

any kind. Though filled with details and multiple variances, the guidebook focuses on an open, holistic approach to teen hood, adolescence, and the challenges facing those living with and working with young people.

The premise of the book is that open communication and positive relationships can be nurtured through honest conversations. Responses to questions must be accurate and open, based on thoughtful consideration and accurate information and the authors aim to provide the practical tools for dealing with these challenges. This is an ambitious but accessible guidebook or “road map” for parents. It is informative and reassuring. It is not an all-encompassing encyclopedia on how to deal with teenagers and their questions but it is an excellent starting base. In fact, the straight-forward non-clinical language interwoven with humour and real life anecdotes is a positive and simple approach to “adolescent realities”—a good go-to resource for young people and their parents who are trying to develop and maintain communication.

## **The Gift in the Heart of Language: The Maternal Source of Meaning**

Genevieve Vaughan

Fano: Mimesis International, 2015

REVIEWED BY NANÉ JORDAN

*The over-emphasis on exchange and force, together with the denial of mothering/being mothered influences all of Western thinking.*

—Genevieve Vaughan (p. 184)

Genevieve Vaughan’s new volume continues her groundbreaking work on the gift economy, as understood through the primary lens of mothering and motherhood. Vaughan reveals the extent to which theories of the gift and economics have failed to consider the obvious: maternal giving. The “maternal gift” refers to the one-way flow, from mother to child, of material and non-material gifts and services (i.e. food, shelter, care, and language). The gift economy is based in a unilateral satisfaction of needs, without thought of return or reward on the part of the giver. Key to understanding the maternal gift economy is in how it has been hidden, distorted, and exploited by the exchange economy and patriarchal capitalism. Our mothers gave birth to our bodies and lives and gifted us with early and ongoing mother-care (gift-

work). This simple fact can be so amazingly ignored that we miss our physical and philosophical “foundations”!

I appreciate how Vaughan develops a unique term: “motherer,” meaning anyone, of any sex or gender, who functions as a gift-giver towards children and/or society as a whole. Forming the basis of once long-sustaining indigenous societies, the gift is interconnected to the exchange economy, in so far as the exchange economy is a parasite on the gift. In this way, one can see how the many social and economic challenges that mothers face are rooted in the exploitation and devaluation of their daily gifting practices by the forces of exchange that govern our lives. The exchange economy uses gifts (e.g. of the mother or the Earth) as free resources to fuel its systems of accumulation, scarcity, and domination through power-over others.

Vaughan provides detailed analysis of the gift by linking “mothering, gender, cognition, economics, language, neuroscience, politics...and the rest of life on Earth” (35). Her expansive contribution investigates and critiques Marxist theory and capitalism, sociological, anthropological, and philosophical studies on the gift from Mauss to Derrida, Bataille, and Bourdieu. Vaughan especially engages new conceptions of the infant as seen by psychologists (and known by mothers for millennia). The child is understood to be a highly communicative and interactive being who learns through relational mirroring with their mother/er. Language development is itself a gifting process, where mother and child nurture and follow each other’s cues. Babies smile, babble or cry, capturing our attention and love, projecting their own affection back to us. Such communicative gift-giving reinforces positive human relations.

Vaughan thus interprets language as functioning according to the “Symbolic Order of the Mother,” a term coined by Italian philosopher Luisa Muraro. In her chapters entitled “The Virtual Plane,” and “Money, Property, and Epistemology,” Vaughan expounds upon the relationship between language and money, towards conceptions of human subjectivity. Money, as an “extra-somatic token of ideas” (242), is a communication and power strategy of patriarchal capitalism, appropriated from “the heart” of the maternal gift of language. We desperately need to understand this projection of exchange ideas into our thinking and actions, which inform our very notions of what it “means” to be human.

In the end, the gift can function very well on its own, without the need for exchange. Like an out-of-control demon, the exchange economy has become a necrophilic system feeding upon our mother-worlds and mother-life. Yet we can all be motherers. Vaughan is herself a grassroots advocate, activist and networker, a “motherer” philosopher who organizes international conferences that are devoted to recognition and support of the mater-