

Gerhard Stamer

Die Philosophie der Gabe – Gaben ohne Gegengabe?

The Philosophy of the Gift –
Gifts Without a Gift in Return?

Three tasks are to be addressed here: first, to delineate the thematic breadth of discourse on the gift; second, to illuminate the modern historical background on which the currency potency of the theme rests; and third, to point out the philosophical depths into which the issues surrounding the gift lead. This paper will first begin by examining the complexity of meaning in the associations of Lifeworld frameworks based on linguistic variety and use of »giving« and »gift« in everyday speech.

Presented after this will be the debate, linked to Marcel Mauss, conducted primarily in France over the past twenty years by sociologists, ethnologists, and philosophers. The question whether gift giving in the truest sense is even possible under current societal conditions of world-wide capitalism, whether all relationships in which gifts are involved are subject to the relationship of equivalent exchange, that is to say, the relationship of goods, is not only to be understood as an assessment of present society, but, at the same time, as a departure from an economic-based critique of bourgeois society, as presented by Karl Marx in *Capital*. In the Lifeworld basis of primary human relationships, which resides beneath the interconnections of economics and politics, human communication is established on all societal levels.

While the first approach to delineate the theme focuses on the relationship between gift and exchange, the second addresses what's given – reality – (also a form of gift) as that which is principally given to man a priori, as defined by Kant and Husserl in whose theory of cognition reality fulfills, in sensory intuition or in the original experience, the role of an initial category for all forms of knowledge. Reality is, however, already the expression for the fundamental understanding of creation – on which the Old and New Testament eloquently elaborate –, and the core of a religious-oriented consciousness of being.

In the Christian tradition, another more deeply rooted form of the gift also appears. The relationship between spirit and God, between spirit and Christ, is viewed as a giving of the self to the other without demand for reciprocity, as the principle of love and cosmic harmony.

Klaus Lichtblau

Die Ökonomie der Gabe

The Economy of the Gift

Modern industrial society, based on capital markets and legally formalized equivalent exchange, does not represent the only possible form of economy. Many years ago the Hungarian economic historian Karl Polanyi established, in several influential studies, that the rise of modern capitalism was accompanied by a major transformation within a substantially different form of economy and associated social and moral milieu. This economy was based on domestic dealings and neighborly assistance, as well as the principles of reciprocity and redistribution. Profit motive in these pre-modern societies was not an end in itself, but part of a social order in which forces of tradition such as custom, convention, religion, and magic played a central role. Within the fields of sociology and anthropology, this form of reciprocity is conceptualized and analyzed with the term »gift.«

This seemingly archaic logic of interaction plays a role even in modern societies and should not be overlooked. A critique of capitalism often relies on this organizational model when it comes to posing plausible alternatives to the capitalist form of socialization and equivalent exchange. Modern manifestations of the gift include the popular virtue of gift giving, the lavish expenditures of the caring welfare state, and the continuing relevance of private foundations for civic engagement within civil society. In this paper, various forms of the »gift« in contemporary society are presented and discussed in contrast to equivalent exchange as a discrete principle of social organization.

Dorothee Bauerle-Willert

Die Gabe – Eine kunst- wissenschaftliche Annäherung

The Gift – an Art Historical Approach

In his collection of essays titled *One Way Street* (dt. *Einbahnstraße*), Walter Benjamin calls the faculty of fantasy the »gift to interpolate in the endlessly small, to invent every intensity as extensive its new pressed abundance, to take each picture, as if it would be folded up in a fan that only breathes when it is unfolded and with the new width performs the characteristics of the beloved person in its interior.«

In art, three gifts cross paths: natural talent, instantaneous intuition, and the gift to the viewer, who can be touched by it. The gift – as the ever-changing symbol between catharsis and collapse – is a transforming act that is the beginning of every culture, responsibility, dedication, and default. With the voluntary gift of existence, we are involved in a web of giving and receiving. Harbored within this tension is a social, intellectual, and aesthetic behavioral model that is powerful, versatile, and effective. Art's images present the act of giving in all its various meanings, and cultural studies deal with issues concerning the gift, with the obligatory nature of giving and taking. The gift is a free-floating, morphologically diverse event that unexpectedly connects, disconnects, and releases energy from its patterns.

This talk will examine the complex fabric and layers surrounding the concept of the gift in art, as well as this generous (in which gene and genius are hidden) act: the gift of creation, which then circles back around to the part of us that is gift and not achievement.

Kristin Westphal

Geben ohne Verpflichtung? Eine Theorie des theatralen Austauschs – Drei Perspektiven

Giving Without Obligation?
A Theory of Theatrical Exchange –
Three Perspectives

When attending a theater play we enter into a contract, an agreement, which, in purchasing a ticket, takes effect and leads to an exchange in the dynamic realm of seeing and being seen, desiring and being desired. The spectator takes part in a performance as witness and carries a particular responsibility for what he or she observes.

Over the past several decades, an increasing number of efforts to work with other modes of communication and perception, and to question the classical relationship between spectator and actor, can now be observed. Such efforts address the relationship between spectator and actor as a double relationship, in which performers and spectators are equally involved in a performance as recipients and actors. This differentiation, which has been given little theoretical attention, concerns observing the communication of those involved within the entanglement of giving and taking, self and other, and is what lends such theater its particular intensity. Accepted at the same time is a risk of failure and the uncertainty of both sides. Such attempts call theater and its very means into question. They lead us toward a fundamental paradigm of the theatrical play: seeing and being seen, hearing and being heard, which we would like to convey here as »a giving form of receiving« and »a receiving form of giving.« We examine these paradigms against the backdrop of a phenomenology of responsive physicality and describe theater as an intermediary happening and event that behaves in a responsive and subject decentered way. In this theory a clear distinction between spectator and actor no longer exists.

Hanne Seitz

Unerbetene Gaben – Die Kunst des Einmischens in öffentliche Angelegenheiten

Im übrigen hätten die sozialen Gefühle ohne Symbole nur ungewisse Existenz [...]. Aber wenn die Bewegungen, durch die sich diese Gefühle ausgedrückt haben, mit Dingen verbunden sind, die dauern, dann werden sie selber dauerhaft. Diese Dinge graben die Gefühle unablässig ins Gedächtnis ein und halten sie ständig wach; es ist, als ob die ursprüngliche Ursache, die sie hervorgerufen hat, weiterwirkte.

Emile Durkheim

The Unsolicited Gift – On Artistic Intervention in Public Places

Artists are abandoning the white cube or black box to show their art in public space, in places where one would expect anything but art. Their work accidentally confronts passersby, involves them with a kind of unsolicited gift – it encourages people, who until then had nothing to do with art, to participate in the process of production. Artists are producing biographical studies, critical researches, and arousing interventions, and, in doing so, are using non-artistic operations to accomplish their ideas. They are focusing on problematic social conditions – sometimes in such ways that even people concerned about cultural and social participation are rendered speechless. The viewer becomes the player, the artist an accomplice – at least temporarily. It looks as if the turnaround to pragmatism has meanwhile also encompassed contemporary art: art and its usage are sometimes in close collusion; the implementation of art and its intermediation appear to have become socially acceptable. Despite its autonomy, art should also operate outside the usual artistic frame, as well as implement further social change and our ability to shape reality.

Using the example of the work *This Baby Doll Will Be A Junkie*, a project realized by artist Ulrike Möntmann, the lecture will discuss participation in and intervention by the arts, as well as the concept of gift as an unsolicited gesture.

Christian Heilig, Thomas Henke

White Story Channel

Ein Film-Installations-Projekt

White Story Channel – A Filmic Experiment

White Story Channel uses means borrowed from installation and performance to examine the documentary and emotional patterns of biographical narratives in film and video.

Five protagonists recount for the camera stories about failed human relationships from a personal point of view. Their faces in close up form part of an overall installation captured on film. The filmed accounts – in turn before the camera – are observed and commented on by the protagonists.

In *White Story Channel* action, reception, biography, and fiction collide together. Whether the stories are actually rooted in personal history is left to the viewer to decide.

HD-DV, 14 min. (loop);

Actors: Matthias Albrecht, Svetlana Derevyagina, Udo Ebert, Carina Krause and Christina Thielscher
Singing by Matthias Albrecht

White Story Channel untersucht mit installativ-performativen Mitteln dokumentarische und emotionale Muster biografischer Erzählungen im Medium Film bzw. Video.

Fünf Darsteller erzählen vor der Kamera – aus persönlicher Sicht – Geschichten, die vom Scheitern in menschlichen Beziehungen handeln. Ihr Gesicht ist dabei Teil einer Gesamtinstallation im Rahmen einer filmischen Nahaufnahme. Die gefilmten Erzählungen werden – wiederum vor der Kamera – von ihren Protagonisten betrachtet und kommentiert.

White Story Channel lässt Aktion und Rezeption, Biografie und Fiktion aufeinander prallen. Ob die Geschichten tatsächlich einen persönlichen Ursprung haben, bleibt eine Ermessensfrage des Betrachters.

HD-DV, 14 Min. (Endlosschleife)

Darsteller: Matthias Albrecht, Svetlana Derevyagina, Udo Ebert, Carina Krause, Christina Thielscher
Gesang: Matthias Albrecht

Lili Fischer

Forschen im Feld der Gabe

Research in the Field of the Gift

As part of her field research as an artist Lili Fischer has addressed the concept of »gifts« through drawing, objects, installation, artist books, video, and performance in particular - in multiple forms. For instance, in her works *Gewürzpredigt für Pfeffersäcke* (in von hier aus, 1984), *Waschlappendemo* (documenta 8, 1987), her *Freiübungen* (Bremer Rathaus, 1995), her numerous *Grazienkongressen*, her *Werkgruppe Falter* (Bremer Kunsthalle, 2005), or her *Testflug der Schnaken* (Hamburger Kunsthalle, 2008), she provides specific gifts (instructions or parameters) that open up possibilities for the audience to become actively involved and therefore to enrich its experience of the performance process (also in terms of ideas) by giving back to itself - as part of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the broadest sense of the word. What this looks like specifically and why - what happens, for instance, when participants bring pieces of fluff to a performance at a planetarium, housewives exchange old scrub brushes for new ones at a *Scheuermittelkollekte* [cleaning products collection], an entire hall engages in a »filth donation« at a *sozialen Waschlappen* [social washcloth], men participate in »necktie gymnastics« or »exercises for ventilating their wallets«, women have spells cast over their handbags or use a »women's scratching post«, or how moth costumes are inspirational - was presented by Lili Fischer along with many other stories. Students from her class »Field Research and Performance« assisted her and offered their own gifts at the end (featuring contributions by Solveigh Krüger, Magdalena Kucia, Paula Roesch, and Katharina D. Martin among others).

Literatur

L. Fischer: *Die Werkgruppe Falter*, Bremen 2005

Una H. Moehrke und Studierende
Catarina Behrend, Sarah Domaratus, Nikolaus Fasslrunner,
Frauke Freese, Florian Goldbach, Alexandra Groth,
Juliane Pietsch, Sabine Töpfer, Birgit Wöhlbrandt

wahr nehmen, weiter geben (Performance)

perceiving, further giving (Performance)

This process-oriented work emerges from the phenomenological perception of the specific room and its objects, undertaken on site, by all the active performers, alone and in silent concentration. The experience of perception is then transposed into physical movement, a »non-language« translation found within one's own body.

Out of each individual's configuration of movements arise correspondences, tangencies, and contact images to the group that is active in parallel, which the audience sees and the performers experience. From the act of perceiving comes further giving, physically, and objectless-ness. Following the presentation, symposium participants will be invited to personally experience this exercise in perception.



Tino Sehgal im Gespräch mit Una H. Moehrke

Another Mode of Production

»I'm looking for another form of production, another mode of production. Not whether another system of distribution exists. Whether another mode of production is also realizable within our present distribution system. My works attempt to integrate this other kind of production mode into the market and valorize it societally. What does this mean in terms of your objects?

I am not just attempting to say something but also to reconfigure something. This is ultimately also the reason why art interests me more than economic theory. I produce works that no longer affix subjectivity to a material object.

You are trying to eliminate what's material. No films of your actions exist. Why? Because the model cannot be clearly viewed otherwise. Of course I know that such films would also be circulated, and that ultimately, even if it were authorized as a document, at some point it would become indistinguishable from the work. Aside from this, it is also not necessary for me. I have the museum. It functions as an archive.

But your work still has to be documented in some fashion. What happens when the text is forgotten?

Well the text is usually just a single line. Apart from this, it is really important for me to recall that our oral culture of remembrance is still the most powerful instance of knowledge transfer in our society today.«

Excerpts from: »Tino Sehgal im Gespräch mit Christiane Fricke, Susanne Schreiber, Petra Schwarz und Bernd Ziesemer«, in: Handelsblatt 2005

Ian Watson

Trading »Gifts«: Performance as an Exchange Strategy in Eugenio Barba's Theatrical Barters

Eugenio Barba is leading international theater figure. He is a director, researcher, author, and teacher. One aspect of his theater practice, which he has mounted in various parts of the world since the early 1970s, is what he terms barters. These barters, in which performances are traded between at least two communities without money changing hands, would appear to be a paradigm of the gift economy. This paper challenges that assumption.

Beginning with a brief discussion of the relationship between barter and value, the paper explores where value lies in Barba's barters. Arguing that the overriding value resides in the meeting engendered during barter rather than in the relationships outside of the event – as one familiar with Marcel Mauss' work on barters might expect, the paper proceeds to examine the performance dynamics engaged during barter. The examination concludes that the economic model best suited to understanding Barba's barter practice is not gifting or gift economics. It is social economics.

Klaus Hoffmann, Indira Heidemann (Theaterlabor Bielefeld)

»Barter« – Kultureller und sozialer Tauschhandel in Bielefeld in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Theaterlabor Bielefeld

»Barter« as Cultural and Social Trade Exchange – in collaboration with the Theater Lab in Bielefeld

Within the framework of the symposium »Concepts of the Gift in Contemporary Art«, a barter as »cultural and social trade exchange« was staged in Bielefeld's Dürkopp district. The event set in motion an exchange of various cultural practices between different social groups and milieus and encouraged reciprocity and mutual understanding. The main challenge was to activate and mobilize residents who live and work in the neighborhood, an aspect that could be applied to approaches in neighborhood management in city districts with particular developmental needs.

Wolfgang Zinggl

Durch die Kunst handeln statt mit ihr

Action Through Art, Not Trading Art

More than a hundred years ago the material character of art was already being questioned and artists were attempting to perform functions that extended far beyond the production of objects. As part of a new understanding, art should not act as if it only exists in and of itself. Art can also deal with reality, grapple with political circumstances, and work out proposals for improving human coexistence. Unconventional ideas, and innovative spirit and energy, which were for centuries wrapped up in formal glass bead games, can thus contribute to the solution of real problems. In the process, a fundamental discussion of the functions of art has arisen: Who does what in art, and why?

Klaus Hoffmann

Theatre for a Change

Junges Theater aus Accra, Ghana

Theatre for a Change - Young Theater from Ghana

Theatre for a Change is a non-governmental organization that has worked to promote human rights, equality between girls and boys, and health and sex education in Ghana since 2003. It works on behalf of disadvantaged people who lack proper education or future prospects. Young actresses, actors, and social workers use theater to empower young people by building self-confidence, fostering creativity, and getting them to work on changing their own lives. In particular, emphasis is placed on AIDS prevention and awareness.

Theatre for a Change employs theatrical methods that actively involve the audience in its performances. Such an approach is not about indoctrination, propaganda, or one-way, top-down communication, but about ensuring the active participation of the target group. This theater, whose aim is to give people a voice, has been greatly influenced by the teachings of educator Paolo Freire and theater director Augusto Boal's »Theater of the Oppressed.« According to Boal, »Everyone should learn together, audience and actors, no one is more than the rest, no one knows better than the rest. Learn, discover, invent and make decisions together«; spectators are to be drawn out of their passive-receptive stance.

Boal stresses that his technique is not a ready-made set of tools, but rather a way to assist in the liberation of things that have been suppressed by education and socialization. In Africa, his forum-based theater typically fuses with traditional and local culture, involving dance and music and opting for ironic exaggeration, satire, and caricature as its forms of expression. This creates a relaxed, fun atmosphere for non-aggressive, open discussion. This theater is particularly attractive as a means of communicating controversial, socially explosive, and taboo issues such as AIDS and rape; without the distancing effect of irony the public would view any direct confrontation as obscene and therefore reject it. This way of working also gets these issues across to people who are otherwise hard to reach – men and young people, for example, who have little interest in them. This form of theater is culturally appropriate not only because it allows the players to shape the scenes individually through improvisation, it actually encourages them to do so, thus enabling local traditional and cultural forms to be integrated into the performance.

Christine Biehler

LandArbeit07 – Ein Kunstprojekt als Gabe

LandArbeit07 – Art Project for an Ort
(Ort in German implies location and community)

LandArbeit07 was a public-space art project that lasted almost three years (including preparations and follow-up events). Around two-hundred of a total of 1,221 residents from the community of Heinde took an active role in the project and were joined by eighty students from the University of Hildesheim, in addition to tutors, artists, and academics.

LandArbeit07 was an art project for an Ort that rapidly became an art project with an Ort – specifically, the village of Heinde near Hildesheim in Lower Saxony. LandArbeit07 had to produce more than just artefacts for contemplation. The plan was to include a variety of art forms with strong ties to the location and the people living there. The goal was participation and equal collaboration without sacrificing the expertise of artists, and without compromising the artistic quality of the project. More than thirty initiatives were implemented in close, ongoing collaboration with local citizens.

The introduction of art into the village served as a catalyst for engaging processes specific to Heinde. The works cultivated an awareness of local issues, and encouraged residents to identify with their village.

What was special about LandArbeit07? What were the challenges? Where has the project caused surprise? Where did the art begin? Where did it stop? Is LandArbeit07 a gift?

Gerhard Marcel Martin

Künstlerische Schaffenskraft als Gabe – religionsphilosophische Aspekte aus Buddhismus, Juden- und Christentum

Wer will, der nehme Wasser des Lebens umsonst.

Offenbarung des Johannes 22,17; viertletzter Vers der Bibel

Artistic Creative Power as Gift – Religious-Philosophical Dimensions of Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism

The first section of this contribution will show why and how concepts of the »gift«, as developed in religious studies and cultural philosophy, are taken up by Christian theology in a positive and critical way.

In the second section, presented will be certain aspects of Christian and Shin Buddhist traditions (theoretical approaches and artistic activities) that deal with and manifest the dynamics of the »gift«.

In the third section, discussed will be the question whether and how the process and the result (product) of an act of giving – defined as answering the »gift« – might retain something of the quality and dynamics of the »pre-given«, that is to say, might express this and might be experienced.

Briefly presented in this context are potential connections to positions within the psychology of creativity.

Klaus Hoffmann

Wishuponastar

Eine Performance

von und mit Smadar Yaaron, Akko Theatre Centre, Israel

Eine fatale Liebesgeschichte

Die israelische Schauspielerin Smadar Yaaron setzt sich in der Zionskirche Bethel in Bielefeld mit ihrem religiösen und nationalen »Heiligsten« auseinander: Hoch oben in der Vierung an einem mannshohen Davidstern als Trapez hängend, ringt sie akrobatisch mit diesem Gegenstand ihrer Anbetung und ihrer Kritik. Sie unterwirft sich, sucht die Vereinigung, wehrt sich gleichzeitig und kämpft gegen die Überwältigung. Sie verliert den Boden, erklimmt Höhen, stürzt, wird wieder hoch gerissen. Sie versucht, die Bewegungen zu steuern, scheint penetriert zu werden, verweigert sich aber der Unterwerfung, revoltiert. Wir spüren diese Energie körperlich. Smadar Yaaron, Schöpferin und Akteurin dieser Performance, wagt eine apokalyptische Reise nach Jerusalem, mit der Frage: »Mein Gott, wo ist das gelobte Land, das Du uns versprochen hast? Warum haben wir es nicht? Warum sind wir so, wie wir sind?« Sie kommentiert dabei, kritisch und locker, in hebräischer, englischer und deutscher Sprache. So verbindet sie ihre persönlichen Erinnerungen mit den kollektiven Erfahrungen ihres Volkes, weckt Bilder einer dreitausendjährigen Geschichte und zieht so eine Linie – provokativ, schonungslos, schmerzhaft und selbstkritisch – von König David bis in die Gegenwart der israelischen Politik.

Das Akko Theatre arbeitet mit Themen, die politisch und sozial herausfordern. Smadar Yaaron sagt: »Ich mache das für mich selbst, und vielleicht ist es auch hilfreich für das Publikum. Es ist mein Weg, die Bühne zu nutzen, zur Eigentherapie. Im Akko Theatre gehen wir mit den Dingen um, die uns alle beschäftigen, individuell und gesellschaftlich. Das kann für uns alle therapeutisch wirksam sein.« In Acco leben mehr israelische Araber als Juden. Wenn Araber die Performance sehen, hat Smadar Yaaron den Eindruck, dass sie fühlen: »hier wird eine Kommunikation zwischen uns aufgebaut«.

Der Kern jeglicher Religion, sei sie jüdisch, christlich oder muslimisch, ist für sie die Botschaft von der Liebe. »Das Wesen der Religion wird verfälscht, wenn sie mit Nationalität in Verbindung gebracht wird. Das führt zu einem Desaster. Der Messias ist Symbol für eine Utopie, es steht für einen Bewusstseinszustand von Gleichheit, Frieden, Liebe.«

Bei der Aufführung dieser Performance in Deutschland schwingt natürlich immer eine zweite Geschichte mit. Durch die Erinnerung an unsere Vergangenheit wird eine Wunde aufgerissen, und wir fühlen einen Schmerz, eine Verzweiflung. »Über diese Verzweiflung aber kann Versöhnung stattfinden«, sagte ein Besucher.

Mohammadreza Farzad

Self-Sacrifice as Gift

After a brief overview of several basic sociological and anthropological theories on gift, sacrifice, and ritual, I would like to describe the burial of martyrs as a kind of ritual solidarity, a vivid display of performative excess and transformative energies. Referring to Erika Fischer-Lichte's *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual* (2005) who shows how theater as a ritual of self-sacrifice could bring about a utopian community, new kinds of memorial cults dedicated to the memory of national fallen heroes could be analyzed in their performative functions.

Regarding the ancient Iranian passion play of Ta'ziyeh, which is strongly based on the philosophy of martyrdom and religious concepts a functional shift occurred. We should also consider this shift as a highly performative, transformative, and action-based phenomenon founded on the supremacy of text over action, even in contemporary theater and religion.

The shift from (holy) texts to action entailed at the same time a shift of interests from the individual to the community. In theatrical terms, this shift could be defined as a dramatic turn from text (drama) to action (performance) based on the secular division of religion and social action (politics). The social consequences of this shift could be seen in the emergence of a very »segmented« and »mechanical« solidarity through jihads and suicide bombings as self-sacrifice rituals. However, one should not overlook the role of politics (colonialism, military occupation, invasions, wars, etc.) and social and religious discrimination in fostering the emergence of such cultures of martyrdom. At this moment in time, we should be very alarmed about the emergence of such a performative shift and of an action-based culture in an era of increasing political discrimination.

Ingrid Hentschel

Experiencing the Gift: Theater, Festivity, and Play

Based on the experience of theater as an event of cultural exchange, this contribution will reflect upon the theatrical and philosophical dimensions of the relationship between theatrical performance, ritual, play, and festivity. What's potent about the dynamic interaction between actors/performers and audience is, in an ideal case, the process of giving and receiving that is rooted in the ritual heritage of theater. The performance as a singular event – in contrast to the play, which may form its basis, and the staging as the intended performance – can be described as play according to Hans-Georg Gadamer. Although with play, as with gift giving, clear positions of the subject and object are difficult to pin down. For this reason the discussion is more about an intermediary zone, a betwixt and between that corresponds to the position of the gift as an intermediary entity and a cultural metaphor.

According to Hentschel, the basis of theatrical performance can be described as barter – as a reciprocal giving and taking between spectators and actors. Theater thus unveils the ontological dimension of human existence, which, as reality, we do not control, but which we shape and make palpable for one another with the help of art.