

# RETHINKING EXCHANGE

## LOGICS OF THE GIFT IN CIXOUS AND NIETZSCHE

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A gift-giving virtue is the highest virtue.

—*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Who could ever think of the gift as a gift-that-takes? Who else but man, precisely the one who would like to take everything?

—“The Laugh of the Medusa”

Following the appearance in 1991 of Jacques Derrida's *Donner le temps*, the theme of gifts and gift-giving will no doubt take a more central place on the critical scene. But as Derrida himself notes in the foreword to this work, the problematic of the gift has been at work in his texts “wherever it is a question of the *proper* (appropriation, expropriation, exappropriation), economy, the trace, the name, and especially the *rest*, of course, which is to say more or less constantly.”<sup>1</sup> More specifically, I would say that the gift was a largely unrecognized but central and recurrent Derridean theme in his texts of the seventies ranging from *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, in which the giving of woman is joined to Heidegger's question of the proper, property, and the gift of Being, through *La carte postale*, in which he addresses issues surrounding giving and the gift in terms of *envois* and their failure to arrive at their destinations, the giving and return of the *fort/da* in Freud, the giving/theft of the letter in Poe, and the *es gibt* of *Sein* and *Ereignis* in Heidegger.

One reader of Derrida who has not failed to attend to this problematic is Hélène Cixous. In “The Laugh of the Medusa,” upon introducing “the whole deceptive problematic of the gift,” she suggests in a footnote that the reader “re-read Derrida's text, ‘Le Style de la femme,’” in which he identifies the gift, in Nietzsche, as “the essential predicate of woman.”<sup>2</sup> In the following remarks, I would like to examine Cixous's comments on giving, property, appropriation, generosity, and exchange—what I am here calling the logic of the gift. And following Cixous's own oblique suggestion, I would like to begin by

re-reading several of Nietzsche's reflections on economy, exchange, and the giving of gifts. By bringing Nietzsche and Cixous into dialogue on these points, we will be able to examine the exchange model and the definition of subjectivity in terms of the acquisition of property that accompanies this model. In so doing, we will experiment with another model, one based on an economy of generosity that in different ways is suggested by both Nietzsche and Cixous.

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In the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche traces the genealogy of the modern moral concepts of guilt and bad conscience back to their economic roots in “the oldest and most primitive personal relationship, that between buyer and seller, creditor and debtor.”<sup>3</sup> The moral concept “guilt” is shown to originate in the economic-legal notion of a debt as something that can and should be repaid. *Schuld*, which translates both debt and guilt, thus operates within a strange logic of compensation that seeks to establish equivalences between the creditor and the debtor. Like guilt, obligation, and punishment, Nietzsche also locates the origin of justice in the relationship between creditor and debtor. This primitive contractual relationship made possible comparative evaluations of relative worth, and it allowed primitive society to arrive at “the oldest and naivest moral canon of justice [*Gerechtigkeit*], the beginning of all ‘good-naturedness,’ all ‘fairness,’ all ‘good will,’ all ‘objectivity’ on earth” (GM II, 8)—by which Nietzsche means the *jus talionis*: “an eye for an eye.” Justice, for Nietzsche,

originates between parties of approximately *equal power*. . . . The characteristic of *exchange* is the original characteristic of justice. Each satisfies the other, inasmuch as each acquires what he values more than the other does. One gives to the other

what he wants to have, to be henceforth his own, and in return receives what one oneself desires. Justice is thus requital and exchange under the presupposition of an approximately equal power position.<sup>4</sup>

As society evolved, the creditor-debtor relationship extended from a moral guideline among individuals to the standard governing the relationship between individuals and the community itself, which now stood in relation to its members as a creditor to its debtors (GM II, 9). To break the laws of the community would now necessitate the payment of a debt in accordance with the primitive canon of justice, the *jus talionis*. As a community gained in strength, however, Nietzsche locates the emergence of a new notion of justice. The creditor, now confident of its wealth/strength, might measure this strength precisely in terms of how much injury it could endure without suffering and feeling the compulsion to respond. Such a society, Nietzsche suggests, might overcome the old model of justice that demanded equal payment for debts incurred and “attain such a *consciousness of power* that it could allow itself the noblest luxury possible to it—letting those who harm it go *unpunished*. . . . The justice which began with ‘everything is dischargeable, everything must be discharged,’ ends by winking and letting those incapable of discharging their debts go free; it ends, as does every good thing on earth, by overcoming itself [*sich selbst aufhebend*]” (GM II, 10).

This image of strength as the ability to actively forget and forgive the debts one is owed, to endure petty injury without reacting, to withhold punishment, recurs throughout Nietzsche’s texts, coming to the fore in the *Genealogy*’s description of the noble individuals who have the strength to actively and affirmatively forget what displeases them. Their incapacity to take their enemies, their accidents, or their misdeeds seriously for very long, Nietzsche writes, “is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget” (GM I, 10). In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, it is this strength to forget which promotes the deliverance from revenge that Zarathustra teaches is “the bridge to the highest hope.”<sup>5</sup> And in *Daybreak*,

he envisions a time when revenge and the law of equal return will no longer be the dominant principle of justice, a time when we will have gone beyond a judicial system grounded upon “shop-keeper’s scales and *the desire to counterbalance guilt with punishment*.”<sup>6</sup> A healthy community, one that has overcome the old instinct for revenge and rid itself of the concepts of sin and punishment, will thus be characterized by a spirit of generosity.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout his writings, and especially in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, one finds Nietzsche isolating two types of economy that give rise to two types of justice. The lower, baser, slave economy is grounded on the law of equal returns: justice demands that all debts be paid in kind; the creditor is unable to forget the debt, and the debtor is obliged to return some equivalent form of payment. This notion of justice operates in those societies whose economies depend on rules of exchange and, we might note, it serves as an axiom of capitalist economies. Anticipating Marcel Mauss’s observations in *Essai sur le don*,<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche’s reflections on slave economics and justice suggests that a “genuine,” “free,” “unencumbered” gift is not possible. Instead, gifts are exchanged in a social context whose “rules” obligate the receiver to return the gift in kind. i.e., to offer in return a counter-gift.

The higher, nobler economy that Nietzsche sketches is based on a fundamentally different principle, one closer to what Georges Bataille called a “general economy” of “expenditure.”<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche’s higher economy is one grounded in excess strength sufficient to squander its resources if it so chooses. In the foreground of this noble economy “is the feeling of fullness, of power that seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of wealth that would give [*schenken*] and bestow [*abgeben*]: the noble human being, too, helps the unfortunate, but not, or almost not, from pity, but prompted more by an urge begotten by excess of power [*Überfluss von Macht*].”<sup>10</sup> In this economy, gifts can be given without expectation of return and debts can be forgiven without penalty or shame.<sup>11</sup> Justice here can but need not demand repayment; tempered with mercy, it is empow-

ered to forgive and forget what it is due.<sup>12</sup> We see this higher justice and “general economy” most clearly at two points in Nietzsche’s texts: in the relationships between Zarathustra and those to whom he offers his teachings, and in the relationship between Nietzsche and the readers to whom he offers his texts.

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* opens with a reflection upon gifts and the necessity of giving. When Zarathustra first goes down from his cave to rejoin humanity, like the bee that has gathered too much honey or the cup that wants to overflow, he is overfull and needs to locate those to whom he can bring the gift of his teaching (cf. Z Prologue 1–3). Initially, as the hermit who meets him along the way predicted, Zarathustra encounters only those who are suspicious of the gifts he brings. Soon enough the situation changes, however. Zarathustra quickly comes to stand in relation to his followers as a giver of gifts, and his followers are only too eager to receive his teachings as gifts from on high. But unlike his followers, Zarathustra knows the dangers involved in gift-giving; he knows that the gift is a *pharmakon*,<sup>13</sup> for those who benefit from receiving the gifts often feel beholden to the one who gave to them. Zarathustra thus cautions those who have nothing to give to be reserved in accepting, because “great indebtedness does not make men grateful, but vengeful; and if a little charity is not forgotten, it turns into a gnawing worm” (Z “On the Pitying”).

To be able to give gifts rightly is an “art” [*Kunst*] (see Z “The Voluntary Beggar”), and great care and skill is required in order to prevent feelings of indebtedness in the recipients of one’s generosity. One repays one’s teacher badly if one remains only a student, Zarathustra tells his followers at the end of Part One, as he urges them to lose him and find themselves (Z “On the Gift-Giving Virtue”). To remain a student is to return the teacher’s gifts in kind, either by simple obedience to the teacher’s lessons or by presenting the teacher with a comparable counter-gift in return. Neither response takes the gift freely and with forgetfulness of its origin. For Zarathustra, overfull with wisdom, giving is a necessity (*Nothdurft*) (see Z “On the Great Longing”), and while his followers will return eternally to the

words of their teacher, the return on Zarathustra’s gifts will not return to him, who confesses not to know the happiness of those who receive. This, says Zarathustra, is his poverty, that his hand never rests from giving (see Z “The Night Song”). His gifts, to be sure, are investments, but investments in a future that he will not share nor from which he will derive profit.

We see a similar relationship exhibited with respect to the “presents” Nietzsche gives to his readers in the form of his texts. With *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he “has given humanity the greatest present [*das grosste Geschenk*] that has ever been made to it so far.”<sup>14</sup> In the frontispiece to *Ecce Homo*, he refers to his texts of the last quarter of 1888 (*The Antichrist, Twilight of the Idols, Dionysus Dithyrambs*) as “presents” (*Geschenke*), and *Ecce Homo* itself is a present he makes to himself on the occasion of his forty-fourth birthday. What is to be done with these presents? Are they to be returned to their author in the same condition that he delivered them? Or are they to be used, not to be returned but to be put into circulation in order to produce other gifts? For Nietzsche, the writer’s task is to stimulate, not to be consumed. Good philosophical writing inspires one to action and, Nietzsche writes, “I consider every word behind which there does not stand such a challenge to action to have been written in vain.”<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche does not so much want to be understood as to incite: his writings are incendiary devices—not words but lightning bolts (cf. EH III UM3). Instead of mere consumers, his readers will be experimenters (*Versucher*), adventurers and discoverers (cf. EH III 3). As a writer, he frees his readers from the constraints of a textual economy that demands that they occupy a place as passive beneficiary or consumer of the text. Instead, his texts invite their readers to enter into relationships with them of active co-production. Which is to say, Nietzsche writes as an act of generosity within a textual economy that does not guarantee the author any return on his gift as it circulates through an intertextual field.<sup>16</sup>

To write, and live, within a textual/libidinal/political economy<sup>17</sup> freed from the constraints of the law of return is also part of Hélène Cixous’s vision of a post-patriarchal future. Ap-

proaching Cixous's comments from a Nietzschean perspective brings to the fore a "feminine" side of Nietzsche's economic reflections, a side, moreover, that is obscured within Bataille's better known incarnation of Nietzschean economics as the tension between an emasculated, restricted economy and a potent, general economy. Where Bataille affirms an economic account based on excess and waste to counter the utilitarian assumptions that all expenditures must be productive and compensated, Cixous frames the issue in a decidedly different manner. We must hasten to add that Nietzsche does not acknowledge the practices of this other economy as feminine. In fact, on those few occasions when he does engender his economic reflections, more often than not and in the most traditional of ways, he associates giving with the feminine and possession with the masculine, as for example when he writes that man has a "lust for possession" and man's "love consists of wanting to *have* and not of renunciation and giving away," while "woman gives herself away" and "wants to be taken and accepted as a possession."<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, insofar as Cixous does obliquely connect her remarks to Nietzsche's through the mediating effect not of Bataille but of Jacques Derrida, we will need to experiment with the connections that can be forged between their thinking as we try to ascertain whether Nietzsche's thought can be moved from the closed economy suggested by passages like *Gay Science* 363.

According to Cixous, current economic realities operate within what she calls the "*Empire du Propre*," the "Empire of the Selfsame/Proper."<sup>19</sup> She identifies the philosophical underpinnings of this economy with Hegel, who in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* framed the fundamental relationship between self and other in terms of the acquisition of property. The phallogocentric desire that animates the Hegelian dialectic of self and other is a desire for appropriation: one confronts the other as different and unequal and one seeks to make the other one's own. The desire to possess, to receive a return on one's investments, animates an economy that Cixous suggests we call "masculine," in part because it "is erected from a fear

that, in fact, is typically masculine: the fear of expropriation, of separation, of losing the attribute."<sup>20</sup> That is to say, founded on a system of returns, economies of the *propre*, proper economies, economies based on the possession of private property, are driven not so much by the desire to appropriate; they are structured instead around the fear of loss, the fear of losing what is already possessed—a fear of being expropriated that Cixous qualifies as "masculine."<sup>21</sup>

Sensitive to the dangers of linking economy with anatomy in some essentialist way, she acknowledges that "one can find [both masculine and feminine] economies in no matter which individual."<sup>22</sup> For this reason, she herself prefers the language of bisexuality and she frequently cautions against the dangers of resorting to the classical binaries of "feminine"/"masculine" or "femininity"/"masculinity." Nevertheless, she continues to use the qualifiers "masculine" and "feminine" in reference to economies because

the (political) economy of the masculine and the feminine is organized by different demands and constraints, which, as they become socialized and metaphorized, produce signs, relations of power, relationships of production and reproduction, a whole huge system of cultural inscription that is legible as masculine or feminine. (NBW 80–81)

Guided by the prime directive to appropriate, a masculine economy is not truly capable of giving. Inscribed under the law of return, the masculine gift expects, nay demands a return, as Mauss's *Essai sur le don* demonstrated and as Derrida reiterates in his recent articulation of the impossibility of the gift.<sup>23</sup> Rephrasing the insights of Mauss, Derrida, and Nietzsche in terms of a gendered unconscious, Cixous notes the lack of ease with which a masculine economy confronts generosity: "Giving: there you have a basic problem, which is that masculinity is always associated—in the unconscious, which is after all what makes the whole economy function—with debt."<sup>24</sup> Freud showed the debilitating effects that this debt has on the child, who must confront the obligation to repay his parents for their gift of his life. And Nietzsche showed the equally crippling effects of indebtedness in his genealogical account of modern society's obligations to uphold the values of tradition. If you are a man,

Cixous observes, nothing is more dangerous than to be obligated to another's generosity: "for the moment you receive something you are effectively 'open' to the other, and if you are a man you have only one wish"—to annul that openness by returning the gift as quickly as possible.<sup>25</sup>

Escaping from the openness to the other has driven masculine exchange practices. A "feminine" "economy," on the other hand, one no longer understandable in classical "exchangist" economic terms, allows for the possibility of giving without expectation of return, for giving that is truly generous: it gives without trying to "recover its expenses. . . . If there is a self proper to woman, paradoxically it is her capacity to depropriate herself without self-interest" (NBW 87). Although brought up in a social space framed by debt, "one can ask oneself about the possibility of a real gift, a pure gift, a gift that would not be annulled by what one could call a counter-gift."<sup>26</sup> While there may be no "free" gift, while one never gives something for nothing, Cixous notes that "all the difference lies in the why and how of the gift, in the values that the gesture of giving affirms, causes to circulate; in the type of profit the giver draws from the gift and the use to which he or she puts it" (NBW 87). Where masculine economies can make only *quid pro quo* exchanges by means of which a direct profit is to be recouped, feminine economies transact their business differently. They are not constrained to giving as a means of deferred exchange in order to obligate a counter-gift in return; instead, they encourage giving as an affirmation of generosity. A feminine libidinal economy, she writes, "is an economy which has a more supple relation to property, which can stand separation and detachment, which signifies that it can also stand freedom—for instance, the other's freedom."<sup>27</sup> It is an economy, in other words, in which direct profit can be deferred, perhaps infinitely, in exchange for the continued circulation of giving.

The distinction Cixous draws between masculine and feminine economies is supported by the work of anthropologists like Marilyn Strathern, Annette B. Weiner, and C. A. Gregory, who distinguish between an economy based on the exchange of gifts and an economy based on the exchange of commodities.<sup>28</sup> Where commodity

exchange is focused on a transfer in which objects of equivalent exchange-value are reciprocally transacted, gift exchange seeks to establish a personal qualitative relationship between subjects in which the actual objects transferred are incidental to the value of the relationship established. To this distinction, we might add that while both commodity and gift exchange are potentially profitable, the nature of their respective profits differ dramatically. Where commodity exchange produces surplus value in the form of capital—creating material wealth where none was before—gift exchange produces surplus value in the form of relationships, creating connections between people where no connection existed prior to the circulation of the gift.<sup>29</sup>

Because of its "more supple relation to property," Cixous herself highlights the difference between feminine and masculine economies insofar as the former promote the establishing of relationships through the giving of gifts. In particular, she draws our attention to maternal gifts as ones that escape the logic of appropriation that structures the commodity economy she labels "masculine." Mother and child do not stand in a relationship of self/other, opposing parties with competing interests, and the gift to the child of a mother's love or a mother's breast is not comprehensible in terms of quantifiable exchange-values or the law of return that governs an economy based on the exchange of commodities. Nor are these maternal gifts understandable in terms of the fear of expropriation, for the mother is willing to expend these gifts without reserve or expectation of return. In fact, like Nietzsche, Cixous emphasizes and affirms the positive value of plenitude, but unlike Nietzsche, she wants to gender this positive value "feminine:" insofar as the mother can supply as much love or as much milk as the child might demand, Cixous articulates a set of economic principles which refuse to accept as given the modern assumption of conditions of scarcity.

Cixous encourages us to understand this ability to give which animates feminine (libidinal) economy in terms of maternity and the specificity of women's bodies: insofar as women have the potential to give birth/life to another, they have

an anatomically grounded relationship that makes possible their experiencing what she calls "the not-me within me." While she tethers this relationship to pregnancy, lactation, and child-bearing, at the same time she wants to link it to the possibility of writing. "How," she asks, "could the woman, who has experienced the not-me within me, not have a particular relationship to the written? To writing as giving itself away (cutting itself off) from the source?" (NBW 90).

Although Cixous here can be criticized for romanticizing maternity as she appeals to the anatomical specificity of women's bodies,<sup>30</sup> one could less problematically ground the practices of feminine economies and *écriture féminine* socio-historically rather than anatomically. To do so would focus attention on the maternal practices discussed by Cixous as exemplary of different intersubjective relations that warrant further generalization, while avoiding the problems raised by either the culturally constraining aspects of maternity or the appeal to anatomical specificity. Cixous herself makes this move on several occasions, acknowledging that a feminine economy "does not refer to women, but perhaps to a trait that comes back to women more often."<sup>31</sup> Insofar as women have been largely prohibited throughout history from possessing things for themselves, they have come to understand and appreciate property differently in terms of an economy based not on the law of return but on generosity and sharing. Likewise, insofar as women have at times been positioned socio-economically as gifts, it is not at all surprising, nor should it be taken as a function of anatomy or biology, that women's perspectives on gifts and giving might differ from men's.<sup>32</sup> By virtue of certain social necessities, Cixous writes, women constitute themselves as "person[s]' capable of losing a part of [themselves] without losing [their] integrity."<sup>33</sup> They are able to exist in a "relationship to the other in which the gift doesn't calculate its influence" (NBW 92). And they can negotiate within an economy "that tolerates the movements of the other."<sup>34</sup>

Departing from more traditional accounts of gift exchange that presuppose a misrecognition or forgetting of the debt which reception entails,

Cixous refuses to describe gift-giving practices as a misrecognition of what is in reality reciprocal exchange. Instead, she wants to retrieve gift-giving from the economic necessities imposed upon it within an exchange economy and to reframe the practices of giving in an account that does not imprison transactions within private proprietary relationships in which loans and loans paid back masquerade as the bestowal of gifts. In so doing, certain heretofore unrealized opportunities emerge. In Cixous's idiom, women have learned how to exceed the limits of themselves and enter into the between of self and other without losing themselves in the process. This escape from the proprietary constraints on subjectivity is what makes possible *écriture féminine* as a writing that puts the isolated, autonomous self at risk, questioning and being questioned in the between of same and of other (see NBW 86). Such radical questioning goes to the roots of our historical-cultural gender constructions, and it makes possible radical transformations of gender relations and intersubjective identities. In response to such questioning,

"femininity" and "masculinity" would inscribe quite differently their effects of difference, their economy, their relationship to expenditure, to lack, to the gift. What today appears to be "feminine" or "masculine" would no longer amount to the same thing. No longer would the common logic of difference be organized with the opposition that remains dominant. Difference would be a bunch of new differences. (NBW 83)

With gender difference reformulated as a range of multivalent differential relations would come a reformulation of the very notion of identity itself. That is to say, no longer would the oppositional logic of "self vs. all others" allow for the self-construction of isolated and atomistic subjectivities. Instead, having reconfigured difference as a "bunch of new differences," self-construction will take place in the tensional between of the full range of intersubjective and differential relations which one is.

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What has so far been the greatest sin on earth? Was it not the word of him who said, "Woe unto those who laugh here?" Did he

himself find no reasons on earth for laughing? Then he searched very badly.

—*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing.

—“The Laugh of the Medusa”

Cixous seeks a place Where it was not impossible or pathetic to be generous” (NBW 72). Nietzsche envisions a society with a level of power sufficient to allow it to be merciful, that is, sufficient for it to allow its debts to go unpaid. To be sure, Nietzsche did not identify this society with the feminine, nor did he associate the generosity of overfullness with the feminine. In fact, the reverse is more nearly the case: the degree of strength necessary for such generosity was almost always put forward in masculine images of mastery, virility, productivity, and activity. But need this have been the case? I think not. When Nietzsche addresses issues of gender, his thinking remains constrained within the human, all-too-human prejudices which he, as a transvaluer of values, should be faulted for not having gone beyond. By setting Nietzsche's discussion of plenitude and generosity together with Cixous's discussion of feminine libidinal economies and the giving of gifts, the affinities between their respective accounts emerge in a way that shows how Nietzsche might have gone beyond his misogynistic prejudices.

Perhaps we might look upon Cixous as the sort of reader Nietzsche was seeking, one who would pay him back not by repeating his text, but by

taking that text and making it her own, putting it to use as she sees fit. Perhaps this is what Cixous calls *voler*, theft/flight, an other/the other side of giving:

steal [*voler*] is woman's gesture, to steal into language to make it fly. We have all learned flight/theft, the art with many techniques, for all the centuries we have only had access to having by stealing/flying; we have lived in a flight/theft, stealing/flying, finding the close, concealed way-through of desire. It's not just luck if the word “*voler*” volleys between the “*vol*” of theft and the “*vol*” of flight, pleasuring in each and routing the sense police. (NBW 96)

Is this perhaps what Cixous is doing when she provides an account of generosity that does not require *übermenschliche* strength to enact, when she substitutes maternal compassion for the masterly indifference to one's parasites affirmed by Nietzsche? By recasting Nietzsche's economic insights in terms of sexual difference, and by making it possible to see the gendered dimension of gift-giving that Nietzsche too quickly discarded, Cixous articulates more clearly than did Nietzsche an alternative logic of the gift, one with several advantages over the more classical exchange logics that imprison the giving of gifts within the confines of assumptions of scarcity and reciprocal commodity exchange. In so doing, perhaps we can hear the faint echo of the laughter Zarathustra taught in the laughter of the Medusa, but we must also hear that Medusa is laughing her own laugh, a laughter that was no *übermenschliche* laughter.<sup>35</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

1. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. ix.
2. Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1 (Summer 1976): 888. Cixous here refers to an earlier version of Jacques Derrida's *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); for Derrida's discussion of the gift, see *ibid.*, pp. 109–23.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House Inc., 1967), Essay II, Section 8. All subsequent references to this text will appear parenthetically as GM followed by the essay and section numbers.
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Section 92.
5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Viking Portable Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Viking Press, 1967), “On the Tarantulas.” All subsequent references to this text will appear parenthetically as Z followed by the chapter title.

6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), Section 202.
7. The connection between Nietzsche's idea that a community shows its strength in terms of its capacity for generosity and the ideal of the welfare state is worth noting. I thank Johanna Meehan for first bringing this connection to my attention.
8. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1990).
9. See Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, vol. 1: *Consumption*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1988), Part One.
10. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966), Section 260.
11. Although quite hostile to what he understood to be the goals of socialism, Nietzsche's position on noble economy is not far from the ideal expressed by Marx in *Critique of the Gotha Program* when he writes that on the banner of the higher phase of communist society will be inscribed: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."
12. I can only note here the importance of forgetting in Derrida's discussion of the gift. For Derrida, "forgetting would be in the *condition of the gift* and the gift in the *condition of forgetting*" (*Given Time*, p. 18), which is to say that the gift cannot be (a gift) unless its having been given can be forgotten. Without this forgetting, the gift will stand as a debt to be repaid rather than as a gift. The link between giving, gifts, and forgetting allows Derrida to move the discussion to Heidegger insofar as for Heidegger the event (*Ereignis*) of the gift (of Being) has been forgotten, and the recollection of this event, which is to say, the appropriate reception of this gift, which is to say, the overcoming of this forgetfulness is now, at present, the task of thinking.
13. Derrida frequently draws attention to the gift as *pharmakon*, often in the context of a comment on Mauss. For example, in "Plato's Pharmacy," he cites Mauss's call to examine the etymology of "gift," which comes from the Latin *dosis*, Greek *fav* *makon*, a dose of poison. *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 131–32. More recently, he makes several references to the gift as *pharmakon* in *Given Time*.
14. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), Preface 4. All subsequent references to this text will appear parenthetically as EH followed by the chapter title and section number.
15. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as Educator in Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 184.
16. Nietzsche's prefiguration of Derridean dissemination should here be noted.
17. In the following discussion of Cixous, I will for the most part refrain from qualifying "economy" with either of the adjectives "textual," "libidinal," or "political." As I read Cixous, she sees these three economies working in terms of the same principles, and what is true of one will be true of the others. If I do choose to use one of these adjectives, it will be to emphasize that particular economy in the context of what I am discussing at that moment, but should not be understood to isolate that economy from the others.
18. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Inc., 1974), Section 363. This is, of course, one of the central themes in Luce Irigaray's critique of Nietzsche in *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); see esp. pp. 42–45, 82–87.
19. That Cixous's discussion of the "*Empire du Propre*" is, in part, a rejoinder to Jacques Derrida's raising the "question *du propre*" with respect to the questions of style/woman in Nietzsche must be noted. I discuss this point in my *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 104–06, 117.
20. Hélène Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman*, co-authored with Catherine Clément, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 80. All subsequent references to this text will appear parenthetically as NBW followed by the page number.
21. Cf. Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" trans. Annette Kuhn, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7 (1981): 50.
22. Hélène Cixous, "Extreme Fidelity," trans. Ann Liddle and Susan Sellers, in Susan Sellers, ed., *Writing Differences: Readings from the seminar of Hélène Cixous* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 15.
23. See Jacques Derrida, *Given Time*, esp. pp. 11–15. To cite one remark, out of context to be sure, of Derrida's articulation of the gift's impossibility, I offer (as a gift?) the following: "if there is no gift, there is no gift, but if there



- is gift held or beheld *as* gift by the other, once again there is no gift; in any case the gift does not *exist* and does not *present* itself. If it presents itself, it no longer presents itself" (ibid., p. 15). In this essay, I only touch the surface of the divergent logics of gift-giving. A fuller treatment of these divergent logics as they have emerged in recent philosophical, anthropological, literary and gender studies can be found in the essays collected in my *Logics of the Gift: Toward an Ethics of Generosity* (New York: Routledge, 1996).
24. Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" p. 48.
  25. Ibid.
  26. Hélène Cixous, "An exchange with Hélène Cixous," trans. Verena Andermatt Conley and published as an appendix to Conley's *Hélène Cixous: Writing the Feminine* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 158.
  27. Ibid., p. 137.
  28. See Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Annette B. Weiner, *Women of Value, Men of Renown: New Perspectives on Trobriand Exchange* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976) and *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press, 1982).
  29. Virginia Held has explored a similar distinction in the context of feminism and moral theory, and she moves close to Cixous when she argues that it is the relationship between "mother or mothering person and child" and not "contractual relationships" which are most "central or fundamental to society and morality." "Feminism and Moral Theory," in Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers, eds., *Women and Moral Theory* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987), p. 114.
  30. The appeal to maternity, maternal language, and maternal images in French feminist writing is frequently an object of criticism by American feminists; see, for example, Domna Stanton, "Difference on Trial: A Critique of the Maternal Metaphor in Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva," in Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young, eds., *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 156–79.
  31. Hélène Cixous, *Reading with Clarice Lispector*, ed. and trans. Verena Andermatt Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 156.
  32. I am grateful to Paula Smith for first suggesting this point to me.
  33. Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," p. 888.
  34. Cixous, in Conley, p. 137.
  35. This essay is an abbreviated version of a more extensive discussion of Nietzsche and Cixous that appears in my *Nietzsche's French Legacy: A Genealogy of Poststructuralism* (New York: Routledge, 1995). Earlier versions of parts of this essay appear in "On the Gift-Giving Virtue: Nietzsche's Unacknowledged Feminine Economy," in *International Studies in Philosophy* 26 (Summer 1994): 33–44, and "On the Gynecology of Morals: Nietzsche and Cixous on the Logic of the Gift," in Peter J. Burgard, ed., *Nietzsche and the Feminine* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), pp. 210–29.

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