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The term "gift" is one of those words so seemingly self-explanatory that it will barely appear to merit extended analysis. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that the act of giving—especially in the psychological sense—can involve a highly complex interaction laden with a great deal of unconscious meaning. We are fully acquainted, for instance, with the saying "To kill with kindness." Here we are obviously dealing with a gift which is not a gift.

The object of this paper will be to consider some other forms of gifts which are not gifts, to analyze the emotional consequences of non-constructive giving, and to try to arrive at some concept of a more genuine kind of gift. Implications for work in hypnosis will also be discussed.

I shall take, as my point of departure, certain aspects of parent-child and adult-child relationships. The child, of course, needs to be given to if he is to develop optimally. The quality of the emotional gifts he receives will determine his view of the world and of himself. We can safely assume that it will in turn color his own capacity for giving as an adult.

I

Now what makes this problem a bit difficult is that certain forms of giving and of appearing to be sweet and kind receive social approval in our culture. This is especially true of adult behavior towards children. It is all too easy for adults to appear to be giving and kindly by assuming a particular sort of playfulness and by appearing to be delighted to descend to the child's level. In order to present oneself as the loving, kindly adult, one pets, pats, tickles, and gushes over the child. A great

premium is put on the humor and play component of the adult-child interaction. No sooner does the child appear on the scene than the face of the adult is compelled to register a smile. This gushy routine of pretense is regularly enacted by movie audiences when an infant is on the screen. The audience is almost competing to see who can express love most vocally. Presumably, this is bestowing warmth and affection on the child. This kind of forced sweetness is so institutionalized in our culture that it is all too easy to fool oneself as well as others. In fact, the social pressure to make a highly visible display of one's affection for the child is so great that a quiet and modulated reaction is regarded by some as suspect and reflecting a cold and forbidding nature.

A most telling example of this forced, non-genuine giving and playfulness occurs in certain group situations. If adults happen to be uncomfortable and uneasy with each other in a social situation and a small child suddenly appears on the scene, one can easily predict the ensuing behavior. The odds are high that the child will be thrust to stage center and will receive an inordinate amount of attention. Superficially, it appears that the child is being blessed with great quantities of affection. A closer look quickly reveals, however, that there is probably little true giving in these scenes. What is actually going on is that the veneer of playful affection is heavily anxiety-laden and serves to cover over the adults' feelings of uneasiness. Whereas on the surface the adult is saying, "I want to show you plainly how much I like you," the underlying message is "smile and chortle at me so that I can convince myself that I am an adequate, loving person."

Most adults who employ these mechanisms would probably protest if confronted

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with this interpretation. They might well insist that the writer's cynicisms and suspiciousness have banished the last ounces of sentiment from his bones. I can only reply that in my observations of our social behavior, so much of our relations with each other, is poisoned by fear, anxiety and the melancholy effort to win each other's approval that genuine instances of loving and unselfish giving are less common than we would think.

II

Let us consider the effects on the child of this kind of false giving. The ramifications for later behavior are very broad and only brief analysis is possible at this point.

1. As I see it, the child is in a difficult situation. He is really not getting very much, but he is made to feel that he is. He will probably be saddled with a vague sense of frustration—like having an itch and not knowing where to scratch. The underlying frustration will necessarily generate anger, but there will be no easy outlet for the anger since, after all, the environment is being "so nice."

2. There is a pressure—subtle but present nevertheless—for the child to remain a child, to continue to be the kind of cute and needful being that makes the adult feel important and adequate. For this sort of adult, the growth and independence of the child is a threat. This observation is essentially commonplace in dynamic psychiatry, but it bears repetition in the present context.

3. There is pressure on the child, not only to respond appreciatively, but to always be prepared to make *some* kind of response in the presence of this sort of adult.

It seems certain that this feeling would be associated with a burdensome sense of indebtedness. It is highly likely that the pattern in question is an important source of a nagging, burdensome sense of obligation to others, and it is readily understandable that this feeling can develop into pervasive feelings of bitterness and guilt. For obviously, if you have a sense of indebtedness, you

have not been *given* anything; you do not have the feeling that something is truly yours to dispose of as you see fit.

4. It is inevitable, in this connection, that we consider the effect on the child's sense of trust, and—at the deepest levels—on his sense of ideals. If the very act of love and giving has itself been a travesty, is it not likely that an attitude of profound cynicism may develop which questions whether unselfish relationships between people are possible at all?

5. Perhaps the greatest burden of all is that the child has been given little opportunity for developing an optimal degree of matter-of-factness. He has not had much chance to take others matter-of-factly, to react to the world as a matter of fact, and even to have a matter-of-fact attitude towards himself. It is unquestionably true that the growing infant sees himself as being of much consequence to the universe. At the same time there is much reason to believe that the child has a desperate, a crying need *not* to bear the burden of being at the center of the universe.

I come here to what is perhaps my central point, the idea that an excessive demand for emotional response can be profoundly upsetting to the biological human need for equilibrium. If the social structure and social relations have constantly called for an uncomfortably high and uncomfortably frequent level of emotional response, then the social world and everything in it will come to be perceived as a burden and a nuisance.

III

As we look for the effects in later life of these early learning patterns, the evidence becomes all too clear. Observations of behavior in ordinary social situations, as well as the types of problems presented by patients in psychotherapy, reveal with amazing consistency how often people feel the burdensome aspect of the social world.

If we look carefully at people's emotional problems we find—to an extent that is truly saddening—that many individuals hardly have a concept of an emotional gift. For

instance, someone relates that he is not comfortable when he does well and receives a compliment, for this means that he will have to strain mightily the next time in order to satisfy the high standards expected of him. In essence he cannot conceive that the compliment may have been granted with no strings attached, without there being contingent obligations.

A common feeling is that favors, compliments and friendly gestures *cannot* be tolerated because they ultimately serve as traps. The reasoning is that if someone is good to you, you can never cross him or disagree with him. You become trapped and enslaved and in the long run, you pay for the favor with the loss of your individual identity.

There are innumerable examples from the field of social manners which are known to all of us. The compulsive smile and over-effusiveness of the "huckster"-salesman type of personality appears on the surface to say how glad he is to see us. We discover fairly easily that just below the surface this person wants to get rather than give. In this social climate a matter-of-fact greeting will often be interpreted as a snub.

Needless to say, in love relationships between men and women, the guilt reaction to the perceived demand-component often does profound damage. How often we hear the statement: "He loved me so much I couldn't hurt him, so I married him." This outlook pays sad tribute to the hypothesis that the sort of love in question is heavily laden with demand and perhaps even with implied threat if the love is unrequited.

An important objection might be made at this point. Namely, does not deep love always imply a demand-component? I am not inclined to agree with that. I would suggest that where a mature love goes unrequited, the effect is sadness and disappointment rather than a catastrophic blow to the center of one's being.

The inability to have a concept of a true gift is of course seen daily by the psycho-therapist. The patient may feel terribly guilty if a symptom returns, because now the therapist will scold him. He may be

uncomfortable when the therapist commends him for his progress because now he feels compelled to move forward at great speed. He cannot stand the therapist's saying nice things about him because he will not have the right to express anger towards the therapist.

An interesting example occurred in the treatment of a hospitalized minister. He had been feeling better and the question arose of his taking a weekend pass outside the hospital. He could not accept the gift of a weekend's relaxation without obligation.

IV

It is possible to see some relationships between the principles so far discussed and the problems of hypnotic technique.

Hypnosis is an extraordinarily complex phenomenon; it is many, many things. Especially in recent years our growing sophistication has helped us understand that the ramifications of hypnotic theory and hypnotic phenomena are very broad and reach into many corners of behavior theory.

If we consider the oft-repeated statement that much of heterohypnosis is dependent on self-hypnosis, then we are in a position to see that hypnosis in a sense attempts to give the subject a most precious gift—the gift of himself. In many respects we try to give the person *back to himself*. Obviously this is a problem only because he has become divided and estranged from himself. A most peculiar and most painful state of affairs! In hypnosis we are going to undertake to see that the messages and instructions he gives himself are truly the ones that he knows to be in his best interests, ones which will give him genuine gratification.

One way I have had recently of thinking about this problem is as follows: It seems to me that Freud and his followers have been largely concerned with the question: "How does society get into the individual?" My feeling is that at this juncture in history we face quite another problem—possibly one of crisis proportions, namely, "How do

we get society *out* of the individual?" That is, how do we restore to ourselves not only the respectful acceptance of our own individualities and our own deepest needs, but even more poignantly the very *awareness* of our own sensations, feelings and attitudes.

It can be no accident that the philosophy of Zen Buddhism, in spite of its irritating obscurities, has begun to appeal to persons of Western culture. For say what one will about the mystifications of Zen, one does sense its deep concern with the autonomy of the individual and his capacity to commune with himself. In one of the most popular Zen parables the master is asked by the novice, "What is the essence of Zen?" The master replies, "I eat when hungry and sleep when tired." At first the answer may seem a foolish truism. But as we turn the thought over in our minds we can perhaps begin to appreciate the great difficulty we often have in giving ourselves simply and wholeheartedly to *any* activity, including the simplest.

Permit me to cite a trivial example from my own experience. It occurred to me recently that the idea of being "through" with a meal could be interpreted in two ways. One could consult one's sensations, i.e., did one *feel* sated? or, what too many people evidently do, one could consult one's eyes and perhaps social expectations and mechanically finish everything on the plate. With this "profound" revelation I have been enabled far more often to leave many things on my plate and to drink just a half a cup of coffee, and to leave the table feeling more comfortable.

Now of course we will have the objection that in a complex society it is enormously difficult to act according to one's desires. In a way, that is precisely my point. I do not know the complete answer—in large measure I am merely posing the question. But I would make two suggestions:

- (1) Our social engineering and our political philosophy must be based on a sound appreciation of human individuality as well as human social needs.

- (2) Early training in the freedom to recognize and act on one's individual feelings at those moments when they *are* quite consistent with our social environment will make it all the easier for us to deny ourselves when it seems necessary for group living.

Let me mention an induction technique which I have used with interesting results. I ask the subject to think of someone he knows whom he trusts implicitly. I have him visualize that person as vividly as possible and then have him imagine that the suggestions given are coming from the trusted person.

Some individuals cannot think of anyone who fits the requirements of being completely trustworthy—a sorry commentary on their experience with true gifts. But those who *can* visualize such a person have gratifying experiences. They are easily inclined to go along with the suggestions of the fantasied person. They revel in and become involved with the feeling of deep acceptance. The more they absorb this accepting relationship, the more willing they become to set aside temporarily their needs for autonomy and to allow the hypnotherapist to guide and define their feelings, perceptions and expectations. When the subject becomes convinced that he is truly being given to and there is no demand for a response, then paradoxically he will feel free to respond.

In our practice of hypnotherapy, many of us have a good deal to learn in this area. How often do we see ourselves as benign, supportive, giving persons. At a less obvious level we may very well be imposing burdensome demands on the patient—to have a particular sensation, to get rid of a symptom quickly, to adopt the therapist's point of view. All therapists need to be sensitive in this area but particularly the hypnotherapist since he is more likely to play an active part in guiding the patient's feelings and expectations.

I am definitely not taking the position that there is no place for constructive demands in a therapeutic relationship. The

skillful hypnoterapist who commands a variety of techniques will occasionally sense that a situation calls for a forceful, authoritative approach. On the whole, however, it seems best to keep the authoritative approach to a minimum and to maximize the autonomy of the patient.

According to the Bible, it is more blessed to give than to receive. Now I find it difficult to evaluate which is more blessed but I do feel keenly the obstacles involved in *both* these actions. Considerable maturity is required if we are to give freely—that we know well. The ability to receive, to take—comfortably, guiltlessly, graciously—seems to require even greater maturity. Interestingly enough, being able to accept a gift and to receive it as a true, unambivalent, uncomplicated gift, entailing nothing but our freedom to enjoy it, is in turn one of the finest gifts we can bestow on our fel-

low man. Our ability to do this pays tribute to our trust in him and our respect for his honor.

And so it seems fitting that at the best levels of maturity, the distinction between giving and taking begins to blur.

Now and then we meet persons who have a certain aura. They radiate an atmosphere which leaves us singularly free from pressure. They are glad to express their opinions but we feel no compulsion to agree. We feel emancipated and refreshed. And these people are not cold or aloof. It is simply that they have such emotional solidity that they want nothing from us but that which we can freely give. A therapeutic atmosphere is set up in which others feel safe, can be themselves, can flourish and grow. These fortunate individuals have the power to confer a most extraordinary gift.