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Rethinking Exchange

Itineraries Through
Economy, Sociology and Philosophy

Ripensare lo scambio

Itinerari tra economia,
sociologia e filosofia

edited by • a cura di
FEDERICA BUONGIORNO - ANTONIO LUCCI



EDIZIONI DI STORIA E LETTERATURA

ABSTRACTS

MARCEL HÉNAFF, *Is There Something as a Gift Economy?*

It could be that the ceremonial gift exchange described by Mauss has little to do with the ordinary idea of giving (as unilateral generosity and gesture of solidarity), and that the primary purpose of that exchange is to be a gesture of alliance among groups – that is to say, an act that performs a political foundation of human groups based on reciprocity and public recognition. In which case this ceremonial exchange must be understood as the symbolic process that makes a human society possible. It therefore does not constitute a “gift economy”, to quote the strange oxymoron used by Mauss himself.

ROSA PARISI, *The kula from ceremonial exchange to narrative device: objects, gifts, words*

This essay analyzes a particular anthropological trait of exchange, namely its *narrative value*. Starting from Bronislaw Malinowski’s classic considerations about the exchange of objects in *kula* among peoples of Trobriand Islands, the author inquires into the ceremonial exchange, not only regarded as a mechanism that establishes a specific economy but also as a way to found and produce individual and collective memory of the subjects involved in the exchange processes.

IRIS DÄRMANN, *Social Theory of Gift, Gift-Theory of the Civilization. On Marcel Mauss’ Essai sur le Don*

This essay examines the concept of “gift” in Marcel Mauss’ anthropological works, with special regard to the *Essai sur le don*. Gift and the related social structures and institutions are analysed from a collective point of view (as “fait social

total”) as well as from a subjective point of view, regarding their consequences for the constitution of subjectivity. Mauss’ thought is examined both with regard to contemporaneous authors (such as Émile Durkheim) and to the reception in the 20th Century (Jacques Derrida, Georges Bataille, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jean-Luc Nancy).

ADELINO ZANINI, *Exchange as Anthropological Figure. About Adam Smith*

The author discusses the philosophical and anthropological foundations of Adam Smith’s theory of exchange as it is treated in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. By analysing the differences existing between social, selfish, and unsocial passions, he asserts that the traditional interpretation of Adam Smith’s primacy of economic egoism, when it is abstractly considered, is devoid of any textual evidence. In fact, this usual interpretation assumes, even if in updated form, the old perspective delineated in the so called “Das Adam Smith Problem”. For this reason, it is not able to give the due explanation of the themes that characterize the relationships between *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nations*, particularly, with respect to the nexus concerning prudence, persuasion, and selfish passions.

FRANCESCO SAVERIO TRINCIA, *The Dualism in Freud’s Thought. Exchange and Replacement in the Drive Theory*

The essay inquires into Freud’s drive theory assuming it as founded on and constituted by conceptual divisions and redoubling of the objects and themes of drive. So considered, drive establishes a form of dualism, namely a kind of constitutive psychic *exchanges* and replacements, which are particularly clear in Freud’s *Tree Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), especially in the theory of *libido* and its turning into homosexuality. The authors suggests that such a dualism can be politically understood as a form of “disobedience” and tries to establish an analogy between Freud’s theory and the current political debates on democratic disobedience

STEVE REDEHEAD, *Symbolic Exchange and Jean Baudrillard’s Death*

This paper forms part of long term work on the philosophy and politics of the post-crash global condition. The work of the late Jean Baudrillard, and his theory of symbolic exchange developed since 1976, are a vital part of this theoretical and political reconstruction. The importance of symbolic exchange in any glossary of Baudrillard’s terms has often been forgotten. In fact symbolic exchange is perhaps the most central of Baudrillard’s concepts and the least understood. Indeed, the paper contends that the concept of symbolic exchange is the basis of Baudrillard’s critical thinking of contemporary societies.

ANTONIO LUCCI, *Beyond Exchange. The Suspension of the Exchange-Order as a Logical Strategy in Giorgio Agamben's Thought*

By focusing on the book series *Homo Sacer* (1990-2014), this paper examines Giorgio Agamben's concept of *exchange*, which I see not as an economical notion, but rather as a logical one. I shall show that Agamben understands the structure of mutual exchange between two concepts (either ontological, theoretical, or political ones) as the way Western philosophy forms *all* concepts. Through this analysis, I provide a more general reading of Agamben's philosophy: I claim that he understands his own philosophical apparatus as an attempt to suspend this form of "exchange".

FEDERICA BUONGIORNO, *Communication in the Digital Age. Byung-Chul Han's Theory of Power and Information Exchange*

The aim of this paper is twofold: first, to *describe* Byung-Chul Han's thought on power and information exchange as it is theorised in his latest works. Since the article represents the first scientific contribution on Han's philosophy, the author's first goal is to outline the general frame and topics of it with special regard to the problems arising from media and communication theory. Second, the paper provides a critique of Han's concepts of power, society and information exchange in order to show that the overcoming of disciplinary society towards transparency society, as it is conceived by Han, is not completely consistent with its premises and it does not keep out the possibility of their coexistence. Thus, current (western) society should be analysed by combining theories such as biopolitics, disciplinary paradigm and performance-society paradigm, rather than by excluding an interaction according to a monological (post-Foucauldian) perspective.

JOHN SCANZONI, *The Gender/Sexuality Marketplace. Evolving Patterns of Social Exchange*

Social exchange/conflict theory – the essence of which is that society is the continually evolving product of bargaining/negotiation among competing persons/groups – prevailed in American social science early during the 20th century until it was overshadowed by consensus theory – the essence of which is that society is bound together by dominant values and norms, conformity to which gives rise to social order/stability. Nowhere was that logic more influential than in the realm of gender/sexuality. In the 1960s, the Feminist Movement (launched in the mid-19th century) renewed itself by attacking that logic. During this same period, consensus theory was displaced in social science by a revival of exchange/conflict (EC) theory. Theorists applying EC to gender/sexuality drew from, among others, Frederick Engels who argued that, in pursuit of their economic interests, men had dominated women throughout most of human history. During our emerging post-industrial/

information age, EC is a prime vehicle for analyzing women's ongoing struggles to subvert men's long-standing domination, and thus achieve greater equity and justice. Although privileged women (and their male allies) are currently most active in that struggle, they seek to encourage less-privileged women to become more active, both for their own good and that of the larger society.

THOMAS SKOWRONEK, *The Deficient East. Economic Othering on Art Markets*

The movement of people, goods, services and capital is one of the aspects of market dynamics. In addition, numerous assumptions are put into circulation regarding not only the functionality of economic processes but epistemological and axiological questions, as well. Following contemporary sociologists like Michel Callon, the article reconstructs the role of cultural ascriptions in the process of structuring art markets. Based on the example of the Polish and Russian markets for contemporary art, the article shows how the notion of a "Deficient East" was used to discipline new, post-socialist market players and art worlds. The culpatory idea, specific cultural conditions would negatively influence an anticipated market development, proved to be a pivotal element of market stabilization under a neo-liberal flag. In this way, deviations from an ideal situation were sanctioned, while the idea of its principally possible realization was maintained. In conclusion comparable developments in Italy are briefly outlined.

HARTMUT WINKLER, *Change, Exchange, Communication. The Network-Building between Economy and Media*

Economy deals with the exchange of commodities; media manage the exchange of signs, or communication. Both are building up networks; between media and economy we will find parallels, interplays, and interdependencies. Several media products actually are commodities. Do they travel as parasites? Using the networks of economy to ensure their circulation?

JOSIAS LUDWIG GOSCH, *On the Advantages of the Idea of Circulation*

The text praises the concept of exchange of ideas and their circulation, which are supposed to be the fundamental components of human progress from a condition of backwardness to a more advanced position in the technical, social and cultural fields.