CHAPTER FOUR

THE BOND

It is the cardinal difference between gift and commodity exchange that a gift establishes a feeling-bond between two people, while the sale of a commodity leaves no necessary connection. I go into a hardware store, pay the man for a hacksaw blade and walk out. I may never see him again. The disconnectedness is, in fact, a virtue of the commodity mode. We don't want to be bothered. If the clerk always wants to chat about the family, I'll shop elsewhere. I just want a hacksaw blade.

But a gift makes a connection. To take the simplest of examples, the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss tells of a seemingly trivial ceremony he has often seen accompany a meal in cheap restaurants in the South of France. The patrons sit at a long, communal table, and each finds before his plate a modest bottle of wine. Before the meal begins, a man will pour his wine *not* into his own glass but into his neighbor's. And his neighbor will return the gesture, filling the first man's empty glass. In an economic sense nothing has happened. No one has any more wine than he did to begin with. But society has appeared where there was none before. The French customarily tend to ignore people whom they do not know, but in these little restaurants, strangers find themselves placed in close relationship for an hour or more. "A conflict exists," says Lévi-Strauss, "not very keen to be sure, but real

enough and sufficient to create a state of tension between the norm of privacy and the fact of community. . . . This is the fleeting but difficult situation resolved by the exchange of wine. It is an assertion of good grace which does away with the mutual uncertainty." Spacial proximity becomes social life through an exchange of gifts. Further, the pouring of the wine sanctions another exchange—conversation—and a whole series of trivial social ties unfolds.

There are many such simple examples, the candy or cigarette offered to a stranger who shares a seat on the plane, the few words that indicate goodwill between passengers on the late-night bus. These tokens establish the simplest bonds of social life, but the model they offer may be extended to the most complicated of unions. As I took gifts at the time of death as the best examples of threshold gifts, so I would take gifts as peace overtures and gifts given in marriage as the types for the class of gifts that bring people together and make one body out of several (gifts of incorporation). The ceremonies are no different from the wine pouring. To take just one of the innumerable examples of marriage gifts, in New Caledonia when boys reach puberty they seek out girls from the clan complementary to their own and exchange tokens whose value and nature are set by custom. A boy's first question to a girl whose favor he seeks is, "Will you take my gifts or not?" The answer is sometimes "I will take them," and sometimes "I have taken the gifts of another man. I don't want to exchange with you." To accept a boy's gifts initiates a series of oscillating reciprocations which leads finally to the formal gifts of nuptial union. Courtship in New Caledonia, it seems, is no different from courtship throughout the world.

Gifts of peace have the same synthetic character. Gifts have always constituted peace overtures among tribal groups and they still signify the close of war in the modern world, as when the United States helped Japan to rebuild after the Second World War. A gift is often the first step toward normalized relations. (To take a negative example, the United States did *not* offer aid to Vietnam after the war. The American Friends and the National Council of Churches both gave gifts to the Vietnamese—medical supplies and wheat—but Congress refused all reconstruction aid and the State Department went out of its way to frustrate the churches' attempts to ship food. For the government, it seems, the war was not over.)

The bonds that gifts establish are not simply social, they may be spiritual and psychological as well. There are interior economies and invisible economies. Gift exchanges may join figures and forces within the drama of our inner lives. Were we to take the

characters in a dream as separated powers of the soul, for example, then a gift given in a dream might serve the soul's integration. To read the Scottish tale "The Girl and the Dead Man" in a similar fashion, the daughter who gives food to the night birds is joined to the spirit of her mother from whom she has parted in fact (while her sisters are estranged from the mother in fact and then in spirit). Gift exchange is the preferred interior commerce at those times when the psyche is in need of integration.

Our gifts may connect us to the gods as well. Sacrifice turns the face of the god toward man. We have already discussed the rites of the first fruit, a return gift that seeks to maintain relationship with the spiritual world. On the other side, the side of the gods, there are compassionate deities who approach us with gifts. The special case I want to consider here are the gods who become incarnate and then offer their own bodies as the gift that establishes the bond between man and the spiritual state to which the god pretends. In some of these cases the gift makes amends for an earlier separation. "Christ gave his body to atone for our sins, so that we might be made one with God." "Sin" here is a falling away, a splitting apart: a man who sins acts so as to divide himself, internally or from his fellows or from God. "To atone" is to reunite, to make "at one." There was a time when a criminal was allowed—and expected—to atone for his crime with a gift, the synthetic power of which would reestablish the broken bond and reincorporate him into the body of the group. Spiritual systems call for atonement when a particular person or mankind as a whole is seen as having fallen away from an original unity with the gods. The Christian story is well known. In the Crucifixion or in the "Take, eat: this is my body," Christ's body becomes the gift, the vehicle of atonement, which establishes a new covenant between man and God.*

In other spiritual systems an incarnate spirit makes a gift of the body, though not in atonement, for no fall has preceded. There are higher states to which the race might aspire, and the spirit that has attained to them gives its body to open a path and establish a connection for others who would follow. Such a gift potentially revalues or redeems mankind. Again, this aspect of the Christian story is well known. Among the stories that are told about the Buddha there is another such tale of giving up the body. Tradition holds that the giving of alms is the first of the ten perfections

* To atone and to forgive are complementary acts. In forgiving a sin, he who has been sinned against initiates the exchange that reestablishes the bond. We forgive once we give up attachment to our wounds.

required of a future Buddha. The *Jātaka*, the Pali collection of accounts of the Buddha's former lives, tells us that there was no limit to the number of existences in which Gautama Buddha became perfect in alms giving, but the height of his perfection was reached during a lifetime in which he was a rabbit, the Wise Hare. Being a Future Buddha, this hare was naturally a rather special animal, one who not only gave alms but kept the precepts and observed the fast days.

The story goes like this. On one particular fast day the Wise Hare lay in his thicket, thinking to himself that he would go out and eat some dabba-grass when the time came to break his fast. Now, as the giving of alms while fasting brings great reward, and as any beggar who came before him might not want to eat grass, the hare thought to himself, If any supplicant comes, I will give him my own flesh. Such fiery spiritual zeal heated up the marble throne of Sakka, the ruler of the heaven of sensual pleasure. Peering down toward the earth, he spied the cause of this heat, and resolved to test the hare. He disguised himself as a Brahman and appeared before the Future Buddha.

"Brahman, why are you standing there?" asked the hare.

"Pandit, if I could only get something to eat, I would keep the fast-day vows and perform the duties of a monk."

The Future Buddha was delighted. "Brahman," he said, "you have done well in coming to me for food. Today I will give alms such as I never gave before; and you will not have broken the precepts by destroying life. Go, my friend, and gather wood, and when you have made a bed of coals, come and tell me. I will sacrifice my life by jumping into the bed of live coals. And as soon as my body is cooked, eat my flesh and perform the duties of a monk."

When Sakka heard this speech, he made a heap of live coals by using his superhuman power, and came and told the Future Buddha, who then rose from his couch of dabba-grass and went to the spot. He shook himself three times, saying, "If there are any insects in my fur, I must not let them die." Then "throwing his whole body into the jaws of his generosity" (as the Sutra puts it), he jumped into the bed of coals, as delighted in mind as a royal flamingo when it alights in a cluster of lotus blossoms.

The fire, however, was unable to burn even a hair-pore of the Future Buddha's body. "Brahman," said the hare, "the fire you have made is exceedingly cold. What does it mean?"

"Pandit, I am no Brahman. I am Sakka, come to try you."

"Sakka, your efforts are useless, for if all the beings who dwell

in the world were to try me in respect to my generosity, they would not find in me any unwillingness to give."

"Wise Hare," said Sakka, "let your virtue be proclaimed to the end of this world-cycle." And taking a mountain in his hand, he squeezed it and, with the juice, drew the outline of a hare on the disk of the moon.

The *Jātaka* records five hundred and fifty stories of the Buddha's anterior lives; the point of these stories is to record the helical development of Gautama Buddha through the cycles of birth and rebirth. Almsgiving is always a part of the preparation for incorporation into a higher level, and the story of the Wise Hare is, says the *Jātaka*, "the acme of almsgiving." It is a Buddhist version of "Take, eat: this is my body," the highest gift of the incarnate spirit. It is not a tale of atonement because the gift follows no previous alienation from the spirit world. But the gift connects the Buddha—and any who would follow his spirit—to a higher state. We must all give up the body, but saints and incarnate deities intend that gift, and, through it, establish bonds between man and the spiritual world.

The synthetic or erotic nature of the giving of a gift may be seen more clearly if we contrast it to the selling of commodities. I would begin the analysis by saying that a commodity has value and a gift does not. A gift has worth. I'm obviously using these terms in a particular sense. I mean "worth" to refer to those things we prize and yet say "you can't put a price on it." We derive value, on the other hand, from the comparison of one thing with another. "I cannot express the value of linen in terms of linen," says Marx in the classic analysis of commodities which opens his *Capital*. Value needs a difference for its expression; when there is no difference we are left with tautology ("a yard of linen is a yard of linen"). The phrases "exchange value" and "market value" carry the sense of "value" I mean to mark here: a thing has no market value in itself except when it is in the marketplace, and what cannot be exchanged has no exchange value.*

It is characteristic of market exchange that commodities move

* I use "value" and "worth" when I want to mark this distinction. I was therefore delighted to find the following footnote in Marx: "In the seventeenth century, many English authors continued to write 'worth' for 'use-value' and 'value' for 'exchange-value', this being accordant with the genius of a language which prefers an Anglo-Saxon word for an actual thing, and a Romance word for its reflexion."

between two independent spheres. We might best picture the difference between gifts and commodities in this regard by imagining two territories separated by a boundary. A gift, when it moves across the boundary, either stops being a gift or else abolishes the boundary. A commodity can cross the line without any change in its nature; moreover, its exchange will often establish a boundary where none previously existed (as, for example, in the sale of a necessity to a friend). *Logos*-trade draws the boundary, *eros*-trade erases it.

In his analysis of commodities, Marx gives many examples of useful objects which are the product of human labor but which are not commodities. A man who makes his own tools does not make commodities. Likewise, "in the primitive communities of India . . . the products of . . . production do not become commodities." The materials that circulate *inside* a factory are not commodities. Marx intends by all of these examples to underline his point that a commodity becomes such when it moves between two separate spheres (without, we would add, abolishing their separation). "The only products which confront one another as commodities are those produced by reciprocally independent enterprises."

This being the case, commodity exchange will either be missing or frowned upon to the degree that a group thinks of itself as one body, as "of a piece." Tribal groups or Marx's "primitive communities of India" or close-knit families would all be examples. There is a famous law in the Old Testament—which I shall expand upon in a later chapter so as to present a history of gift exchange—a double law which prohibits the charging of interest on loans to members of the tribe while allowing that it may be charged to strangers. In terms of the present analysis, such a law asks that gift exchange predominate within the group (particularly in the case of needy members), while allowing that strangers may deal in commodities (money let out at interest being commodity-money or stranger-money). The boundary of the group is the key to which of the two forms of exchange is proper. Such a double law is not at all peculiar to the Jews; any close-knit group will express their sense of "brothers and others" in a double economy. In an earlier chapter I referred to an ethic among the Uduk: "any wealth transferred from one subclan to another, whether animals, grain or money, is in the nature of a *gift*, and should be consumed, not invested for growth." No such prohibition applies to dealings with strangers, but the subclans of the Uduk intermarry; they are meant to be "of a piece," and the preferred economy is therefore gift exchange, not market exchange.

If a thing is to have a market value, it must be detachable or alienable so that it can be put on the scale and compared. I mean this in a particular sense: we who do the valuation must be able to stand apart from the thing we are pricing. We have to be able to conceive of separating ourselves from it. I may be fond of my wristwatch but I can put a value on it because I can imagine parting with it. But my heart has no market value (at least not to me!), for to detach it is inconceivable. (I address below the interesting question of value in relation to body organs used for transplant.) We feel it inappropriate, even rude, to be asked to evaluate in certain situations. Consider the old ethics-class dilemma in which you are in a lifeboat with your spouse and child and grandmother and you must choose who is to be thrown overboard to keep the craft afloat—it's a dilemma because you are forced to evaluate in a context, the family, which we are normally unwilling to stand apart from and reckon as we would reckon commodities. We are sometimes forced into such judgments, to be sure, but they are stressful precisely because we tend not to assign comparative values to those things to which we are emotionally connected.

Let us take one example each of the form of deliberation appropriate to marketing a commodity and to giving a gift. I intend these examples to illustrate the nature of the gift bond, to show that a bond precedes or is created by donation and that it is absent, suspended, or severed in commodity exchange. I have chosen rather striking cases here—how the Ford Motor Company marketed its Pinto automobile and how people who are called upon to do so decide whether or not to give one of their kidneys to a dying relative—yet each case is typical of the contrast between gift and commodity in that it is the presence or absence of an emotional connection which determines the mode of evaluation.

One classic way of evaluating the production, sale, or purchase of a commodity is cost-benefit analysis, in which a balance sheet is drawn up for some undertaking, weighing its expenses against its rewards. Cost-benefit analyses have met with justifiable scorn in recent years because they often involve a hidden confusion or deliberate obfuscation of the difference between worth and value. We feel some things to be gifts by nature, and these cannot be entered into a cost-benefit analysis because they cannot be priced. What is or isn't a gift, however, is a matter of belief or custom, so it is not necessarily obvious when quantitative evaluation is improper.

In a classic example both of cost-benefit analysis and of the confusion between worth and value, the Ford Motor Company had

to decide if it should add an inexpensive safety device to its Pinto cars and trucks. The Pinto's gas tank was situated in such a way that it would rupture during a low-speed rear-end collision, spilling gasoline and risking a fire. Before putting the car on the market, Ford tested three different devices that would tend to prevent the rupturing of the tank. One would have cost $1, another around $5, and the third, $11. In the end, however, Ford decided that benefits did not justify costs, and no safety feature was added to the vehicle. According to Mark Dowie, between 1971, when the Pinto was introduced, and 1977, when the magazine *Mother Jones* printed Dowie's analysis of the case, at least five hundred people burned to death in Pinto crashes.

In order to apply a cost-benefit analysis to a situation in which the core equation is "cost of safety parts vs cost of lives lost," one must first put a price on life. Ford was spared the embarrassment of doing this themselves because the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration had already done it and Ford merely cribbed the figures. Here, as it appeared in a 1971 NHTSA study, is the itemized price of a traffic fatality, including a precise figure for "pain and suffering":

A Ford Motor Company internal memorandum estimated that if the Pinto was sold without the $11 safety feature, 2,100 cars would

ITEM	COST
Future Productivity Losses	
Direct	$132,000.
Indirect	41,300.
Medical Costs	
Hospital	700.
Other	425.
Property Damage	1,500.
Insurance Administration	4,700.
Legal and Court	3,000.
Employer Loses	1,000.
Victim's Pain & Suffering	10,000.
Funeral	900.
Assets (Lost Consumption)	5,000.
Misc. Accident Cost	200.
TOTAL per fatality:	$200,725.

burn every year, 180 people would be hurt but survive, and another 180 would burn to death. Rounding off the government's figure, Ford put the price of a life at $200,000. They estimated a survivor's medical bills at $67,000 and the cost of a lost vehicle at $700. Given the market—11 million cars and 1.5 million light trucks every year—the company then drew up the following balance sheet:

BENEFITS *money saved by a safer car*	COSTS *money spent on safety device*
180 deaths × $200,000 + 180 injuries × $67,000 + 2,100 vehicles × $700	11 million cars × $11 per part + 1.5 million trucks × $11
= $49.5 million	= $137.5 million

As the costs so clearly exceed the benefits, the decision was made not to spend money on the safety feature.

If we accept for a moment that human life may be counted as a commodity, the story of the Pinto offers a picture of decision-making in the marketplace. The classic model of market deliberation assumes an "economic man" whose desire is to increase his rewards and cut his costs. *Homo oeconomicus* identifies the elements of a problem and all of its possible solutions, treating no element as so much a part of himself that his emotions would be unduly stirred by its alienation. He lines up his choices, assigns prices to them, weighs one against another, chooses his course and acts. Few of our decisions benefit from such complete analysis, of course, but nonetheless it is our goal in the marketplace to deliberate in this quantitative and comparative manner. How, then, do we make choices that involve gifts?

Some of the most interesting recent work on this question has come from studies of people who have been asked to give one of their kidneys to a mortally ill relative. The human body is able to function with a single kidney, though nature has given us two. It is now the case that another person's kidney can be transplanted into the body of someone whose own kidneys have failed. The greatest problem with such transplants has been that the recipient's immunological system, reacting as if the body had been invaded by a disease or by a foreign protein, attacks and destroys the new kidney. The closer the match between the blood type and tissue

of the donor and those of the recipient, the less likely it is that the kidney will be identified as "foreign" and rejected. Kidney transplants are therefore more successful when the donor is a close relative. An identical twin is ideal, followed by siblings and then by parents or offspring. In 90 percent of the cases, transplants from a twin are still viable after two years. With other related donors, the success rate is around 70 percent. Kidneys from nonrelatives (usually from cadavers) are accepted about half the time.

How does a person go about deciding to give someone a kidney? The decision is not a trivial one. There is some risk (about 1 in 1,500 donors dies as a result of his or her gift). The operation is major. It calls for several days of hospitalization and a month or more of convalescence; it involves considerable pain and leaves a scar that runs halfway around the abdomen. Not surprisingly, then, some individuals, when they become aware that a relative might need one of their kidneys, think it over in the classical "economic" fashion. They seek information about the operation—its risks and benefits; they talk to and compare themselves with other potential donors; they discuss the prognosis with the family doctor, and so on.

What is surprising, however, is that such deliberation is not at all usual. The majority of kidney donors volunteer to give as soon as they hear of the need. The choice is instantaneous; there is no time delay, no period of deliberation. Moreover, the donors themselves do not regard their choice as a decision at all! When asked how she had made up her mind, a mother who had given a kidney to her child replied, "I never thought about it. . . . I automatically thought I'd be the one. There was no decision to make or sides to weigh." A woman who gave a kidney to her sister said, "I don't think it was a decision. I really didn't consider much. I kept thinking 'What was the decision?' . . . As far as I was concerned . . . , I would donate a kidney." These quotations come from a study done at the University of Minnesota; for most donors, the study concluded, "the term *decision* appears to be a misnomer. Insofar as decision-making implies a period of deliberation and conscious choice of one alternative, most individuals do not feel as if they have made a decision. Although the gift of a kidney is a major sacrifice, the majority of donors appear to have known instantaneously that they would give the gift, and they report no conscious period of deliberation."

I have been focusing this contrast between commodity and gift on the issue of relationship, the emotional ties between the parties in the exchange. We do not deal in commodities when we wish to

initiate or preserve ties of affection. One hardly needs a study (though the studies have been done) to know that people who give one of their kidneys give it to someone they feel close to (and the gift brings them even closer). The instantaneous decision of these organ donors should not be such a surprise, after all. Situations calling for gifts are exactly those in which we find inappropriate the detachment of analytic deliberation. Sometimes it won't even occur to us. As the woman said, there are "no sides to weigh." Instantaneous decision is a mark of emotional and moral life. As an expression of social emotion, gifts make one body of many—almost literally in this case—and when a person comes before us who is in need and to whom we feel an unquestioning emotional connection, we respond as reflexively as we would were our own body in need.

Emotional connection tends to preclude quantitative evaluation. To return briefly to the Pinto story, when a decision involves something that clearly cannot be priced, we refrain from submitting our actions to the calculus of a cost-benefit analysis. The executives at Ford seem so sleazy because we find it hard to suspend our sense that life is not a commodity. To some degree, what constitutes a gift is a matter of opinion, of course. For example, wherever there has been slavery, some life has carried a price and some not. Arable land is treated as a commodity nowadays, but there have been times and places when it was improper for it to be bought and sold. Similarly with food. "The Yakut refused to believe," writes an anthropologist, "that somewhere in the world people could die of hunger, when it was so easy to go and share a neighbor's meal." We do not put a price on food if it is an inalienable part of the community. It would still be hard to find a family where food is sold at the dinner table, but beyond that there are few who feel it indecent to announce the price of a meal. Executives at Ford might have hesitated to buy Pintos for their own children, but no sense of their oneness with the rest of human life inhibited them from assigning it a price for their analysis. The great materialists, like these automobile executives, are those who have extended the commodity form of value into the human body, while the great spiritual figures, like the Buddha, are those who have used their own bodies to extend the worth of gifts just as far.

Because of the bonding power of gifts and the detached nature of commodity exchange, gifts have become associated with community and with being obliged to others, while commodities are associated with alienation and freedom. The bonds established by a gift can maintain old identity and limit our freedom of motion. To take a simple example, as soon as an adolescent truly wants to leave his parents, he does well to stop accepting their gifts, for they only maintain the parent-child bond. If you want out, you pay your own way. I had a friend in college who once decided to stop participating in the family celebration of Christmas. He explained himself in several ways—the great distance to travel, the waste of money, the commercialization of the holiday—but whatever the reason, his absence removed him from a gift ceremony that would have reaffirmed his connection to family at exactly the time when he wanted to leave it. (The same friend re-joined the family Christmas in later years, the group spirit of a gift holiday being less threatening once he had established his own identity.)

It seems no misnomer that we have called those nations known for their commodities "the free world." The phrase doesn't seem to refer to political freedoms; it indicates that the dominant form of exchange in these lands does not bind the individual in any way—to his family, to his community, or to the state. And though the modern state is too large a group to take its structure from bonds of affection, still, the ideology of the socialist nations begins with the call for community. "Labor should not be sold like merchandise but offered as a gift to the community," Che Guevara used to say. The young writers in Cuba refuse royalties for their books. "In a socialist society literary property cannot be private," they say. The revolution belongs to everyone and everyone belongs to the revolution, they say.

In states that profess to be such a "big family" we can well expect an equivalent to my friend's refusal to participate in Christmas. The jails in the free world are full of people who have committed "crimes against property," but in the East, it seems, they lock men up for crimes "in favor of property." There will always be times when we want to act upon our *dis*connection from the group. Herein must lie the fascination of Communist youth for Western commodities. Teenagers in Prague will risk their futures to acquire a pair of genuine Levis. In Russia there are secret societies of owners of Beatles records. A young man approaches a Western newsman in Peking to ask if he will buy him a Sony tape deck next time he's in Hong Kong. He knows all the model numbers.

The excitement of commodities is the excitement of possibility, of floating away from the particular to taste the range of available

life. There are times when we *want* to be aliens and strangers, to feel how the shape of our lives is not the only shape, to drift before a catalog of possible lives, staring at the glass arcades of shoes that are sensible and shoes for taking a chance, buses leaving town and the gray steam railway depot where men and women hurry by with their bags.

It is not simply luxury the teenagers of Peking and Prague want. All youth wants, once, to be alienated from the bonds that nurture, to be the prodigal son. Sometimes we go to the market to taste estrangement, if only to fantasize what our next attachment might be. This experience is so available in the West, of course, that we are well aware of its shortcomings. The freedom of the free world tends toward the perfect freedom of strangers. When Vietnamese refugees settled in Southern California they found its culture toxic to something they had always taken for granted, their family life. It's a free country, you can do what you want: get married, get divorced, settle down, leave town, ski, farm, talk on the radio, buy the radio; the problem is to find someone to do it with. In this old lovers' quarrel between liberty and community, Westerners are those who defend freedom and long for attachment. The tone of Country and Western music must be the American complement to blue-jeans mania in the East. In the typical Country song, a man is driving his Studebaker away from a bad marriage, toward the lights of town; or else he's working in the car factory in Detroit, all alone and pining for his home in the mountains. The truck drivers who figure so largely in these songs are a perfect image of commodity incarnate: free as a bird and lonesome. Given the choice, we choose the road. Those particularly American movie heroes, the cowboy and the private eye, act out for us the drama of survival in a land where man has no attachments. The cowboy and the detective survive despite lives of complete rootlessness, and they do it by fighting the lawlessness that is the necessary companion to the perfect freedom of strangers.

The conflict between freedom and the bonds that gifts establish is not absolute, of course. To begin with, gifts do not bring us attachment unless they move us. Manners or social pressure may oblige us to those for whom we feel no true affection, but neither obligation nor civility leads to lasting unions. It is when someone's gifts stir us that we are brought close, and what moves us, beyond the gift itself, is the promise (or the fact) of transformation, friendship, and love.

The issue of bondage and freedom has been well addressed in

the literature on organ donors. Early writers on the psychology of organ donation confessed considerable trepidation because they saw that the exchange was inherently unequal, a case of a gift so valuable it could not possibly be reciprocated. "The gift not yet repaid debases the man who accepts it," Marcel Mauss had written. Might not problems of indebtedness create an inexorable tension? What if the recipient avoided the donor, resenting his subordinate position? What if the donor took advantage of the debt and attempted to exert his will over the recipient? One man who pondered these risks went so far as to suggest a sort of incest taboo prohibiting live organ transplants between close relatives.

Problems between donors and recipients have in fact occurred, but they are rare. Gifts bespeak relationship. As long as the emotional tie is recognized as the point of the gift, both the donor and the recipient will be careful to structure the exchange so that it does not jeopardize their mutual affection. The University of Minnesota study found that kidney donors typically seek to define their gift so as to minimize the recipient's sense of debt. A young man who gave a kidney to his mother insisted on referring to it as a return gift for her having borne him in the first place. A man who donated to his brother said, "I don't make him feel he should pay me back because he doesn't owe me anything. . . . I don't want him to feel grateful. . . . He doesn't owe me a thing." The point is simply that donors who care about the relationship seek to assure that their gift is *not* perceived in terms of power and debt. They may in fact expect gratitude and be hurt if it is not forthcoming, but nonetheless, those donors who prize their closeness to the recipient are careful to make it clear that the gift is not conditional.

Recipients are likewise aware of their relationship to the donor as it exists over and above this particular gift, and their gratitude is not a response to the gift so much as to the affection it carries. When the affection is missing, so is the gratitude. In one rather striking case in the Minnesota study, a woman who was to receive a kidney from her daughter found the girl saying that she would donate *if* her mother would buy her an expensive coat! Here is the mother's description of the daughter a year after the transplant:

> She's a very selfish girl and not very mature in many ways. . . . She's not used to doing things for people. She didn't think her life should be constricted in any way. . . . She wanted a fur coat. It really shook me up. It was unnerving. . . . She was reluctant and unenthusiastic. . . . She's very calculating.

Asked if the gift had made her uncomfortable, the mother replied, "I'm not uncomfortable. I've put up with so much . . . then she turns around and kicks us in the teeth." The daughter even saw fit to complain to her mother about postoperative pain. "I said to her, 'I didn't tell you about my labor pains.' And that shut her up."

The story is hardly a model of familial affection, but the reader will note that despite its magnitude, the gift did not render the mother subservient to the daughter. And for a good reason: it wasn't a gift. As soon as the daughter shifted the category of the exchange and tried to barter, all of her authority drained away. When either the donor or the recipient begins to treat a gift in terms of obligation, it ceases to be a gift, and though many in such a situation will be hurt by the revealed lack of affection, the emotional bond, along with its power, evaporates immediately.

We cannot really become bound to those who give us false gifts. And true gifts constrain us only if we do not pass them along—only, I mean, if we fail to respond with an act or an expression of gratitude. We might here remember the stories of *genius* and of the shoemaker's elves, for they make it clear that there is a kind of servitude associated with gifts of transformation. We are indentured to our gifts until they come to term. But this is a willing bondage, and the bond is loosened with the maturation of the gift. Our servitude is ended by the act of gratitude which accomplishes the transformation. The elves and the shoemaker are quit of each other then, just as *genius* becomes free spirit. Bondage to our gifts (and to the teachers who wake them) diminishes as we become empowered to pass them along. It is true that when a gift enhances our life, or even saves it, gratitude will bind us to the donor. Until it is expressed, that is. Gratitude, acted upon or simply spoken, releases the gift and lightens the obligations of affection between lovers, family, and comrades. Is it really proper, then, to speak of the ties of affection as a bondage? These are attachments to be desired. When gift exchange achieves a convivial communion of spirits, there is no call for liberty; it is only when our attachments become moribund that we long to break them. Interesting as the subject may be, it is not for a theory of gift exchange to explain why we so often enter and maintain relationships that have in them no life to offer.

Because gifts do have the power to join people together, there are many gifts that must be refused. On the simplest level, we are wary

of gifts in any situation that calls for reckoning and discrimination. If I am to negotiate a contract, I do well to pause when the man who wants my signature offers a three-course meal with wine. For, if I am a man of goodwill, I may subsequently feel my generosity rise as the time comes to put my name on the line. A gift, no matter how well intentioned, deflects objective judgment. Persons whose position in society demands that they maintain their objectivity—I am thinking now of policemen, politicians, judges—are expected, even required, to refrain from gift exchange. A judge should embody the law's impartiality. We want to feel he can separate himself from the particulars of his class, race, and religion; we certainly want to feel he has no tie to either the prosecution or the defense. Similarly, we would be suspicious of a congressman who accepted secret contributions from the liquor industry, or a doctor who took gifts from pharmaceutical companies. We want the doctor to be concerned about our health, and not feel a convivial communion with some proprietary drug.*

Despite my earlier caveat about fees for service, there are times when it would be inappropriate for a psychotherapeutic relationship to be a gift relationship. All healers risk contamination from their patients. In psychotherapy the doctor and the patient may both feel the need for a kind of distance between them. There are patients who can't begin to work until they sense that their illness won't destroy the person to whom it is revealed. They are not seeking an erotic attachment. In the Catholic Church the risk of contamination from confession is addressed by the architecture of the confessional itself: a grille or cloth stands between penitent and priest. Though it has other functions, the anonymity of the confessional shields the priest so that he may speak of sin without being drawn into it. The fee in psychotherapy may be a modern equivalent to the screen in the confessional, making it clear that the therapist is distinct from the client (as we now say). The fee states clearly that the therapist is not a friend or lover or parent. Freudian analysts maintain further that the fee is an aide in the resolution of the transference. The patient's unconscious emotions are expected to be transferred to the analyst in the beginning, but in the end they are to be withdrawn, and it will help if the relation-

* The prohibition on gifts to public servants has always been a problem because our expectations are conflicting: we want such people to become a part of their community, but we do not want them to be beholden to one particular element. Is a policeman who accepts an apple from the greengrocer an extortionist? Is he a lackey of the grocery trade, or is he merely accepting and expressing his connection to the group he serves?

ship is a market relationship in which therapist and client are, as Marx says of commodities, "reciprocally independent enterprises."*

Gift exchange must also be refused when there is a real threat in the connections that it offers. In ancient tales the hero who must pass through hell is warned that charity is dangerous in the underworld; if he wishes to return to the land of the living, he should lend a hand to no one, nor accept the food offered by the dead.

An Irish fairy tale offers a similar warning. In return for an act of charity the Queen of the Fairies invites a midwife to festivities at Fairy Knoll. The man who comes to lead the midwife to the fairies says that he himself is not a fairy, but a human who lies under their spell. He gives her instructions so that she may avoid his fate and return to her home. "I will come for you when your time is out," he concludes, "and then the fairies will gather about you, and each one of them will offer you something to take with you as a gift. You may take anything they will give you, except gold or silver."

Some days later the man returns to guide the midwife home. As he foretold, the fairies gather around with gifts. She takes everything but the gold and silver. Then, as she rides off with her guide, he tells her to throw one of the fairy gifts away. As soon as it strikes the ground it explodes like a bomb, burning the bushes around it. The midwife throws each gift away, and each one burns as it hits. "Now," says the guide, "had you kept those things until you went home, they would have set the house on fire and burnt all that was in it, including yourself."

The tale says there are powers in the fairy world which cannot be contained in the human. In speaking of increase in the last chapter I mentioned tales in which a spirit gift grows in worth when the mortal arrives at his doorstep. Here the increase seems too huge. The tale smells like a warning about psychosis.† Had the midwife tried to bring the gifts into the house, she would have been like a young person who gets involved with psychedelic drugs be-

* Alcoholics who get sober in AA tend to become very attached to the group, at least to begin with. Their involvement seems, in part, a consequence of the fact that AA's program is a gift. In the case of alcoholism, the attachment may be a necessary part of the healing process. Alcoholism is an affliction whose relief seems to require that the sufferer be bound up in something larger than the ego-of-one (in a "higher power," be it only the power of the group). Healings that call for differentiation, on the other hand, may be more aptly delivered through the market.

† Schizophrenia occurs at about the same rate throughout the world with two exceptions: it is more common in one area of northern Sweden and

fore the ego is strong enough to contain the experience. There are powers so great that if we were to try to live with them they would consume our dwelling place. The fairy gifts must be abandoned.

Gifts from evil people must also be refused lest we be bound to evil. In folk tales the hero is well advised to refuse the food and drink offered him by a witch. Folk wisdom similarly advises silence before evil. Conversation is a commerce, and when we give speech we become a part of what we speak with. A bewitched princess in one of the Grimms' tales says to the man who wants to save her, "Tonight twelve black men, draped with chains, will be coming; they'll ask you what you're doing here. Keep silent, however, and don't answer them." She says they will beat him and torture him and finally kill him, but if he does not utter "a single solitary word," she will be freed and will revive him with the Water of Life. Were he to speak with the black men, he would enter their bewitchment, just as the midwife would have fallen under the spell of the fairies if she had accepted their gold and silver.

It is because gift exchange *is* an erotic form that so many gifts must be refused. The issue commonly arises in public life. Should a university accept an endowment from a notorious dictator? Should a writer or a scientist accept a grant from a government waging an immoral war? We often refuse relationship, either from the simple desire to remain unentangled, or because we sense that the proffered connection is tainted, dangerous, or frankly evil. And when we refuse relationship, we must refuse gift exchange as well.

in all of Ireland. This tale is Gaelic. The strained relations between fairies and mortals in Gaelic tales seem appropriate to a land where commerce with the spirits is unusually risky.