attempts at founding a company called Viti Kambani, that is to say, the Fiji Company, failed numerous times, the flow of gifts to the operation's leader never ceased. Why did the donations continue? The answers to that question will highlight the distinct-

obscure nature of gift-giving, and, at the same time, stir up some interesting issues concerning commodity exchange.

Difference and Repetition in the Viti Kambani Movement

Judging from oral surveys of elders, chiefly taken in Fiji's main island of Viti Levu, and from records of civil servants, missionaries, and colonists, it seems that the Viti Kambani movement, which was Oceania's largest native movement, inspired the people by means of the following logic. Why are white people rich and Fijians poor? "Westerners hide good and proper things from us, and try to show us nothing but bad things."¹ The thing that was hidden was, the "company." Fijians had to found a company for the sake of Fijians and to take the banana and copra trade into their own hands. The company's name was, "Viti Kambani." The government soon became aware of this movement, by early 1914 at the latest. Its central figure was a man named Apolosi Nawai, from Nandi in western Viti Levu. Making full use of his eloquence, he travelled all over Fiji, collecting funds for the foundation of the company. The movement gathered strength and soon spread across the whole territory, helped by a growing sense of fear among the Fijians that changes in government land policy would lead to the loss of their lands and by the weakening of the authority of the British Empire, due to the war with Germany.

From the start it was a strongly religious and political movement. In particular, in regions that continued to feel the influence of the Tuka movement that had so surprised the government forty years before, Apolosi was seen as the second-coming of that earlier movement's founder; and, as had been the case with that earlier founder, he was said to be protected by the twin gods throughout the whole land of Viti Levu. Even in other regions he was associated with the twin gods. In particular in the west, where there was a strong sense of cold treatment by the government, it was emphasized that this man was making full use of the supernatural powers of the land of the west. In eastern Viti Levu as well, Apolosi made his influence felt as the possessor of a special *mana* that would "save" (*vakambula*) Fiji, and as a being who would "reverse" (*vukitha*) the positions of Fijians and white men. Many believed that the Christianity and wealth that the whites had brought to Fiji originally belonged to the Fijians, and that the strong Fiji of former days would now be restored by Apolosi, who had laid bare the white men's secrets.

For the raising of funds, Apolosi appropriated the style of the "church collections" (*solu ni lotu/ vaka misoneri*), that western missionaries had labored so hard to establish. The movement basically made use of a method in which a man chosen from the people of the village kept accounts of the names, amounts, and dates of donations, with in principle the burden shared equally by each house. While regarding Jesus and Jehovah as strong "chiefs" (*turanga*), Christianized Fijians also maintained friendly relations with the ancestral spirits and gods of the land, relations that the Church condemned as sinful. Apolosi, who was under the protection of the twin gods, unashamedly brought these gods and spirits into the Church system and made the Church itself an affiliate of the Viti Kambani.

The church system and the chiefs, who were embodiments of and mediums for the gods and spirits, supported one another, and the church system depended on the chiefs for its maintenance. Accordingly, control of the churches in various districts meant that the chiefs in those various districts would cooperate with Apolosi and obey him. In Fijian, everything from kin and ritual group to chiefdom and further to the level of confederation is referred to as land. In Fijian society, where segmentation remains strong, while the chiefs attend each other (*veinguaravi*) at the level of each of these "lands" (*vanua*), a chief-

¹ Apolosi Nawai to Governor E.B.Sweet-Escott, 27 November 1917. "E ra dau vunia e matai keimami na ka vinaka ka savasava ka ra sa dau vakaraitaka ga vei keimami na vei ka ca." (the Original Fijian)

vassal hierarchy in which one attends on the other (*guaravi turanga*) is also produced / developed. Apolosi set up locally-born activists as mediators and toured the various regions, making use of kinship relations and impressing on the chiefs the fact that he was “strong” (*kaukauwa*) and “true” (*ndina*)—both of which are synonyms for *mana*. Eloquent, surrounded by followers, and demonstrating his fearlessness of great chiefs and the government in both word and deed, Apolosi blessed the lands that welcomed him and cursed those that refused to obey. When, thanks to the newness of the idea of a company and the skilful stage-management of Apolosi, “monetary donations” and agricultural products began to accumulate, westerners and great chiefs joined him to drink their share of this sweet nectar. As he travelled round the various regions, Apolosi continued to increase his “strength” and “true-ness”, to the point where he was hailed everywhere as a great chief. Even though the various lands left their conflicts and senses of rivalry as they were, they told stories that traced the origins of Apolosi’s *mana* to their own ancestors, spirits, and gods of the land; and in this way the lands were united by Apolosi. This man was what one might call the head of a confederation; something like the god of Christianity, looking down from a high place and admonishing the gods and spirits for their jealousy and resentment. Many reports of the day indicated his power, such as ‘It is as though there were two governments’² and Apolosi as ‘the chief of a new trinity, Jesus Christ coming second, and Moses third!’³

The general meeting of the Viti Kambani copied in exact detail the form of the “gifts of the land” (*solu vaka vanua*), where vast numbers of gifts were offered to Apolosi, who was received as a guest in the manner of the paramount chief. Further, when he travelled about gathering cash and foodstuffs, these actions were referred to as “orders” (*lala*) or “taxes” (*vakathavathava*), as had been done formerly with great chiefs. In every case, Apolosi behaved as the ideal paramount chief, being the bearer of *mana* that accorded “vitality” (*bula*) to the land of the giver, and giving blessings to “grow and increase” (*tumbu*) plants, animals, and men. People gave this man enormous sums of money, in the hopes that in his hands that money would produce unbelievable amounts of “growth / multiplication of money” (*tumbu ni lavo*), in other words, of “interest.” The movement raised central figures in each region, and built up a speedy information network that crossed regional boundaries. It was often the case that Fijian civil servants became active participants, ignoring the governor’s warnings that the movement was a fraudulent exercise meant solely to cheat people of their money. The movement faithfully copied the administrative institutions of the colonial government, establishing public offices, which were filled by central figures in the movement. They held meetings at every level, just as government civil servants did, and conveyed Apolosi’s instructions to the villages. They explained that in place of the “government’s laws” (*lawa ni matanitu*) they would enforce, “Apolosi’s laws” (*lawa ni Apolosi*). By this point, payments of tax to the Fijian colonial government slowed and its tax collectors were ignored; further, white exporters found it more and more difficult to obtain bananas, and the Church began to lament its financial difficulties. And yet, though the company set up an office at Suva and flew the company flag, it engaged in hardly any business activities. The vast quantities of agricultural products and cash that had been collected, dispersed and became the basis for Apolosi’s luxurious living and generous behavior.

Needless to say the government came under pressure to take severe countermeasures. They established native ordinances to block the movement, punished a stream of activists, and applied the special order entitled, “the Disaffected or Dangerous Native Removal Ordinance 1887” to Apolosi, repeatedly exiling him to distant Rotuma. In fact, between 1917 and 1924; 1930 and 1940; and 1940 and 1946, the year when he died, Apolosi spent most of the time following the establishment of the “company” in

² The Council of Chiefs Proceedings 1917.

³ Fiji Times, April 8, 1915.

exile. Thorough suppression led to the severing of the movement's vertical command structure and its horizontal solidarity; without these, it inevitably became isolated, confined to remote areas, and fell into decline. Even then, in western Viti Levu, there were times when fifty or sixty copies of Apolosi's letters would somehow evade strict censorship and make their way to his supporters in various areas. These messages were referred to as "orders" (*ota*), and would call for the collection of thousands or tens of thousands of pounds to fund the return of Apolosi, the reestablishment of the company, or participation in some new business venture. As before, after records of the donors' names and the amounts given were entered in account books, the money was taken from the various regions to the treasurer in Lautoka, and from there conveyed in secret to Apolosi.

As in the initial period of the movement, these "orders" included a wide range of religious and political activities: purification rites that made use of kava to call forth ancestral spirits and the gods of the land; rituals to Christianize those gods and spirits (*vakalotutaki ira na vu*); prayers to bring about a world war that would lead to the independence of Fiji; and the establishment of schools to learn business from Indo-Fijians. The orders are full of biblical quotations and metaphors, and colored with prophecies. Take one example.

The secret year is 1944, and it is then that the truth for which we have struggled so much will emerge and stand forth as proofs of our worthy lives and the life of "the New Age." When the King of Peace, the Messiah and Saviour of all mankind shall come, all will come to an end.⁴

The word "the New Age" (*Na Gauna Vou*) became widely used from the 1920s on, foretelling an age in which, in place of Jesus Christ, Apolosi would rule the world. However, in contrast to millenarianism, this "age" would not stop normal human activities, but would rather lead to a general flowering of Fijian business.

From the early teens of the twentieth century, until Apolosi's death in the 1940s, people received his orders and donated money and food. As "slaves of the new age" (*bombula ni Gauna*) they went as manual laborers to Suva and Levuka, or withstood the harsh labor conditions of the sugar plantations; but always they continued to make donations from their meager wages. The return of Apolosi was never realized; and far from paying a dividend, the company never even began to function. This went on for decades, with nothing but repeated orders for the establishment of the company. What is more, even though the people heard of Apolosi's extravagant living, they continued to make donations in the face of certain punishment from the government.

Even after Apolosi's death, and into the 1950s, small-scale donations continued to be made by people who believed he was immortal and would still return. Why did people continue to make contributions during his lifetime and for a short time after his death, when they received nothing in return?

One would like to respond that donations are one of the products of religion, and the people of Fiji believed that at some point they would receive repayment in full; however, such an explanation would be too simple. Corroboration for their religious belief came, of course, from Apolosi's *mana*. His words, "being true," should have been effective, but this was not necessarily the case. The enormous profits that should have been generated by the company they founded never materialized. On the other hand, the predictions of hurricanes that would arrive on a specific date to smite those who failed to obey Apolosi's orders repeatedly missed their marks. It is recorded that in villages where donations to Apolosi continued, children who were disappointed by his predictions, danced and sang, "Apolosi is in slavery at Rotuma."⁵ From the 1920s there is a clear increase in the number of people who secretly reported his words and deeds / actions to the government; and there are reports that "the inhabitants vacillate in their support for

⁴ From Apolosi to the members of the Divine Movement, 'Gauna Vou'(G.V) March 19,1939.

⁵ District Inspector Ba to District Commissioner Ba, 31 March 1931.

him.”⁶ Even so, his eccentric behavior instilled fear in the people. Although there may have been some surreptitious criticism, it did not raise doubts about his *mana*, but rather directed itself against his behavior, which misused that *mana*. For Fijians who were familiar with the *mana* of the great chiefs, this was certainly not a novel form of behavior. One of the inhabitants of Yasawa, who had actually been menaced by Apolosi that he would sell out their land if anybody disobeyed his order, said, 'It seemed as if the minds of the people were frightened by his threatening words and so they fell in with him, although some of them unwillingly, as would have been done by our forefathers in olden times.’⁷

However, it would also be inappropriate to portray this donation without any return as simply a form of blackmail. This is because, while they repeatedly made donations in fear of Apolosi, the people certainly hoped for the coming of a different reality. Apolosi’s messages continued to emphasize that “the New Age” would arrive “this time, for sure.” See the following three examples.

Fiji lives. All nonsense and deception will be cease. The progress of Fiji will not halt.⁸ —February, 1925—

It is my desire that you repent immediately and take the right path to follow. I will then forgive the sin of the Society and will be able to cleans it that we may reach the “New Era.”⁹ —June, 1938—

Keep your spirit up boys or the jar may break in the doorway as the place from which it is brought is too far.¹⁰ —September, 1941—

The orders that Apolosi issued one after another always claimed that all past suffering would be overcome, and an age of supreme bliss would arrive. He berated the Fijian people, whose deceptions and sins were the only reason that such an age had not arrived already, and encouraged them to carry out “purification” rites with strict attention to detail. This bears some resemblance to the way in which con men snare their victims by alternating threats and sweet promises; but there is a big difference. When stating his goals for the kind of age this “New Age” will be, and when describing how he will be the “king” of this new age and the Fijian people will be “children” leading a certain kind of life, Apolosi limits himself to portraying them in terms of dream-like biblical metaphors. Moreover, the reason that the implementation of this n-th order will lead to the accomplishment of this mysterious goal, is that, in conclusive contrast to all of the times up to the n-minus-one-th time, this time the “true Fijians”(*kai Viti ndina*) and the “true Chief(s)” (*turanga ndina*) will manifest themselves in full.

One could almost say that the reason that Apolosi’s movement was able to inspire the people was by asking questions about how the true Fiji and Fijians should be. The establishment of the Viti Kambani company, and the recognition of the twin gods as gods of Christianity, and the efforts made for the arrival of the “new age” were all for the purpose of making manifest the world and Fiji as they should be. However, these depictions of things as they should be are made in extremely puzzling language, in contrast to the fixed sums of money to be collected and the procedures for conducting “purification.” It is Fijian tradition that will solve the puzzle of the “true” things. A representative example of this is *serekali*, whose words and music are composed by poem-writers who have relations with the ancestral spirits. People recited and danced to countless poems extolling the Viti Kambani and Apolosi, and these were disseminated to other villages. While the “orders” and the *serekali* both related “what should be,” each left the matter of concrete interpretation to the people. Having received announcements

⁶ Acting Inspector General to Colonial Secretary, 18 March 1926.

⁷ A Letter from one villager to Acting Inspector General, March 1926.

⁸ Napitalacagi Japeuni to Uaia Nakobua, 4 March 1925.

⁹ From Apolosi Nawai to all the Heads of the Gaounavou Society of Fiji, 28 June 1938.

¹⁰ From Apolosi Nawai to the Leaders of the New Age, Rt.Semesa N., Aisea N. and Everyone in Fiji, 4 September 1941.

of puzzling truths, the people carried out the specifics of the orders, while searching for vestiges of things past and omens for the future. While interpreting the true meaning of the words, they remained both hopeful and anxious, due to the remaining puzzles, and awaited the arrival of “what should be.” And then another “order” would arrive, berating them losing the chance of having “what should be” due to their deception and sin; and then informing them anew of the puzzling truth that, “ ‘What should’ have been, should be...” What should have been, should be. What should have been, should have been, should be. What should have been, should have been, (repeated unto the N-th time) should be.

The supporters of Apolosi iterated a multi-layered repetition exercise of difference characterized by difference, difference from difference; difference from difference from difference, etc. The course they followed calls to mind exactly “The philosophy of life” that Grosz evolved in relation to Bergson [Grosz 2004:189]. In just the way that she depicts the virtual producing the actual after passing through differentiation in unpredictable series, the words of *mana* are first given as a virtual unity, rousing people to interpretation and practical application of their actualization. However, the transition from the virtual to the actual first occurs when it passes through the operation of difference, in which there are disparities between “what should be,” and the people’s interpretations and practical applications. A virtual unity can only become the actual in the form of disparity. In order to reach an actual unity from here, a repetition is born in which further words of *mana*, which is to say another virtual unity, make their appearance and once again produce disparities.

As long as the word of *mana* is “true” and unpredictable, it “possesses a full reality by itself,” [Deleuze 1997:211] and at the same time it is the virtual, destined for differentiation, and can only be actualized by way of difference. To put it another way, word(s) as a virtual unity give birth to an actual unity. That is precisely the time at which Fijians become true Fijians; the time at which the “New Age” arrives when Apolosi will become the true Apolosi; and the time at which the way in which Fijians should be and the way in which Apolosi should be will be identified without the slightest disparity. In order to reach the unshakeable self-identity of both Apolosi and themselves, the supporters of the movement accepted order after order, and continued their repeated gift-giving without receiving anything in return. In order to deepen our understanding of this kind of gift-giving, it is necessary to refer to Deleuze’s discussion of difference and repetition.

The Second Repetition. The Third Repetition.

The difference of which Deleuze makes an issue, signifies the difference in a thing itself and the disparity/ies therewith: this has the same character as that observed in the example of the Viti Kambani. He develops his observations regarding repetition whose ultimate element is difference, and contrasts “the repetition of habit” and “the repetition of memory.” The former is repetition that constitutes time as a living present and attempts to draw off difference; the latter is repetition grounded in profound memory that generates difference in the present. The repetition actions we have seen in Fijians are strongly tinged with the character of the latter. The founding of the Viti Kambani, the awareness that the twin gods are gods of Christianity, and the arrival of the new age all existed from the beginning as items that ought to be discovered; and it is thought that Apolosi discovered them by means of *mana*. These things are “pure past” which existed prior to all reality. And, although they are irreducible to the former present that has already passed or to the actual present in relation with which we call them past, they confer the grounds of existence on the present (e.g. trauma, scène originelle, déjà vu, etc.).

The pure past gives birth to the actual by way of virtual objects. Virtual objects are shreds of pure past and attempt to rediscover a part of the lost self; however, as with Lacan’s “object little a,” they simply try to recover the self-identity which it should be

impossible to recover. There is always a need for virtual objects to be displaced; and in this way this type of repetition is constituted. Sometimes virtual objects assume the form of esoteric or poetic words; and this certainly bears a close resemblance to the orders of Apolosi. Caught by pure past and series of displaced orders of Apolosi, each supporter 'dreams of metamorphosis which restores him/her the depth of his/her memory and of all the memory of the world, on a tragic plane, with his/her own identity, and dreams that, having become capable of action, [s]he purports to be equal to the whole of time.' [Deleuze 1989:378][my translation]

This form of repetition by the supporters of Apolosi stands in contrast to the third kind of repetition proposed by Deleuze; "eternal return." While eternal return is "a world the very ground of which is difference, in which everything rests upon disparities, upon differences of differences, which reverberate to infinity," [Deleuze 1997:241] denying all identity and resemblance; by contrast, the supporters of Apolosi live in a world where they cannot stop pursuing self-identity. In contrast to eternal return, which takes the "for-all-times" (*pour toutes les fois*) form of ceaselessly returning home to different things, in the case of the supporters, their determination that it will happen "this time for sure", in other words, "once and for all" (*une fois pour toutes*) in the end gives birth to repetition. Eternal return is a world of the abyss, which destroys and sucks in all grounds for establishing a difference between real things and simulacra. By contrast, the supporters of Apolosi insist most strongly on "the true" and live in the present, based on pure past.

Nevertheless, the two sorts of repetition are not completely irreconcilable. On the contrary, it is interesting that Apolosi's supporters' movement calls to mind eternal return and can even be likened to it. Certainly the supporters tried to recover their lost self-identity, attempted interpretations that took the "true-ness" of Apolosi's words as a presupposition, and executed his orders. However, these words hold good as "true"—that is to say as *mana*—by virtue of a great paradox. This means that the content of the words is made actual—that is to say, effective—and at the same time that it arrives as an unpredictable and inexplicable phenomenon. The words are of necessity puzzling; so that even if they reverberate clearly, they are tinged with an unknowableness that may betray interpretation in some way. In addition, Apolosi himself is a being who conceals within himself a deviance that might just lead to improper use of *mana*. In other words, to the extent that self-identity, pure past, and concrete goals depend, at the last, on Apolosi's words, there is no way of substantially confirming their basis. Nevertheless, because the supporters accept Apolosi's words and obey his orders, their words and deeds cannot but take on an ironic, simulacra-like coloring. Irony and simulacra are characteristics of eternal return emphasized by Deleuze. In a world that rejects both identity and resemblance, simulacra express an alterity that they end up generating by still being connected to some kind of model; irony exhibits a state of affairs in which all religious belief turns into these kinds of simulacra.

In the circumstances in which the continuously failing Viti Kambani movement endured so long, the objects of identity, resemblance, and denial laid bare the disparities with themselves; and further, those disparities are filled with irony and simulacra, in that they are produced by way of the words of Apolosi, words whose substantial grounding cannot be established with certainty. The locus of the repetition, "[What] should have been, should have been, should have been..." is not evidence of indomitable resolve, but can be interpreted as a situation in which difference goes on being produced in the world of the abyss. Indeed it is possible to portray the Viti Kambani movement with eternal return as its [grammatical] subject.

...it [the eternal return] produces an image of identity as though this were the *end* of the different. It produces an image of resemblance as the external *effect* of "the disparate". It produces an image of the negative as the *consequence* of what it affirms, the consequence of its own affirmation. It surrounds the simulacra and surrounds itself with this identity, this resemblance and this negative....It plays upon these as though upon a never attained end, an always distorted effect and an always

perverted consequence: they are the products of the functioning of simulacra.[Deleuze 1997:301]

Eternal return and the repetition of memory are not absolutely disconnected. In fact, Deleuze indicates that the pure past expressed in Proust's work is tinged with the character of eternal return at some deeper level. Nevertheless, the two types of repetition should be strictly distinguished and contrasted as inverses; and it is worth noting that Apolosi's movement presents faces of both of these irreconcilable sides at the same time.

It is difficult to identify the gift-giving seen in the Viti Kambani movement as gift-giving; it refuses to be represented by an identical concept. In other words, to the extent that they are half-threatened when they continue their gift-giving without receiving anything in return, the behavior of those involved in the movement lacks the element of reciprocity, and it would be difficult to call this behavior gift-giving. On the other hand, if it is considered as "the repetition of memory," it is gift-giving behavior, in which a pay-back "this time for sure" is hoped for every time. However, at a still deeper level of this repetition of memory, the identity of gift-giving, the resemblance of gift-giving, and the denial of gift-giving are all refused, and the form of the eternal return endlessly spinning out difference is laid bare.

Derrida says that unifying the meaning of gift-giving is like "look[ing] for noon at two o'clock"[Derrida 1992:34]. What we see here is not gift-giving as a concept that causes meaning(s) to converge, but merely "gift-giving" as a word that causes meaning to be scattered and lost. Indeed, it seems better to handle gift-giving not as an identical concept, but a Deleuzian Idea, including in itself superfluity and alterity.

It seems that, far from being an exceptional form of gift-giving, the Viti Kambani movement makes clear various potential problems concerning gift-giving. For example, reciprocity in gift-giving cannot necessarily be identified clearly, as long as gift-giving builds human relationships, and then again as long as those relationships both include disparities and are themselves a series that produces disparities. In particular, harsh demands, meager returns, and the fear of being ignored, can be observed in many different societies as a complex of gift giving and power relationships.

Next, the point that gift-giving is deeply related to the self-identity of the giver and receiver has already been hinted at in Mauss' classical discussions. According to Graeber, not only are there cases of gift-giving such as that of the treasure of the Maori, in which the character of the giver becomes resident in the container; but also, as with the treasure of the potlatch, cases in which the gift becomes the "constitutive property" of the receiver[Graeber 2001:209-12]. Whichever the case—that is to say, whether concrete objects are imbued with the unknowable power of people, or the unknowable power of objects is internalized in people—gift-giving discloses the fact that people never possess obvious identity, but are beings in whom resides a latent difference from the present self.

Further, the fact that the pursuit of identity by means of gift-giving continues to produce disparities from the self for both the giver and the receiver is widely observable. As Bourdieu pointed out, gift-giving is more than a simple chain of payment and counter-payment: it is an uncertain and irreversible process of creation fraught with tension concerning whether or not the gift will be accepted, and whether or not it should be given; and on every occasion the resolution that "this time for sure," lies hidden[Bourdieu 1997]. During the process of gift-giving, the giver and the receiver watch closely to see how their own selves will change and how the other party will change. While questioning whether this is "really the appropriate quality and quantity," and whether, "It really now belongs to me/ the other party," they are aware that differences are generated from the original other (from oneself), when personality excesses and shortages are produced as a result of gift-giving. In short, gift-giving makes clear the fact that both the giver and the receiver are indefinite beings who produce disparities from their selves.

Finally, it is certainly not difficult to discover in other cases this distinctive feature, whereby gift-giving as a serious process exhibits the simulacra-like character of

the self. In addition to the identity of the self, friendship, solidarity, dignity, duty, god etc. also ride on the gift. However, no matter how many important issues are entrusted to it, gift-giving brings with it some form of excess and show off its self-elusive character. In the world there are countless instances of gift-giving that evade attached meanings and by means of such difference further encourage repetition of the behavior. They elicit such questions as, “Indeed I don’t understand. Why do you continue?” which should not be characterized as self-reflective. While the self-reflectivity, discussed by Beck, converts things into the knowable and the negotiable¹¹, this produces disparities and unknowableness without limit, and finally hurls into the world of the abyss the desire to identify the reflective self and gift-giving. In this sense, gift-giving makes simulacra of one’s very grounding and ironically denies it. Gift-giving shows its true value when it rejects the framework of conceptual representation.

Commodity exchange and freeters.

We, who have reconsidered the character of gift-giving, suddenly find ourselves in an uneasy mood, because “uncanny” things that we became familiar with in the past have begun to raise their heads: the disparities from the self in actors engaged in exchange; the desire to obtain self-identity; the ever-present insufficiency thereof; and the indictment of the acts themselves as simulacra. But hadn’t all of these been pointed out as characteristics of commodity exchange?

This is certainly the case. And yet, compared to the things one had become familiar with, there is a disparity somewhere. Whether one chooses to interpret it as alienation, fetishism, reification, or non-identity, to indict simulacra is to disclose the truth, an act that has been carried out critically, intentionally, and heuristically. On the surface, commodity exchange is an act in which the parties mutually what the other has and engage in a give and take of equivalents; it is not, as in the case of gift-giving, joint labor in which both sides produce disparities with their selves. In short, because the goals are accomplished as soon as both sides have gained the things they desire, leaving no seeds for future trouble for either side. Accordingly, it is at least possible to discuss the problem of self and disparities separately from the act of exchange. The normal course for indictment is to disclose the falseness of the logic of this kind of commodity exchange. No matter how vigorously exchange may insist on the completeness and transparency of the act, critics maintain that the seams always begin to show. To borrow Marx’s views of money: commodity exchange is “the fraternization of impossibilities,” and “it makes contradictions embrace.”[Marx 1967:130-1] For which reasons the production of disparities with the self and the failure to overcome non-identity are parts of its fate. In this way, the indictment of commodity exchange sees through to the “being” beneath the “appearances” and penetrates the truth.

Campbell faithfully applies this approach to the analysis of consumer behavior. Focussing on 18th and 19th century England, he depicts the outcome of the story of individuals who, after being deprived of a sure footing for their social identity, held out fantastic hopes for an ideal of revolutionary self-expression in commodities. The individual is disappointed that commodities fail to actualize a self in which he can be satisfied, and he again reaches for a new giver-of-fantasies, in other words, for commodities. He lives out a never-ending story: no, a story that ends in bankruptcy. Campbell believes that this vicious circle is the root of the dynamism of consumer society. Consumer activity, which supports the development of capitalism, gives birth to difference and repetition in the same way as gift-exchange; however, this is due to the fact that it is set up in such a way that disparity and failure are hidden and falseness is difficult to detect.

¹¹ See Bewes’ insightful comment on Beck[Bewes 2002].

And so it seems that we have been drawn back into precisely the world of binary opposition from which we began. The generation of difference and the repetition that we discovered in gift exchange, now appear in symmetrically inverted form in commodity exchange. On the one hand, the simulacra-like aspect of the former makes clear the non-identical and self-deviant characteristics of gift-giving; while in the latter these characteristics are merely evidence of the hidden scheme, and make the identity of the concept of commodities even clearer and more rigid. In other words, in the context of gift-exchange simulacra are the true nature of gift-giving; in the context of commodity exchange, they are no more than a means of laying bare the true nature of this form of exchange. However, this binary contrast is still not precise. This is because, in the world of commodity exchange, there actually exist difference and repetition that are incapable of reduction to hidden schemes or of being viewed as a revival of gift-giving. As an example of rejection of collection into such binary contrasts, let us consider the contemporary Japanese phenomenon known as freeters.

Freeters are young people who frequently change their place of employment, and are neither regular company employees, nor irregular company employees attempting to improve their careers. Among freeters there are many types, but those who attract the most attention are young people who seek out the type of life-time work most suited to their characters. In Japan there are in general age-limits for being hired as a regular employee. Nevertheless, rather than actively hunt for “work that I would really like to do,” these freeters live a life of passively waiting for something to turn up. They shift from job to job, making vague, spur-of-the-moment choices, and repeatedly thinking, “no, this isn’t it.” Their behavior is not mere repetition. This is because it teaches them disparity from the original meaning of “waiting.” That is to say, each time they search for a new, interesting job, the likelihood of being hired becomes slimmer as they age; and this job-searching, which should become an ever more serious matter, somehow takes on an air of irrelevance or indifference. In short, repetition gives birth to disparities from the meaning of “waiting,” and to difference from the self one imagined.

The problem of freeters does not originate in self-realization by means of selling the fictitious commodity of labor. With or without the simulacra of commodity exchange, there are countless wage workers who have lived a “satisfying life.” Moreover, it does not stem from the abundance of foreign labor markets; nor is it due to the schemes of capital exposed to world competition. The freeters themselves clearly refuse to be drawn into the logic of commodity exchange. Even when they go bankrupt, the consumers depicted by Campbell are dealt with by the financial and legal systems, resulting in at most a warning against feverish consumption; the well-spring is never touched. However, freeters are dangerous beings as far as the game of commodity exchange is concerned: they threaten its very survival. Although they are supposed to be the owners of commodities, they cause degeneration in their status as the protagonists of exchange, and seem even to deviate from the technologies of the self that support the commodity economy society. However, this also does not mean that the interest they often exhibit in volunteer work signifies active participation in gift-exchange. In short, they “wait” forever in a place where they never get used to either form of exchange, continuously producing divergence from the meaning of “waiting.” By continuing to give gifts to Apolosi, Fijians present the self-reflective and self-elusive character of gift-giving; however, by continuing to sell their labor for the sake of their own “self-realization,” the freeters of Japan expose how deviant and difficult-to-understand is the subject that commodity exchange produces within itself. One side proposes the inherent alterity of gift exchange as such; the other makes known the production of alterity that threatens commodity exchange. This is an asymmetric, somewhat eccentric contrast, but it seems rather an appropriate point of arrival for this paper, which began from a reconsideration of Deleuzian Ideas and combined it with an attempt to make new use of binary contrast.

Viti Kambani Activists and Freeters.

Let us go a little further into our analysis of the self and the disparities that the freeters continue to produce. By ceaselessly generating these disparities, freeters acquire an air of being on the border, as they exist within the logic of commodity exchange while at the same time threatening the survival of that logic. If we reinforce this with Donna Haraway's terminology, it is possible to imagine this border as lying between "implosion" and "explosion." Bowker, who developed Haraway's terminology in his own way, studied "a modality of implosion" that constitutes the biodiversity discourse of the current age, and contrasted this situation with explosion. "In a modality of implosion, representations are made of several registers within a single structure — the representations are imploded into a singular form rather than explored into full detail." [Bowker 2005:119] In other words, implosion is the conversion, by way of valuation, measurement, units, classification, singularization etc., of the countless produced non-identities to comparable valuation and to a form suitable for manipulation; and it exists in a mutually dependent relationship with audit culture, market mechanism, biopower and the like. On contrary, explosion is the very aspect itself that faces outwards and goes on generating difference without limit. That is, even while it is ceaselessly generating the difference from difference, the difference from difference from difference, the difference from difference...difference etc, it shapes the movement that breaks through pre-existing frameworks and systems.

While being positioned on the border of this implosion, freeters embody the production of difference that transcends the logic of audit, market and governmentality. Doesn't this picture of them call to mind people we have already studied in relation to gift exchange: the supporters of Apolosi? They continued to spin out disparities with their selves to the extent that the seriousness of their selves appeared as simulacra, and reached a point where gift-giving actions could not be called gift-giving. Their embodiment of the self-deviation of gift-giving is surprisingly radical. They stand on the middle ground, between the region where difference becomes subsumed under the name of gift-giving, and the area where difference expands outward to the point where it can no longer be contained within the name of gift-giving, and disperses. And further, on a border, they continue to produce difference without limit.

When the figures of the activists of the Viti Kambani and the freeters overlap in this way, the pattern of the special performance shared by the two becomes visible. It is a pattern that should be called "as if." Riles, who studied amateur lawyers who work as documentation people in a bank in Tokyo, astutely sees through to the homologousness of their amateurism and freeterism, and also depicts how these document people leave hanging in mid-air the "as-if" premise of the law. The law establishes the "as-if" legal fiction that the unknowability of the future to the markets can be converted to the problem of limits on the future, and composes documents as a means of guaranteeing this legal fiction. In spite of which, the documentation people invert this means-end relationship, devoting themselves to the production of documents for which the market has no need. Moreover, they themselves borrow the limits on the future that the legal fiction was supposed to have placed, and make a point of resolving to live a future without guarantees: an "as if" that precisely inverts the "as if" that is the premise of the law [Riles 2005].

As it does in the law, the logic of means-and-ends is a framework that forms one of the bases of the market mechanism. Further, it can be applied to gift-exchange. In either case it functions as a modality of implosion that controls the generation of unknown difference. Both the freeters, who hold up as their goal the realization of the self, while on the contrary reducing the possibility of their achieving it, and the Fijians, who set their sights on the success of the company and went on giving gifts without effect, certainly reach a point where the collapse of means-end relationships is visible, as do the documentation people. Further, they take upon themselves the unknowability of the future, to which this logic was supposed to have acclimatized itself, and, turning to

the outside of implosion, endlessly generate difference. They act out an “as if” that is the exact opposite of the “as if” that supports implosion, and open themselves without limit to the unknown future and to unknowable difference. An “as if” that directs itself towards a world of the interminable generation of difference; the complete absence of the same thing; the disappearance of the distinction between things that are simulacra and things that are not; and the overflow of disparities and groundlessness.

As far as post-industrial society is concerned, both the activists of the Viti Kambani and the freeters are bizarre beings who may even give rise to chaotic fear. Nevertheless, for people with a real sense of the stifling situation in which the ideology and practice of actual reform have grown rigid, they are, on the contrary, extremely valuable, enlightened beings. This is not because they offer specific prescriptions, revelations, or hints. It is because, in this age when the “modalities of implosion” have become ever more rigid and value judgements and evaluation are penetrating into every corner of life, they recognize the disparities from themselves latent in themselves and others, and because they live on in an “as if” way that almost seems positively to affirm that fact. If such is the case, rather than turning our attention to the “enclaving” of commodity exchange or the revitalization of gift-exchange, we would do better to shine more light upon the people who deviate from exchange itself, and further continue to deviate from deviation.

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