

"[T]he givenness articulate itself into a giver, a gift given, and a gift-recipient which are tied together, in principle, by a link of reciprocity..." These are the elements which we will look at.

Derrida is able to show how this model falls into self-contradiction to the point of causing givenness to disappear.

Argument (1)

"For there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity...the gift disappears as soon as reciprocity transforms it into a system of exchange."

Argument (2)

"For there to be a gift, *it is necessary* that the donee does not give back, amortize, reimburse, acquit himself, enter into a contract, and that he never have contracted a debt...The recipient benefits from a gift—pure gratuity—only if he does not immediately interpret it as a gift that has to be returned, a debt to be reimbursed as soon as possible."

Argument (3)

"Forgetting [of the gift must be radical not only on the part of the donee, but first of all on the part of the donor...the simple awareness of giving awakens the consciousness of one's self as giving, thus a sort of auto-recognition, self-approval, and narcissistic gratitude."

"At the limit, the gift as gift ought not appear as gift: either to the donee or to the donor."

Argument (4)

"[I]f the present is present to him *as present*, this simple recognition suffices to annul the gift. Similarly, it cannot be gift as gift except by not being present as gift. Or, if it presents itself, it no longer presents itself."

This leaves us in a paradox, by the presenting of the present is disappears as present. The other side of the paradox could be understood this way, "*the present gives itself without its presence.*" The possibility can become open outside of being. Pushing that to the limit, the gift is outside of presence, outside of self-subsistence, and outside of truth.

What this gives us, is that any attempt to define or grasp the gift will lead to failure, because it only proves that what we thought of as the gift is simply something else economy, because it doesn't resemble the gift.

{This is extremely murky for me, so it is probably unintelligible if you are depending solely on the two paragraphs above for explanation.}

Marion changes his focus here, he says the procedure of examination is all wrong, we need to look at the gift in its givenness.

Describing this givenness is a question of thinking through the gift under the rubric of givenness itself, without referring it to the economy, because the impossibility we just noticed does not concern the gift as such—but rather its economical interpretation.

To examine the gift under the rubric of givenness, Marion believes that bracketing of the individual parts (giver, givee, gift) will allow the reduction of the gift to givenness.

(1) Bracketing of the Giver

What is the meaning of giving a gift? First it isn't necessarily tied to an object. Actually the richer the gift to less it is tied to a specific object. The marriage ring symbolizes much more than it is worth in itself. Thus the gift doesn't coincide with the object. The most valuable give literally nothing, because what they give belongs neither to reality nor to objectivity.

Objects don't have intrinsic properties of givability, they are made objects of givenness by the act of the giver. The giver's obligation to giving only results from the recognition of myself being the beneficiary of a gift. {I'm not sure exactly what is meant here, if the fact of the gift I want to give has to be first given to me, or if I realize some *other* gift that has been given. I think it is the former, but I'm sure}

The gift decides the giver. The gift itself decides: it resides in the decision of the giver, but this decision itself rests upon the obligation motivated by an anterior gift...The gift *itself* gives in the giving the giver.

(2) Bracketing of the Recipient

The question is what does it mean for someone to receive a gift. "Most importantly, the act of receiving a gift resides neither in the transfer of property nor in the object received for an obvious reason: it resides in the act of acceptance itself." It is important that the recipient receive the gift, there is a need for acceptance, there has to be a decision to receive it.

The gift fulfills itself perfectly when I—the recipient—make up my mind to receive it. The performance of the gift is linked more to my decision to accept it than to its own availability; moreover, it is often my decision which decides that something is found to be accepted. If we reflect, for example, on the call, the reception of the call (the recognition that there has clearly been a call for me) and the response by me become the strongest confirmation of the availability of this call—that no one else perhaps has heard, to which no one (undoubtedly) has responded in the same manner as I have...From the perspective of the recipient, the gift consists ultimately in the fact of self-decision, exactly as is the case in the perspective of the giver.

(3) The Reduction of the Gift to That Which Itself Gives

There is a difficulty to both in the act of giving but also in the act of acceptance. "To decide to receive a gift imposes the acceptance, with this gift, of the owing of something to someone. The gratuity of the gift is paid for with the recognition—of the gift and of its very gratuity...To decide to receive the gift is equivalent to deciding to become obligated by the gift...[T]he gift remains impossible as long as one is not attached to it, either in giving it or in accepting it."

There is a certain power which the gift in the character of givenness has over both parties, giver and givee.

(4) The Gift Reduced—Without Return

"The gift would thus lose all gratuity, all grace, if it is given to a recipient capable of 'offering' or compensating for it. 'If it is for recompense that you give, where then is your grace?' (Luke 6:33)...The enemy places the gift in evidence precisely by its refusal of reciprocity—to the contrary of friends who 'return in equal measure'(Luke 6:34) and who downgrade the gift to the status of a loan with interest. The enemy thus becomes the ally of

the gift and the friend becomes the enemy of the gift. The enemy emerges exactly as the model recipient-reduced, who receives the gift without re-offering it...The simple fact that a gift is abandoned does not destroy it; on the contrary, it confirms it in its character of givenness—no reciprocity whatsoever; there is not even the recognition of this gift which would corrode its pure gratuity. The abandon indicates that the gift not only surpasses every counter-gift but that it surpasses every possible acceptance."

The parable given in Matthew 25 gives good example of this, when Christ's return he will judge everyone according to the gifts they would have made Him on earth. They are confused with this parable because they don't know how to feed or clothe Christ; He explains that they do those things when they help the needy. This invisibility of the recipient emerges. It doesn't matter if the person receives your gift because you are doing it to Christ, not the person.

(5)The Gift Reduced—Without Beginning

Can the gift be considered while bracketing the giver?

Yes, cases of unknown or 'anonymous' gifts, the gift still has a bearing on the recipient. The recipient is forced to interpret the gift as gift, also the question of economy is lost because there is no possibility of recompensing. This allows for the gift to be reduced to pure givenness.

Conclusion

We have reduced the gift to givenness in order to expose the fact that beyond all objective support and all economy of exchange, *the gift intrinsically gives itself from its self giving*. We also just bracketed, first, the recipient in the figure of *the enemy* (of the ingrate and of the anonymous one) and, then, the giver, in the figure of the unsolvable *debt*. This yields the following paradox: *the gift, reduced to givenness, decides to give itself as an unsolvable debt given to an enemy*. Thus, we may pretend to have also reduced them to givenness. This triple reduction obviously does not aim to abolish the gift, the recipient, and the giver. On the contrary, it makes them play freely according to the mode of pure givenness.

So the gift doesn't depend upon the process (giver & recipient, because we saw they could be bracketed out without a breakdown of the givenness of the gift) by which it comes about, but upon its mode of appearing—givenness.