

A POSTMODERNIST APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE PHENOMENON OF GIFT EXCHANGE

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a philosophical analysis of the phenomenon of the gift within postmodern philosophy, revealing its multiple meanings and transformations in contemporary thought. In the article, the authors conduct a comparative analysis of the concepts of Derrida and Henaff regarding the problem of the gift. The article devotes particular attention to Jacques Derrida's aporetic approach, which questions the possibility of a pure gift within institutionalized economic exchange and elevates the gift to the level of an unprecedented ethical event, manifested in acts of "unforgivable forgiveness" and the sacrificial "gift of death." The article also highlights the significance of Marcel Henaff's theory, which emphasizes the gift as a ritual procedure that ensures mutual recognition and strengthens social and ethical bonds.

This paper employs comparative philosophical and analytical-conceptual methods to systematically compare concepts and reconstruct their semantic structures. The authors use hermeneutic and comparative methods to determine the conditions, foundations, and role of the subject. The results highlight the methodological significance of gift exchange for analyzing social and symbolic relations, critiquing economic reductionism, and understanding the space of subjective freedom, making the paper relevant to philosophers, sociologists, and cultural researchers. Methodologically, the paper draws on comparative philosophical and analytical-conceptual approaches, allowing for a systematic comparison of key concepts and the reconstruction of their internal semantic structures. The study reveals the critical potential of gift exchange for rethinking social and cultural interactions, exposes the limitations of economic reductionism, and expands our understanding of the space of subjective freedom.

Keywords: Gift, Gift Exchange, General Economy, Aporia, Phenomenology of the Given, Recognition, Sovereignty, Social Connection

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Сыйлық алмасу құбылысын зерттеуге постмодернистік көзқарас

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада постмодерндік философия контекстіндегі сыйлық феноменіне философиялық талдау жасалып, оның қазіргі теориялық ойдағы көп қырлы мағынасы мен трансформациялары ашылады. Мақалада авторлар Деррида мен Энафтың сыйлық мәселесіне қатысты тұжырымдамаларына салыстырмалы талдау жасайды. Мақалада Дерриданың апоретикалық тәсіліне ерекше назар аударылады, ол институционалдық экономикалық алмасу шеңберіндегі таза сыйлықтың мүмкіндігіне күмән келтіреді және сыйлықты «кешірілмейтін кешірім» және құрбандық «өлім сыйы» арқылы көрінетін бұрын-соңды болмаған этикалық оқиға деңгейіне көтереді. Мақалада сондай-ақ Энафтың теориясының маңыздылығына назар аударылады, ол сыйлықтың өзара тануды қамтамасыз ететін және әлеуметтік және этикалық байланыстарды нығайтатын салттық рәсім ретіндегі рөлін атап көрсетеді.

Жұмыста ұғымдарды жүйелі түрде салыстыруды және олардың мағыналық құрылымдарын қайта құруды қамтамасыз ететін салыстырмалы-философиялық және аналитикалық-концептуалдық әдістер қолданылады. Әдістер ретінде авторлар герменевтикалық және салыстырмалы әдістерді қолданады, ол үшін субъектінің шарттары, негіздері, рөлі анықталады. Зерттеу нәтижелері әлеуметтік және символдық байланыстарды талдау және экономикалық редукционизмді сынау үшін сыйлық алмасудың әдістемелік маңыздылығын көрсетеді. және субъективті еркіндік кеңістігін түсіну, бұл мақаланы философтар, социологтар және мәдениет зерттеушілері үшін өзекті етеді. Әдістемелік тұрғыдан жұмыс негізгі ұғымдарды жүйелі түрде салыстыруға мүмкіндік беретін салыстырмалы-философиялық және аналитикалық-концептуалды тәсілдерге және олардың ішкі семантикалық құрылымдарын қайта құруға негізделген. Зерттеу әлеуметтік және мәдени

өзара әрекеттестіктерді қайта қарау үшін сыйлық алмасудың сыни әлеуетін ашады және экономикалық редукационизмнің шектеулерін ашады. және субъективтік еркіндік кеңістігі туралы түсініктерін кеңейтеді.

Түйін сөздер: сыйлық, сыйлық алмасу, жалпы экономика, апория, берілгеннің феноменологиясы, тану, егемендік, әлеуметтік байланыс

Постмодернистский подход в исследовании феномена дарообмена

Аннотация. В статье представлен философский анализ феномена дара в контексте постмодернистской философии, раскрывающий его мультислойное значение и трансформации в современной теоретической мысли. В статье авторы проводят сравнительный анализ концепций Деррида и Энафа относительно проблемы дара. Особое внимание в статье уделяется апоретическому подходу Деррида, который ставит под вопрос возможность чистого дара в рамках институционализированного экономического обмена и возводит дар в ранг беспрецедентного этического события, проявляющегося через акты «непростительного прощания» и жертвенного «дара смерти». В статье также авторы обращают внимание на значение теории Энафф, в которой акцентируется внимание на роль дара как ритуальной процедуры, обеспечивающей взаимное признание и закрепляющей социальные и этические связи.

В работе применяются сравнительно-философский и аналитико-концептуальный методы, обеспечивающие систематическое сопоставление концепций и реконструкцию их смысловых структур. В качестве методов авторы использует герменевтический и сравнительный методы, для чего определяются условия, основания, роль субъекта. Результаты исследования подчеркивают методологическое значение дарообмена для анализа социальных и символических связей, критики экономического редукационизма и осмысления пространства субъективной свободы, что делает статью актуальной для философов, социологов и исследователей культуры. Методологически работа опирается на сравнительно-философский и аналитико-концептуальный подходы, позволяющие системно сопоставить ключевые концепции и реконструировать их внутренние смысловые структуры. Исследование выявляет критический потенциал дарообмена для переосмысления социальных и культурных взаимодействий, обнажает ограничения экономического редукационизма и расширяет понимание пространства субъективной свободы.

Ключевые слова: дар, дарообмен, общая экономика, апория, феноменология данности, признание, суверенность, социальная связь.

Introduction

Relevance of the topic: The study of gift exchange dates back to the late 19th and 20th centuries, to the works of E. B. Tylor, F. Boass, and B. Malinowski [1, 2, 3]. The works of these scholars marked the development of anthropological interest in the problem of gift exchange in the early forms of human community. These works formed the basis for the formation of ethnographic and cultural anthropological descriptions and the first major theoretical generalizations on the problem of gift exchange. Between 1910 and 1930, a theoretical and methodological basis for studying this problem was formed, which is presented in the works of Moss [4]. He was the first to consider the gift as a social fact and draw attention to the need to fulfill obligations, while the exchange itself is not reduced to economics.

Beginning in the 1930s–1960s, the problem of gift exchange began to receive intensive theoretical study. This is particularly evident in the works of Lévi-Strauss [5], which emphasized the structure of kinship and communication between groups. Roger Caillois [6] developed a playful/ritual logic and competition, emphasizing agon (rivalry) as the principle organizing prestige ex-

changes. Taken together, these approaches allow us to contrast gift exchange with utilitarian commercial exchange, where gift-giving constructs solidarity through a system of nonequivalent but mutually binding relationships. Scholars of this period conducted fieldwork, which yielded scientific, theoretical, and empirical material.

In contrast, in the 1960s–80s, Bourdieu developed key ideas about symbolic capital. Bourdieu explores gift exchange as a latent sociocultural mechanism in which the rational-economic calculations of participants are translated (and simultaneously concealed) into the category of selflessness for the sake of reproducing their symbolic capital [7, 8]. A significant structural condition is the time interval between the gift and the subsequent return. Bourdieu is the first to disrupt the linear obviousness of equivalent exchange and explains why participants can avoid the direct logic of equivalence, yet simultaneously remain in the regime of obligation.

As we see, research into gift exchange in the classical period explores its multiplicity of forms, developing various analytical approaches that highlight the impossibility of reducing the understanding of gift exchange to a single, singular nature. According to these analytical approaches,

gifting is not merely an economic phenomenon. Scholars believe that gifting cannot be reduced solely to a system of kinship, but it also represents a ritualistic, agonistic method of distributing prestige. Gifting, as we see, is contradictory, diverse in its manifestation and function. At the same time, gift exchange captures the changes and differences occurring within the system of relationships and within the community. The search for a single substance to which all the contradictory, multiple forms of manifestation and functioning of gift exchange can be reduced leads to the development of a new philosophical and theoretical model that attempts to provide a new interpretation of the phenomenon of gift exchange. Postmodernist philosophy is such a theoretical and methodological model.

The problem of gift exchange is particularly significant amid the crisis of classical models of rationality based on the principles of equivalent exchange, utility, and accumulation. In the contemporary theoretical landscape, gift exchange transcends economic understanding and is viewed as a fundamental mechanism for the formation of social ties, symbolic structures, and forms of subjectivity. In this regard, turning to the concepts of philosophers such as Derrida and Henaff allows us to identify various, often competing, interpretations of the gift as a phenomenon situated on the boundary between economics, symbolic exchange, and ontology.

The relevance of this study is also determined by the need to analyze these approaches, since each in its own way problematizes the nature of the gift. Thus, Derrida asserts the fundamental impossibility of the gift in its pure form [9, 10]. In contrast, Henaff attempts to interpret the gift as a form of symbolic recognition [11]. Therefore, the task of conducting a comparative analysis of these systemic approaches is being formed in the philosophical literature, which will contribute, according to the researchers, to a deeper understanding and awareness of the problem of gift exchange as a fundamental, central phenomenon of modern philosophical reflection, and will also contribute to an explanation of its analytical significance for the study of social and cultural transformations [12, 13, 14]. Thus, an analysis of the place, role, and function of the gift in the works of key French postmodernists allows us to understand and sense the boundaries of the

"human" in the digital age and rethink the foundations of social solidarity beyond economic calculation. Although in philosophical literature the problem of gift has become a subject of philosophical and theoretical research [15, 16, 17, 18], the phenomenon of gift has not been sufficiently studied, especially in Kazakhstani philosophical literature.

Purpose of the study. The aim of the article is a comparative analysis of the concept of gift in postmodernism, drawing on the concepts of Derrida and Henaff.

Tasks

1. To identify the conceptual foundations and differences in understanding the nature of the gift in the works of Derrida and Henaff.

2. To conduct a comparative analysis of these approaches to determine the methodological significance of the concept of gift exchange and its relevance for contemporary research on forms of sociality.

Scientific novelty. This paper attempts to conduct a comparative analysis and synthesize ideas about the gift in Derrida's ethical-phenomenological concept of the "gift of death" and Henaff's socio-symbolic theory. This allowed us to consider how the true gift operates not as an act of exchange, but as a "rupture event" that restores to human existence the character of unpredictability and freedom from the dictatorship of utilitarian calculation and the logic of exchange.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the study also consists of a synthesis of a comparative approach and a hermeneutic method, which enabled the differentiation of the ontological registers and the functional and role-specific nature of the gift-giving phenomenon. Using a comparative method, the authors conducted a cross-theoretical analysis that revealed points of demarcation among the utilitarian, semiotic, and existential interpretations of exchange advanced by postmodern philosophers. Thus, the tools of the hermeneutic method allowed the authors to uncover and analyze the verification of the aporetic role of the unrequited "gift of death" in the face of the Other in Derrida's conception. Furthermore, the hermeneutic method, which involves interpreting philosophical texts and reconstructing the se-

matic structures of the concept of gift in various theoretical traditions, allowed Henaff's concept, based on a revision of anthropological narratives, to explicate and identify the sociocultural function of reciprocal gift-giving as a non-commercial instrument for mutual recognition and the institutionalization of interpersonal alliances. In Derrida's concept, it allowed us to identify the paradoxical nature, as well as its constantly changing, elusive state, and contradictory nature. Thus, using a comparative method, the authors sought to identify the foundations on which their differences (economics and reciprocity, the role of the subject, status) could be grounded, as well as certain similarities in their understanding of the gift. Based on this method, the authors attempted to identify differences in understanding of the gift, evident in the conditions of its possibility/impossibility, in the role of the subject, and in determining the location of the meaning of the gift. This allowed them to identify the difference, the essence of which lies in the logic of reasoning in the concepts of Derrida and Henaff.

Main part

The concept of the gift of J. Derrida and M.Enaff: the theoretical context of the discussion

Derrida's postmodern concept of the gift seeks to explore the aporia of the impossible. The philosopher proposes a deconstruction of the economy and an examination of the essence of the ethics of the gift. In examining the problem of the gift, we believe it to be one of the most radical points in Derrida's concept of deconstruction. For him, the gift is not simply an act of everyday generosity, Derrida interprets the gift as a fundamental philosophical paradox that calls into question the very logic of human relations and language. In examining this problem, we must first clarify the ontology of the gift. In this regard, and within the framework of his deconstruction of Western European metaphysics, Derrida postulates a radical rupture between economic exchange and the "pure" gift. For him, the gift emerges as an event that fundamentally disrupts any economy, understood as a system of equivalence, compensation, and the circular circulation of goods [9, p. 17]. Derrida develops this understanding of the ontology of the gift in his

work "Given Time", in which he argues that the true object of a gift is not a material object, but something irreplaceable and non-returnable. According to the philosopher, Time is the phenomenon that cannot be repaid or returned. Using a hermeneutic method, it was determined that Derrida pays attention to time in the process of giving. According to the philosopher, we primarily "give time," since a thing merely symbolizes a break in the usual flow of time, whereas the object of a gift can be something irreplaceable, such as one's own life or death ("The Gift of Death"). In this sense, a gift does not imply repayment, exchange, or compensation, which characterizes it as an absolutely selfless act. The thing or object itself, which in this case is a gift, is excessive in relation to market necessity and, therefore, transcends the logic of supply and demand. According to the French postmodernist, gift and forgiveness appear as "impossible" phenomena, since in their pure, original form they oppose the logic of exchange, rationality, and the principle of equivalence [9, pp. 17-25].

Using a hermeneutic method, we focused on the role of the gift, which, for the French postmodernist, assumes the character of an ethical challenge. A true gift must be "forgotten" at the moment of its completion, as the giver should not perceive themselves as the giver, and the recipient should not perceive themselves as the recipient. Any awareness of debt or gratitude instantly reintegrates the gift into the system of economic exchange. The role of the gift is to test the subject's ability to perform an act that goes beyond egocentric calculation. Consequently, the key function of the gift is to deconstruct the logic of calculation. The scholar formulates a paradox: the gift is possible only as the "impossible." As soon as a gift is recognized as a "gift," it imposes a debt on the recipient and provides moral satisfaction to the giver, transforming it into a transaction and destroying its own essence. The function of the gift, therefore, is to be a constant interruption of the economy, pointing to the horizon of unconditional responsibility that expects no reward [9, p. 26]. In its most extreme ethical expression (according to the work "The Gift of Death"), the subject becomes Death itself as an absolute sacrifice that cannot be compensated within the framework of the life cycle or social contract.

As follows from the analysis of Derrida's position, the gift is conceived through aporia. The essence of this aporia is that, according to the philosopher, a "pure gift" is impossible, since it is not included in the economy of exchange. If a gift is included in the economy of exchange, then a chain of the following actions is assumed, such as reciprocity, debt, and expectation of recognition. In this format, the gift, according to the philosopher, ceases to be a "gift" in the strict sense because the gift is destroyed by a number of conditions. These include:

- recognition of the gift by the recipient, in which case the recipient turns the situation into a meaningful debt/repayment;
- the giver himself recognizes himself as a subject and introduces moral/narrative credit into the center.

In this case, the gift becomes not the simplest act of kindness, but a structure that constantly changes, becoming elusive. The gift is aporistic; it cannot be fully represented as a gift, either to itself or to another. As follows from the logic of Derrida's reasoning, we cannot conceive of a gift as a material object, a thing; rather, a gift functions as a structure of being. According to Derrida, when the giver defines something as a gift, it automatically ceases to be one. The scholar asserts that if the giver receives words of gratitude or feelings of joy, inner satisfaction, or bliss in response to the gift, then the gift is transformed into a transaction. For Derrida, a true gift exists and is fulfilled only when both the giver and the recipient forget it. A gift, in its true sense, presupposes a break in the cycle of mutual obligations and should not be associated with a debt or obligation of reciprocity. In such a case, the gift cannot be reduced to calculation, repentance, forgiveness, or any kind of moral debt [10, p. 72, p. 88]. The gift appears in the philosopher's logic as a "pure gift" – one that demands nothing in return. According to aporistic logic, a gift is possible only in the mode of the "present," which does not have time to become part of calculation. To give something means to cede part of one's temporal continuum to another. In "The Gift of Death," the object is radicalized to the extreme. Death is what the giver gives without being able to receive anything in return, not even recognition, since this act removes the subject from the economy of life. The object of the gift must be "withdrawn"

from the system of values. As soon as a gift is recognized as a valuable object, it becomes a commodity [10, p. 95]. Thus, through hermeneutic analysis, we have discovered that, on the one hand, the gift appears in Derrida's conception as an experience of rupture with the economy of visible exchange; the gift is also paradoxical and demands consideration of the "impossibility of a pure gift." On the other hand, the gift, in ontological terms, manifests itself as an elusive structure, or more precisely, as an aporia of elusion from the economy of exchange. Consequently, the ontological aspect enabled us to characterize the subject's role and its ethical aspects.

In the contemporary discussion of the gift, Henaff's position represents an attempt to overcome Derrida's deconstructivist pessimism. In contrast, Henaff returns the gift to the realm of institutional sociality, arguing that its "impossibility" (from the perspective of pure ethics) does not negate its effectiveness as a fundamental social mechanism. Drawing on an ethnographic analysis of the Kula system in Melanesia, the scholar posits that a gift's object lacks its own utilitarian value. The thing serves merely as a "message carrier," a material pledge of goodwill. The object of a gift is not the object of exchange but the very act of establishing a relationship, in which the thing symbolizes the parties' willingness to form an alliance and mutual commitment. For Henaff, the role of the gift is constitutive, serving as the primary legal instrument in pre-state societies. The gift creates a space of publicity, elevating relations from a mode of private acquisition to a mode of public recognition. It is a "political gift" whose function is to interrupt the potential chain of violence and replace it with a ritualized union. [11, p. 21].

According to Henaff, the key function of the gift is as a procedure for the mutual recognition of the dignity and status of the parties. Unlike market exchange, where subjects remain anonymous, the gift personalizes the participants. Moreover, the scholar substantiates the crucial cultural function of the gift, the essence of which lies in preserving certain spheres (truth, honor, justice, the sacred) from market commodification – that is, the transformation of certain goods into commodities, as a result of which various forms of human activity acquire monetary value. Thus, the gift separates the symbolic "price of truth" from

the commercial value of the commodity, serving as a guarantee of the existence of non-merchantable values in culture [11, p. 74].

The philosopher analyzes the specific nature of the gift object, its role in shaping social space, and its function in the transition from archaic gift exchange to a market economy. Unlike Derrida, Henaff defines the symbol of recognition as the object of the gift [11, p. 306]. The gift object (a prestigious thing, a ritual object) is valuable not in itself or for its value, but for its ability to serve as a "pledge" (gage). The object of the gift is the social relationship itself. The thing merely materializes the act of recognizing another as an ally or equal [11, p. 297].

The Aporia of the Impossible: Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction of the Economy and the Ethics of the Gift

Based on Derrida's deconstructive concept, a genuine, "pure" gift is conceived as an ontologically impossible phenomenon, instantly annulled and transformed into an economic exchange (transaction) at the slightest awareness of either the giver or the recipient. Derrida elevates the object of gifting from the realm of material things to the realm of existential modes such as Time, Forgiveness, and Death. Derrida argues that a true gift requires absolute cognitive oblivion and excludes the traditional material "reciprocal gift". The only possible response here is paradoxical immaterial states (for example, the ego's internal narcissistic self-reward or the acceptance of metaphysical guilt), which maintain the relationship between the parties in a state of absolute asymmetry. Derrida interprets the gift as a regulative ethical duty, serving as the only chance for a person to break through to selfless actions, free from calculation and self-interest. Unlike his classical predecessors, Derrida abstracts from the social essence of man, from economics, from the very logic of gift exchange. Derrida's distinctive interpretation of the gift lies in his recognition of its aporistic nature. For him, a gift cannot appear as such without destroying itself. If the recipient recognizes the gift, the phenomenon of gratitude or a symbolic repayment of the debt arises, closing the economic circle. If the giver recognizes themselves as "giving" they receive a reward in the form of moral satisfaction. The gift becomes an investment in one's own self-image. Thus, the

gift demands absolute oblivion. For a gift to exist, it must remain invisible, unphenomenologized [9, p. 38].

The central thrust of Derrida's argument is that, for a gift to remain a gift, it must somehow avoid becoming an exchange. The paradoxical and contradictory nature of Derrida's argument lies in the act and role of the subject, who, by realizing, recognizing, and acknowledging the logic of the gift (whether explicitly or implicitly), begins to operate as an exchange. The gift begins to be conceived as something possible only in tension with that which constantly "corrupts" its purity. Thus, the inclusion of the role of the subject leads to reciprocity and recognition, the positions of giver and recipient, including their knowledge and relationship, drawing the gift into the logic of exchange.

Another determinant, economics, always creates and conditions the transformation of the gift into exchange, even if symbolic. Therefore, the essence of the first deconstruction is to avoid that which transforms it into exchange, drawing it into a process of compensation. Therefore, in an ontological sense, it is necessary to abstract from economics, to consider the gift outside the logic of economics; otherwise, it is impossible to avoid its transformation into exchange. Derrida believes that in the era of the dominance of exchange and credit, all forms of gift exchange begin to be evaluated and considered within the framework of this economy. As a result, gift exchange itself begins to lose its essence and to transform into a form of exchange and credit economy. Therefore, Derrida sees the solution to this problem in translating it into the plane of philosophical reflection, abstracting from all external determinants. The philosopher proposes to investigate the nature of the gift as a concept, delving into the concept itself by identifying the rigor of its definition and its conditions. Therefore, the philosopher asks the following questions: 1. How to define the gift as a strict category, while taking into account that a gift must not be an exchange; 2. Show that the realization of this category inevitably involves mechanisms that abolish it. Reasoning and logically reproducing all possible logical operations in solving this problem, the philosopher comes to the conclusion that the gift is recognized as an aporia. Therefore, the paradoxical nature of Derrida's position on the gift lies in the fact that he

attempts to consider it as a pure abstraction, calling it a "pure gift," excluding its determination by social and cultural factors, and seeks to consider it as a logical category [9, 10].

The second deconstruction involves examining the gift from an ethical perspective. By examining various aspects of this task, the philosopher attempts to understand the role of the subject, as the subject performs the logical operation of recognition, acknowledging both the giver and the recipient. Therefore, the task is to clarify the conditions under which a gift can be called, or considered, a gift. Analyzing these conditions reveals that a gift, when linked to ethical obligations such as debt, reciprocity, and respect, begins to function as an exchange. Therefore, for a gift to be a pure gift, it must avoid that which turns it into recompense, into a recognizable debt. Thus, the philosopher concludes that the problem of the pure gift is problematic and paradoxical. The nature of the gift is dual, and the duality itself is insoluble. Yet, it is precisely this duality that guides us to be constantly selfless, keeping the ideal of the gift outside the confines of utilitarian calculation. The deconstruction of ethics consists of inventing an ethics that rejects all rigid dogmas and rules in favor of the living, constantly at risk, and open to responding to the needs of others, to their agency. The fundamental contradiction of Derrida's concept of the gift is that a pure gift is impossible, yet it remains the only ethical guide [9, 10].

In our view, this theoretical model finds precise empirical confirmation in contemporary social and bioethical realities. We believe this is clearly illustrated in parent-child relationships, where a grown child invests the scarce resource of the "gift of time" in elderly parents (while financial assistance serves only as a utilitarian simulation of a response). Finally, the ultimate manifestation of the "gift of death," in our view, is the practice of anonymous posthumous organ donation, where legal secrecy technically ensures absolute oblivion: the deceased donor is deprived of egotistical self-admiration, and the recipient is freed from a sense of personal duty, accepting only existential responsibility for the life saved. Thus, we conclude that in all these borderline situations, the subject breaks through to genuine ethics through the acceptance of unconditional responsibility to the Other, completely disrupting

the pragmatic logic of commercial exchange.

In Derrida's logic, the question of the "reciprocal gift" takes us to the most radical level of his deconstruction. While Mauss's triad of "give-receive-return" is material and cyclical (a physical thing is returned in the form of another physical thing to maintain social balance), for Derrida, the traditional "reciprocal gift" does not exist and cannot exist in principle. Any equivalent or proportionate response destroys the very essence of the pure gift, reducing it to a banal market transaction or the repayment of a debt. However, if we analyze the ultimate objects of the gift according to Derrida (Time, Forgiveness, Death), then the "reciprocal gift" in his philosophical system can be considered only three paradoxical, immaterial phenomena: for the "Gift of Time" is narcissistic self-admiration (internal return), for "Forgiveness" is the unforgivable (asymmetry), the Reciprocal Gift for the "Gift of Death" is absolute responsibility (existential response) [9, 10].

In our view, Derrida's complex and paradoxical philosophy finds its most vivid and accurate confirmation when applied to real-life situations of our time. In a world where almost everything can be bought, priced, and calculated, true, selfless gift manifests itself not through the exchange of material things, but through three profound existential phenomena: Exploring parent-child relationships, we believe that in modern society, in the context of digital culture, the most scarce and valuable resource is not money, but time. Parental education is associated with the "gift of time" in its purest form. Parents irrevocably give their children their time, health, and vitality for years. As parents age, within the framework of standard market logic, children often try to "buy off" by hiring a caregiver, giving money, or buying things. However, from our perspective, financial assistance is simply an attempt to pay off a debt, transforming the sacred parental gift into a commercial transaction. Derrida's true, non-equivalent return is the reciprocal investment of a grown child's personal time into live communication and co-presence with their elderly parents. This act of sacrificing one's own time maintains the relationship within the realm of genuine love, where no one can finally settle accounts with the other.

The radical absolutization of the ontological impossibility of gift within Derrida's deconstruc-

tive approach determines the emergence of a profound ethical aporia that paralyzes the intentionality of the moral agent. By imputing implicit self-interest and transformation into a utilitarian economic transaction to any act of reflection or awareness of the fact of giving, the philosopher inevitably reduces the real practices of altruism, charity, and social solidarity to the category of phenomena "polluted" by egoistic calculation. Such a theoretical disposition devalues the empirical status of conventional moral actions and entails the risk of axiological nihilism or social passivity: postulating the fundamental unattainability of a "pure" gift eliminates the subject's praxeological motivation, depriving any attempts at its practical realization of pragmatic meaning.

In the context of contemporary society and digital culture, where chronoresources acquire the status of the highest value, parent-child relationships can be explicated as a representation of Derrida's ethical-deconstructive model. Primary parental praxis (care, upbringing, socialization) manifests not as a utilitarian investment, but as a fundamental "gift of time" and "gift of life", coupled with the irreversible alienation of the subject's own existential potential. Accordingly, during parents' senility (retirement age), attempts at descriptive material "reciprocal giving" by adult children (financial support, purchase of goods) demonstrate the logic of capitalist debt closure, translating sacred bonds into the framework of market equivalence. In contrast, the true, uncompensated gift in Derrida's system is the investment of the child's scarce life time into a mode of co-presence with the Other (the parent). This act maintains the absolute asymmetry of the relationship, transforming care from the plane of a legal or social contract into the register of pure, unrequited existential ethics.

In contemporary bioethics, the phenomenon of anonymous posthumous organ donation represents the ultimate embodiment of Derrida's concept of the "pure gift", transcending the limitations of utilitarian exchange. The confidentiality of the procedure and the donor's biological status (brain death) create a situation of absolute cognitive oblivion, as the donor is deprived of the opportunity for narcissistic compensation and the recording of their own virtue, while the recipient, unaware of the benefactor's identity, is freed from the obligation of symmetrical "giving

back" and the paralyzing sense of personal debt. This practice manifests a radical mode of the "gift of death" (*donner la mort*), where the expropriation of the departing subject's own corporeality becomes the condition for transcending the life of the Other. The paradigmatic "gift" in this optic is dematerialized, moving into the register of existential responsibility: the recipient internalizes the presence of the Absolutely Other in his own corporeality, thereby transferring his being into the status of an ethical duty, not calculated by market mechanisms.

In our view, Derrida's deconstructive model finds its most precise empirical confirmation in the analysis of two polar yet existentially linked phenomena of contemporary society: parent-child relationships and the practice of anonymous posthumous organ donation. Exploring the first aspect, we propose that in the context of digital culture, where chronoresources acquire the status of the highest value, parental care and upbringing manifest a fundamental "gift of time", associated with the irreversible alienation of the subject's existential potential. Accordingly, during parents' retirement, any attempts at descriptive material "giving back" by adult children (financial support, purchase of goods) demonstrate the logic of capitalist debt closure, which seeks to translate sacred bonds into the realm of market equivalence. In contrast, in our view, the true, uncompensated reciprocal gift in Derrida's system is the reciprocal investment of the child's scarce life time into the mode of co-presence with the parent. This act maintains the absolute ethical asymmetry of the relationship, taking care from the plane of a legal contract to the register of pure existential responsibility.

Moving on to the second aspect, we believe that the phenomenon of anonymous posthumous organ donation represents an even more radical, extreme mode of the "gift of death" (*donner la mort*), in which the expropriation of the corporeality of the departing subject becomes a condition for the continuation of the life of the Other. The legally enshrined confidentiality of the procedure technically overcomes the main paradox of deconstruction, since it constructs a situation of absolute cognitive oblivion. In this optics, the donor is completely deprived of the possibility of narcissistic self-compensation, and the recipient, not knowing the identity of the

benefactor, is freed from the obligation of a symmetrical response. The paradigmatic "reciprocal gift" here is dematerialized, forcing the recipient to internalize the presence of the Absolutely Other in his own physical body, thereby transforming his further existence into an ethical duty that is fundamentally not calculated by market mechanisms. Thus, we come to the conclusion that in both cases, whether the sacrifice of scarce time in the space of the family or the sacrifice of corporeality in the space of bioethics is in fact a true gift, according to Derrida, which is actualized not through the circulation of material things, but through the subject's acceptance of unconditional responsibility to the Other, destroying the pragmatic logic of commercial equivalent exchange [10, p. 98].

Symbolic pledge and the procedure of recognition in the theory of Marcel Henaff

Unlike Derrida, Henaff explores the essence of the gift in the context of society and culture. In traditional societies, especially, the gift plays the role of a "social contract" – one that is fundamentally political and legal in nature – before the emergence of the state. It is a primordial gesture of hospitality that transforms the "stranger" (enemy) into the "other" (partner). The role of the gift is to be a public gesture. Unlike love or mercy, ritual giving is always performed "in the public eye" to cement the status of the parties. Henaff views the gift not as an act of individual generosity, but as an institutionalized procedure of symbolic recognition, defining its object, its specific role in social anthropology, and its functions in the structure of human communities. For the scholar, the gift is, above all, a ritual procedure, the purpose of which is not the transfer of goods, but the establishment of status. He argues that the gift precedes the market and the state, serving as the primary "social glue." The essence of his theory lies in the separation of ritual gift (public and obligatory) from ethical generosity (private and disinterested) [11, p. 306]. Unlike Derrida, Henaff views the gift as a form of symbolic action in society, demonstrating which social structures are reproduced through it (such as reciprocity/recognition/connection). Consequently, the gift performs positive "work" and is therefore rationally explainable as an institutional mechanism.

In our view, the object of a gift, in the researcher's theory, lacks material utility. It functions as a carrier of a message. The object is not the thing itself, but the recognition of the dignity of another inherent in it. By transferring an object, the subject transfers a "pledge" of their readiness for peaceful coexistence. The object of a gift is something that, in principle, cannot have a price. These are "treasures" that circulate within the union, confirming its inseparability. Often, the object serves as a metaphorical proxy for the giver himself, confirming his presence in the social space. The role of the gift, according to the researcher, is constitutive. The gift creates peace where there could otherwise be war. The primary role of the gift is to transform potential conflict into a commitment to reciprocity. It is a mechanism that allows two groups or individuals to recognize each other as equal subjects. The gift plays the role of public evidence. It must be seen and recorded by the community so that the social status of the participants is officially confirmed. [11, p. 305].

In our opinion, Henaff identifies three strategic functions that the gift performs in the structure of culture:

- The function of symbolic recognition: This is a key function. The gift allows one to avoid a "life-or-death struggle" (in Hegel's sense), offering a ritual exchange of tokens of respect instead.

- Hierarchical stabilization function: Authority and prestige are distributed within the group through a system of gifts and reciprocal gifts. A gift establishes who has the right to give and who is obligated to receive.

- The function of demarcation of spheres: The Gift serves to protect certain areas of human existence (truth, honor, justice) from the penetration of the logic of buying and selling [11, p. 299].

In Henaff's theory, the gift appears as a complex logical structure that provides the possibility of human coexistence. Its subject is a symbolic pledge, its role is the establishment of a union, and its main function is mutual recognition, without which the formation of neither legal nor political space is possible. Conducting a broad cross-cultural analysis based on classical ethnographic data from the early 20th century, Henaff reinterprets them from the point of view of modern political philosophy. However, the main empirical basis for his conclusions comes from studies of the following groups and periods:

First, Henaff draws conclusions based on the structural similarities of these diverse cultures. He notes that everywhere – from the Pacific Islands to Ancient Greece – there was a strict logic: a gift was obligatory (not a matter of goodwill, but of law); a gift was public (in the presence of witnesses); and a gift created a bond that could not be measured in money.

Secondly, the role of the gift is to create publicity. Unlike secret alms, the ritual gift of Henaff requires witnesses. Based on this, we can say that relationships are removed from the personal or private sphere into the space of socio-legal regulation, where obligations acquire a more normative nature, and their violation is associated with a loss of social status. This theoretical perspective reconceptualizes the gift as a rational instrument of political creation; that is, it is used as a way to build and strengthen social and even political relationships (e.g., alliances, trust, solidarity), rather than simply as an act of generosity. Its subject is a symbolic pledge that ensures the stabilization of social ties; to be more precise, it is not so much a thing as a sign (symbol) that affirms intentions, respect, or a willingness to cooperate. In this context, the gift performs the function of preventing or even avoiding conflict and institutionalizing mutual recognition, which is the basic condition for the existence of society, preceding and not reducible to market interactions.

Based on the analysis, the authors of this article believe that what the two philosophers have in common is the anti-capitalist stance and the recognition of the Gift as the only alternative to market hoarding, where signs of language and money operate according to the same laws of oppression. In turn, the synthesis of the two philosophers' approaches creates a powerful critical theory of capitalism. Derrida sets the philosophical bar for the impossible, pure gift beyond the framework of commercial logic. Henaff analyzes in detail the transition to money fetishism, revealing the irrationality of capitalism and its sign system, and explains the nature of modern crises, wars, and depressions. The authors see resistance to the market not in a change of power, but in a way out of the logic of profit. A conscious "unprofitable" gift becomes the only way to restore human dignity. What the two philosophers have in common is the understanding that a gift cannot be interpreted as a simple operation in

the plane of economic exchange. Philosophers note that a gift has a symbolic dimension (how an event is read/interpreted) and also a relationship between participants (a gift does not exist "alone").

In identifying the similarities between the two philosophers' conceptions of the gift, it is necessary to identify their differences, which can be summarized as follows: Derrida considers the pure gift theoretically impossible. He conceives of the gift as something that requires impossible conditions to avoid transforming into an economy of recognizable reciprocity. In this case, the gift as a "pure" category is called into question. Henaff, on the other hand, defines the gift as a fundamental form of symbolic exchange through which reciprocity and recognition arise. The gift is not "impossible", but rather socially valid as an institution/event of connection. Derrida conceptualizes the gift as a philosophical aporia: giving requires conditions under which it cannot be transformed into recognizable reciprocity and cannot unfold into a logic of debt and exchange. Therefore, the gift becomes a problem of purity and possibility. Henaff, on the other hand, views the gift as a socio-symbolic practice that shapes reciprocity and recognition: the gift does not abolish connection, but rather establishes it, demonstrating the positive social work of symbolic exchange.

Conclusion

The authors of this paper attempt to integrate Derrida's and Henaff's approaches to the gift, opening a heuristic perspective for interpreting contemporary digital phenomena. Within this framework, the authors seek to deconstruct the latent forms of alienation concealed behind the facade of "humanization" in the sharing economy and crowdfunding. In our view, contemporary transnational capital has successfully transformed acts of solidarity into utilitarian practices. The logic of sharing transforms archaic forms of trust and selfless service into commercial transactions and forms of total rent. At the same time, we believe that crowdfunding institutions rationalize the individual's sacrificial impulse, pragmatically reducing the altruistic gesture to a commercial pre-order or the acquisition of a participatory status.

We identify similar strategies of simulated capital in the domains of social media platforms and cryptoeconomics. The NFT and cryptocurrency industry marks a radical decoupling of value from its material basis, giving rise to a Baudrillardian realm of pure simulacra. Network platforms simulate Bataille's ecstatic communication through substitute forms of interactivity, such as likes, reposts, and donations. At the same time, the free mental energy of users (their "damned share") is appropriated by digital corporations to generate targeted profits. We conclude that digital capitalism demonstrates a remarkable degree of adaptability. The market logic successfully assimilates the radical potential of gift exchange, transforming the human desire for unproductive expenditure into new avenues for the extraction of surplus value.

In the context of contemporary philosophical debate, gift exchange is conceptualized as a complex structure that integrates elements of competition, symbolic play, and emotional intensity. Derrida emphasizes the aporetic nature of the gift, arguing that the gift becomes impossible as soon as it is recognized as such. A genuine gift, according to the philosopher, excludes any form of self-presentation or expectation of recognition, functioning as an act of unconditional ethical responsibility and radical openness to the other. Henaff understands the gift as the price of recognition; for him, the object of the gift itself is secondary, shifting the emphasis from its material value to its symbolic meaning. Gift exchange in this case serves as a mechanism for competition and the affirmation of reputation, status, and honor, while the gift object acts as an intermediary through which mutual recognition between subjects takes place. Consequently, drawing on these philosophical approaches, we identify a polyphony of meanings associated with gift exchange, united through themes of ecstatic excess, reversible strategies, and the critique of utilitarian logic, which confirms its status as a key phenomenon in the analysis of social, power, and symbolic orders.

An analysis of philosophical concepts of gift exchange demonstrates that the gift in modern philosophy appears as a multidimensional phenomenon that combines elements of ecstasy, competition, and symbolic play. For Derrida, a gift is considered genuine only if it is free from

calculation and any expectation of gratitude. In turn, Henaff views the gift as a means of mutual recognition between individuals through the exchange of certain objects, thereby acknowledging each other's status, while the former position emphasizes it as an act of self-giving that transcends the conventional relationship between subject and object. Based on a comparison of these approaches, several conclusions can be drawn. First, gift exchange can be seen as a critique of the reduction of social relations to economic calculation and profit, while demonstrating the existence of symbolic freedom. Second, its characteristics open up new forms of social interaction, in which what matters is not the possession of property but the ability to give, thereby reshaping ideas about power and prestige. Thus, the philosophical analysis of gift exchange confirms its key role in understanding the limits of subjectivity, sociality, and symbolic communication, revealing the gift as a field of intense interaction between ethics, power, and meaning.

Derrida seeks to break the cycles of economic exchange, focusing on the role of ecstasy as awe before an absolute ethical obligation and sense of duty, while valuing death as an exclusive gift that cannot be shared or restored. In contrast, Henaff emphasizes the social dimension of the gift, viewing it as a ritual of recognition, where the mechanics of exchange are grounded in the public affirmation of hierarchy and honor. Thus, a comparison of these approaches allows us to identify key characteristics of gift exchange: its ecstatic nature, radical reversibility, social and ethical significance, and its connection to the boundaries of life and death, making the gift an important phenomenon for the analysis of subjectivity, social dynamics, and symbolic structures.

The objectives of this study enabled us to identify the conceptual foundations and differences in the understanding of the nature of the gift in the works of Derrida and Henaff, and to determine how, in contemporary philosophy, the gift is losing its status as an exclusively economic or anthropological category and acquiring the character of a limit phenomenon in which ontological, ethical, and symbolic dimensions intersect. At the same time, each of the concepts considered emphasizes different aspects of the gift, ranging from Derrida's aporetic impossibility

and the rupture of exchange to Henaff's notion of symbolic recognition.

A comparative analysis of these approaches revealed that gift exchange, as interpreted by the authors, functions as a tool for critiquing economic reductionism and as a means of deconstructing the fundamental assumptions of sociality. The gift emerges not as a form of equivalent exchange, but as an excessive, asymmetrical, and disruptive event that shapes spaces of recognition, obligation, responsibility, and symbolic interaction. In this context, the theoretical and methodological contribution of these scholars lies in the possibility of examining contemporary social processes beyond the logic of utilitarian calculation, opening up new perspectives for the study of subjectivity, power, and forms of symbolic communication in the context of late modernity. Thus, the findings of this study confirm that the concept of gift exchange possesses significant explanatory potential and allows for a new understanding of the nature of social bonds, revealing their dependence not only on rational mechanisms but also on excessive, ecstatic, and nonequivalent forms of interaction.

An analysis of the evolution of the idea of the gift in French thought during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries allows us to conclude that this concept has evolved from a sociological tool into a fundamental philosophical category. The study revealed that, despite differences in approach, both thinkers share a desire to discover in the gift a mechanism capable of breaking the determinism of calculation and market logic. Thus, the problem of the gift in contemporary French philosophy appears not simply as an archaic relic, but as a strategy for resisting the commodification of existence. Whether in love, language, or political hospitality, the gift remains a mechanism for recognizing the absolute otherness of the Other and affirming the possibility of an unconditional event in a world governed by the logic of equivalence.

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