

Belonging: From Identity Logic to Relational Logic

Ann Game and Andrew Metcalfe

School of Social Sciences and International Studies

University of New South Wales

Sydney NSW 2052

Australia

a.game@unsw.edu.au

a.metcalfe@unsw.edu.au

Biographical Details

The authors teach and write together in the School of Social Sciences and International Studies, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2052. They have written four books collaboratively: *Passionate sociology*; *The mystery of everyday life*; *The first year experience*; and *Teachers who change lives*. Additionally, Ann is co-author of *Gender at work* and author of *Undoing the social*, and Andrew is author of *For freedom and dignity*. They are currently working on a study of everyday ritual practice.

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Abstract

Recent work in Australian cultural studies has drawn on Mauss's analysis of gift-exchange to question the common presumption that social encounters necessarily involve either opposition or appropriation. This article agrees with these writers on empirical grounds, but argues that, rigorously speaking, exchange is based on identity logic which is necessarily oppositional. There is therefore a tension between, on the one hand, their use of the language of identity and exchange and, on the other, their empirical examples of mutuality and hospitality. The article outlines an alternative logic of gift relation, arguing that this opens more conceptual possibilities for understanding the experiences of mutuality to which these cultural analysts have drawn attention. It shows that relation is an ontological condition that cannot be reduced to identity, and, that, from a relational perspective, difference is not opposition but unidentifiable openness.

Keywords: gift, exchange, relation, identity, difference, belonging, I-You

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This article addresses the fundamental issue of social encounter.¹ Social encounter is usually understood as the interaction of identities or subjects, an understanding that cedes identity logical priority to relation. According to this account, difference derives either from the opposition of or exchange between identities. Arguing that this common approach obscures the significance of social encounters which involve no attachment to identity; we will show that relationship is an ontological condition that cannot be reduced to identity or subjectivity. Relational logic understands difference as unidentifiable openness.

In making this case, we are developing the recent Australian literature on ‘everyday multiculturalism’, produced by cultural analysts interested in belonging and social inclusion (Noble, 2009a, 2009b; Wise and Velayutham, 2009; Wise, 2005, 2009, forthcoming; Butcher and Thomas, 2003; Ang, 2001; Hage, 2003). Two of the writers, Noble and Wise, explicitly criticise the cultural studies account of identity that presumes that social encounters necessarily involve either opposition or appropriation (see e.g. Hall and Du Gay, 1996; Ashcroft et al, 1995; Hage, 1998; Bhabha, 1994; Morris, 1992; Chambers, 1994; Bennett, 1998). Noble and Wise seek to avoid this presumption by leaving the role of opposition as an open empirical question, thereby making space to discuss also what they see as the non-oppositional negotiations of everyday cohabitation. They organise discussions of this

everyday multiculturalism around the trope of intercultural exchange, and the language of negotiation, swapping, sharing, interaction, turn-taking, obligations and reciprocities. We will argue that they overlook the way in which this conceptual language of exchange still relies on the presumption of oppositional identity.

We focus in this article on Noble and Wise because their empirical work demonstrates that everyday multiculturalism has more complexity than has been acknowledged in abstract models. As they have shown, there are forms of social encounter that are not based on opposition. Our aim is to contribute to this project by providing relational concepts that allow a richer appreciation of the importance of everyday encounters.

To develop our argument, we will concentrate on one key theoretical trope used by Noble and Wise, that of the gift. While both writers (Noble, 2009b; Wise, 2005) recognize that their models of social exchange draw on Mauss's account of gift exchange (1970), they do not draw attention to the ontological presumptions of this account. Exchange theory presumes 'a subject, a dative, and a direct object: a giver [who] gives a gift to someone who, through this giving, is invited (asked, urged, demanded, forced) to receive the gift' (Peperzak, 2002, p.164). While the focus of Noble and Wise on everyday cohabitation challenges the claim that social encounter necessarily involves opposition, we will argue that the logic of gift exchange relies on this presumption of opposition. Indeed, rigorously speaking, any subject- or identity-based account presumes opposition. This presumption makes it impossible for analysts to consider the possibility of a relational ontology.

To anticipate our argument, we are saying that the model of gift-exchange cannot conceive of the gift itself, which happens gratuitously, without exchange, in a meeting where there are no subjects, no identity boundaries for the gift to cross, and no sequence of giving, receiving and reciprocating (see Game and Metcalfe, 2010b; Metcalfe and Game, 2008a). While some social encounters take the form of exchanges, others have the form of the gift. The latter have the ontology, space and time of openness, which means openness to difference. This openness to difference, we suggest, could be the basis of the belonging and social inclusion that Noble and Wise affirm in their empirical research (see Metcalfe and Game, 2008b, 2008c; Game and Metcalfe, 2008, 2009, 2010a).

Identity logic

We will start with the classic cultural studies approach to identity. Drawing on deconstructive accounts of Hegel's master/slave story, Lacan's account of identification, and Saussure's theory of the sign, cultural studies in the 1990s was characterized by 'a veritable discursive explosion ... around the concept of "identity"' (Hall, 1996, p.1). Identity was simultaneously challenged and privileged through the deconstruction of binary oppositions: the presumed autonomy of the dominant identity was destabilized as attention was drawn to its unacknowledged dependence on negated terms. A case in point is Morris's essay 'On the beach' (1992), which distinguishes cultural studies from uncritical accounts of national identity (see also Hage, 1998, pp.71ff; Ang, 2008). Morris sees an analogue of the uncritical

approach in Charles Meere's painting *Australian Beach Pattern*. To demonstrate her alternative deconstructive approach, Morris refers to Anne Zahalka's photographic quotation of this image, arguing that Zahalka destabilises the 'Anglo-Celtic masculine possibilities so dear to nationalist thinking' by 'foregrounding figures ...crucial to Koori, feminist and immigrant constructions of Australian history'. These figures represent 'the plurality and mixity of origins that now constitutes Australia' (1992, p.99). Once Zahalka adds these repressed oppositional figures to her image, she reveals that 'noble, athletic Australians [of Meere's image] were... Aryan' (Morris, 1992, p.99). For Morris, the singularity of national identity is thus revealed and undone by oppositional plurality. Continual opposition is the only way to avoid appropriation by the singular.

Through their empirical focus on everyday social encounters, writers like Noble and Wise challenge the presumption that social encounter necessarily involves opposition. However, since they do not engage with the deconstructive tradition, they do not explore the conceptual inadequacies of the oppositional model of identity. Their starting point, instead, is a critique of classificatory social analysis. They claim that real encounters cannot be understood through the 'freeze-frames' and abstractions of 'social categories such as gender, class, race and ethnicity' (Noble, 2009a, p.876, p.877). Noble, for example, insists on the 'messiness', 'complexity' and 'multiplicity of identities' in ordinary life; identity, he says, is always incomplete, 'contingent and contextual rather than a stable set of reference points' (2009a, p.876). He is critical of theorists who focus on collective identities and lose sight of

individuals' experiences of interpersonal encounters, whose work 'pathologises otherness as a radical and hostile alterity' (2009a, p.878). Instead, he encourages empirical work that can recognize the existence of encounters that 'reconcile subjects' without appropriation or opposition; he insists on the importance of 'mediating structures [and] shared cultural and institutional forms' that allow 'intersubjective agreement' and 'solidarity' (2009a, pp.878-9).

Like Noble, Wise criticizes abstraction and values the quotidian, focussing on 'the diversity that exists in real, lived environments', on the 'complex task of actually "doing" everyday togetherness-in-difference' (2005, p.172; see Ang, 2001). This allows her to identify positive as well as negative encounters, and draw attention to forms of care, gratitude, hope, hospitality and belonging that are not appropriative. In the face of '[c]ultural theorists [who] have often viewed community as always about closure', she argues that 'there are other forms of community which are looser affiliations, or articulations ... that can create a mutual opening up to one another, and possibility of recognizing the stranger' (2005, p.182; c.f. Caputo, 2004). After offering empirical examples of 'cultural dissonance' (2005, p.173), she describes more hopeful 'vignettes' of intercultural sharing. She divides these vignettes into two types, involving either 'non-ethno-specific space' or 'reciprocity'. As an example of the non-ethno-specific space, Wise describes a gathering where elderly Polish, Anglo and Chinese ladies joined elderly Greek ladies in a 'Zorba' dance. She describes this as a 'magical moment' where 'genuine joy and warmth' were 'exchanged' (2005, p.182). We will return to this example at the end of the article.

One of Wise's examples of reciprocity centres on Teresa, 'a late middle-aged Filipina lady' who had recently migrated to Australia. Concerned about the social isolation of the 'very elderly Anglo ladies' who lived on either side of her house, Teresa invited them to a house warming party. The ladies reciprocated by bringing to the party gifts of food.

The three are now firm friends. They always call out a hello to one another, Teresa drops in on them to 'borrow sugar' or such like (an excuse to check up on them) and they drop by with some 'spare' fruit cake, just baked, or have a chat over the fence if the opportunity arises. Teresa sometimes helps out with things around their homes, but emphasised to me that it is not a one-way relationship. She said she feels a real sense of belonging and is very pleased they seem to like her and appreciate her neighbourliness and she enjoys the small ways in which they reciprocate her kindness. (2005, p.180)

Trying to find a language for these interactions between subjects, Wise draws on Mauss's account of gift-exchange. She claims that her positive vignettes demonstrate 'that gift-exchange and relations of reciprocity are undervalued and potentially offer real possibilities in ethnically diverse communities' (2005, p.181). Gift-exchange, she says, holds the possibility of 'mutual hospitality and recognition', and is therefore the model for 'intercultural exchange'. Accordingly, in relation to Teresa's story, Wise notes that the turn-taking of the gift cycle broke the power dynamic that exists in a one-way relationship.

Writers such as Noble and Wise have made an important contribution to an understanding of everyday forms of sociality that do not take the form of opposition; they have changed debates by drawing attention to the importance of experiences of hospitality and gratitude, and non-ethno-specific space. It must be noted, however, that they use the language of identity, subjectivity and exchange without apparent awareness of the logical underpinnings of these terms. It follows that when they speak of social relations, they are referring only to interactions between subjects or identities; they do not recognize relationship which has a different ontological form. It also follows that they do not acknowledge that the logic of identity is necessarily based on singularity, sameness and opposition, and that the Hegelian desire for identity is always based on the appropriative binary opposition between self and other. These logics are not changed by multiplicity, which is no more than a multiplication of the singular, any more than they are changed by acknowledgement of hybridity, context, messiness or instability.

Our argument will be that the conceptual language of relational logic allows a richer appreciation of the empirical situations described by these authors. In this logic, relationship is not derived from but is ontologically prior to subjects and identities; relationship, moreover, has a space and time that is distinct from the Euclidean space and linear time of the ontology of identity. Before we get to relational logic, however, we want to briefly examine the ontological presumptions of classical accounts of gift-

exchange. This theory is misunderstood, we will show, when seen as an account of non-oppositional subject-to-subject interactions.

Gift-exchange

To show why gift-exchange is a limiting conceptual tool for cultural analysts who want to talk of hospitality, belonging or gratitude, we will return to the work of Mauss and Lévi-Strauss and show that it logically requires the existence of hostility and objectification. Exchange theory derives social cohesion from the ongoing pursuit of self-interest and the appropriation of otherness.

In *The Gift*, Mauss insists on the Hegelian connection between giving and hostile appropriation.:

To give is to show one's superiority, to be more, to be higher in rank, *magister*.

To accept without giving in return, or without giving more back, is to become client and servant, to become small, to fall lower (*minister*). (1990, p.74)

Mauss says that '[w]hen two groups of men meet they may move away or ... resort to arms; or else they can come to terms' (1970, pp.79-80). By 'coming to terms', Mauss means embedding appropriative claims to superiority within the institution of gift-exchange, thereby allowing groups of people 'to stabilise their contracts and to give, receive and repay' (1970, p.80). For Mauss, then, social cohesion arises from people

agreeing to take turns in putting forward their claims to superiority; the society established through gift-exchange is not the overcoming of, but the harnessing of opposition (c.f. Simmel, 1964). Gift exchange allows people 'to oppose one another without slaughter and to give without sacrificing themselves to others' (Mauss, 1970, p.80). This is, it should be noted, a very emaciated view of social encounter, which presumes oppositional identity and requires the exchange sequence of separate acts of giving, receiving and reciprocating. The temporal institution of turn-taking only works because it ensures that people never encounter each other as whole people.

The connection between warfare and gift-exchange explains why Mauss chooses the fiercely competitive potlatch as the model for gift-giving. The key issue, he says, is the preservation and enhancement of 'face', by which he means identity, rank, dignity and persona. To give is to put the other 'in the shadow of [your] name', to seek self-certainty by 'flattening' the other, but through this agonistic process, Mauss says, groups are tied together (1970, p.38).

Lévi-Strauss begins his account of gift-exchange with an example of an everyday interaction. He asks us to imagine two male peasants, both strangers, who have been forced to sit 'less than a yard apart, face to face on both sides of a table in a cheap restaurant' in the south of France (1969, p.59). According to Lévi-Strauss, this situation offers 'material for inexhaustible sociological reflection.' It is 'a "total social fact" – on a microscopic scale', 'an example ... of the formation of a group, for which ... no ready-

made formula of integration exists' (1969, p.58-9). From this example, Lévi-Strauss will draw out the exchange logic which he thinks underlies all social life, whether in the field of kinship, economics, art, science, religion or culture (1969, p.61).

Lévi-Strauss's analysis of the diners' situation begins with reserve and hostility.

A conflict exists... . [The diners] feel both alone and together, compelled to the usual reserve between strangers, while their respective spatial positions, and their relationships to the objects and utensils of the meal, suggest, and to a certain extent call for, intimacy. ... An almost imperceptible anxiety is likely to arise in the minds of these table-companions with the prospect of trifling disagreements that the meeting might produce. (1969, p.59).

When the stranger sat down, the first diner was aggrieved. The otherness of each is a dangerous recalcitrance that threatens self-certainty: if I can treat the other as an object, they can do the same to me, thereby negating my world.

Lévi-Strauss resolves this Hegelian dilemma with an exchange. Each diner has before him a small bottle of wine, holding only one glassful, and one diner pours his bottle into his neighbour's glass. His neighbour immediately reciprocates. Lévi-Strauss comments that this

exchanging of wine ... is an assertion of good grace which does away with mutual uncertainty. It substitutes a social relationship for spatial juxtaposition. ... Wine

offered calls for wine returned, cordiality requires cordiality. ... In this way a whole range of trivial social ties are established by a series of alternating oscillations, in which offering gives one a right, and receiving makes one obligated, and always beyond what has been given or accepted. (1969, p.59)

We will return later to the concepts of grace and calling, which we think Lévi-Strauss misunderstands. At the moment we observe that social life is, in this account, the by-product of the actions of desirous subjects acting on a world of objects. If social life is a series of oscillating exchanges, social relationships are not the *replacement* of juxtaposition, as Lévi-Strauss claims, but only the simple *alternation* of positions. Relations are simply seen as exchanges of objects by would-be subjects, taking place in Euclidean space and chronological time. Because the other is only a mirror of the self, there is no openness to difference in this interchange; this is mere tolerance of the other (see Hage, 1998), and not open-hearted acceptance of difference.

Although Lévi-Strauss suggests that exchanges are not always calculated (1969, p.42), his conclusion to the diners' story suggests that strategy is fundamental to exchange logic and sociality:

The person beginning the cycle [by pouring the first glass of wine] seizes the initiative, and the greater social ease which he has displayed puts him at an advantage. For the opening always involves a risk, in that the table-companion may

respond to the drink offered with a less generous glass, or the contrary risk that he will take the liberty to bid higher, obliging the one who made the first offer (and we must not forget that the bottle is small) either to lose his last trump as his last drop, or to sacrifice another bottle for the sake of prestige. ... [T]he respective attitudes of the strangers in the restaurant appear to be an infinitely distant projection ... of a fundamental situation, that of individuals of primitive bands coming into contact for the first time (1969, p.60; c.f. Bataille, 1985; Derrida, 1994, pp.11-12, 123).

The point we are making is that gift-exchange theory is misunderstood if it is taken as the basis of mutuality and open generosity. As Douglas observes, it is a theory that explains how self-interest produces a truce, allowing a juxtaposition of warring people:

[Mauss] discovered a mechanism by which individual interests combine to make a social system, without engaging in market exchange. ... The gift cycle echoes Adam Smith's invisible hand... . Like the market it supplies each individual with personal incentives for collaborating in the pattern of exchanges. (1990, pp.xiii-xiv)

Exchange logic, then, is based on the same oppositional terms as the model of identity that Wise and Noble criticize. This draws attention to the fact that any theory that takes as its starting point separate terms or identities is implicitly reliant on

oppositional logic. The oneness and self-sameness of identity necessarily implies oppositional negation of the not-one.

The claimed unavoidability and unrealisability of the Hegelian desire for identity is, we have already noted, the starting point of deconstructive analysis (see Hegel, 1977, pp.104-119). The strategy is to draw attention to the denied dependence of the first term on the second. Derrida, accordingly, highlights how Mauss's account of the gift relies on these Hegelian assumptions about the desire for identity and negation of otherness. (1994, p.28) He claims that giving

supposes a subject and a verb, a constituted subject, which can also be a collective...a subject identical to itself and conscious of its identity, indeed seeking through the gesture of the gift to constitute its own unity, and, precisely, to get its own identity recognized so that that identity comes back to it (1994, p.11)

Derrida's argument is that this necessary underpinning conflicts with the very definition of the gift, which is that 'there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counter-gift, or debt' (1994, pp.11-12). His conclusion is that the gift itself is impossible, always annulled by the inevitable desire for the return to identity.

Deconstructing Wise's story of Teresa and her neighbours, for example, Derrida might claim that Teresa was motivated by self-interest, a desire to be a 'good neighbour', a desire to control how she is seen by others, a desire to control others, a

desire to have others act in a way that reinforces her sense of identity. However good her intentions are, she has intentions, and intentions necessarily involve a desire for identity in Hegelian logic.

We agree with Derrida's explication of the logic of gift-exchange. We agree too that this form is common in everyday social life. We disagree, however, when he claims that this logic is ubiquitous (Derrida, 1994, p.24). Although we do not seek to offer definitive reinterpretations of Wise's fieldwork, we think it is possible that, in Teresa's story, for example, she is describing an encounter that is *not* based on identity logic and a gift that is *not* gift-exchange. Our point is that the language of identity and exchange lacks the conceptual terms needed to allow for the very possibility of such encounters and such gifts: there is a tension between, on the one hand, Wise's use of the language of identity and exchange and, on the other, the possibilities raised by her empirical examples and overall argument about mutuality.

Relational logic

While we agree with Noble and Wise about the empirical reality of mutuality and open generosity, we think that these are based on relation rather than exchange. In the gift relation there is no distinct giver or receiver, by which we mean that participants are not located, positioned or attached to identities. The gift happens in the relation, in a

simultaneous giving-and-receiving which allows no distinction between the act of giving and the act of receiving. To say that the gift happens means that it occurs without causality, that it does not originate with the intentions of a subject, that it is gratuitous. There is, it follows, a stillness in the gift relation that is not found in the oscillation and juxtaposition of the gift-exchange. Rather than the future-orientated sequence of exchange, which presumes chronology, the gift relation takes place in the non-linear present.

The distinction we want to make between exchange and relational logics of the gift can be drawn from Buber's distinction (1958) between the worlds of I-It and I-You (sometimes translated as I-Thou). Buber uses the term I-It to describe the willful, self-centred logic of the Hegelian world of finite subjects and objects located in linear-Euclidean time-space. Far from being universal, this world of identity and exchange is, for Buber, only one way of being in the world. I-You refers to a relational way of being that logically underpins and embraces I-It. In an I-You relation, there is openness to difference: people are not seen as an aggregation of identity characteristics but as unique and therefore undefinable beings. For Buber, in other words, to be unique is not to be one but to be non-finite, infinite, open. Whereas the world in an I-It interaction is a mirror of the self, there is, in an I-You relation, an acceptance of the difference that is present but cannot be identified or located as either in I or You.

A good way of exploring this distinction is to think of different understandings of knowledge and knowing. Beginning with a theory of identification, I-It understands knowledge as representation. I-You, however, describes relations of immediate and real presence (see Steiner, 1989; Shotter, 2003; Barthes, 1984; Metcalfe and Game, 2004; Game and Metcalfe, 2008; Wise, 2005, p.171). As Buber puts it, when You is spoken, the speaker has no thing for their object, for You is unbounded: 'The relation to the *Thou* is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between *I* and *Thou*' (Buber, 1958, p.11). Buber illustrates his point by considering the ontologies of different ways of seeing a tree. When he is in an I-It form of being, a subject in a world of objects, Buber says he can see a tree as picturesque, he can admire its vitality, he can classify it as a species and study it as a type, he can see it as an example of a scientific law or turn it into a number. But, in all of these cases 'the tree remains my object, occupies space and time'. Reified, the tree, like the subject, is locatable in Euclidean space and linear time. This is the representational categorised world of identities. But it is not the only world.

It can, however, also come about ... that in considering the tree I become bound up in relation to it. ...

this it is not necessary for me to give up any of the ways in which I consider the tree. There is nothing from which I would have to turn my eyes away in order to see, and no knowledge that I would have to forget. Rather is everything,

picture and movement, species and type, law and number, indivisibly united in this event.

Everything belonging to the tree is in this: its form and structure, its colours and chemical composition, its intercourse with the elements and the stars are all present in a single whole. (Buber, 1958, pp.7-8, emphasis added)

When Buber says that he can become 'bound up in relation' to the tree, he is referring to the unmediated directness of an I-You relation. Everything relies on the preposition *in*, which can be used in either Euclidean or wholistic terms (see also Heidegger, 1962, pp.70-85). In the former sense, *in* implies containment: there are insides and outsides demarcated by walls. Just as chalk is *in* a box, the tree is *in* the categories that define it. But in the wholistic sense, *in* implies involvement and implication. When we are *in* love, or absorbed *in* our work, we are *in* a relation that does not locate insides or outsides or identities. There is just *this*, whatever is present, *here, now*. Although *this* is always surprising and disconcerting, because different to any categories I may have deployed to appropriate its uniqueness, I accept *this* in its undefinable wholeness, without needing to deny those aspects (of both I and You) that would threaten my identity in the world of I-It. As Buber makes clear, then, the presence of I-You is not a denial or negation of the I-It world of categories and

identities: Buber does not have to forget or turn his eyes from classifications, but that is only possible because he is not subjectively attached or identified with them.

This experience of absorption is often mistaken for merger, solidarity, unity or oneness ('I am at one with the world'), but these remain categorical concepts based on exclusions and inclusions in Euclidean space. Implication, by contrast, is infinite: not-countable, non-definable. The immediacy of the I-You relation is not the identity or unity of what deconstruction calls a metaphysics of presence, for it is characterized by openness and difference and not by a return to self-sameness.

If we take this logic another step, we notice that this open I-You relation underpins belonging and social inclusion. When based on identity, belonging leads to attempts to 'fit *in*', in a Euclidean sense (Noble, 2009, p.184), requiring negation of the aspects of the whole that exceed the identity. By contrast, the belonging of the I-You relation allows people to accept, for *whatever* they are, both the You *and* the I. Implicated, parts of a boundless whole, the You and I call out each other's potential, without that being codifiable. Belonging, in other words, is therefore based on difference in openness rather than sameness.

Our interest in this article in the ontology of encounter matches Buber's interest in the concept of *meeting*. Meeting must always be a meeting with difference: difference *and* sameness without definition of where these fall, and without identification of who brought the meeting about.

The *Thou* meets me through grace – it is not found by seeking....

The *Thou* meets me. But I step into relation with it. Hence the relation means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one....

The primary word *I-Thou* can be spoken only with the whole being.

Concentration and fusion into the whole being can never take place through my agency, nor can it ever take place without me. I become through my relation to the *Thou*; as I become *I*, I say *Thou*. All real living is meeting. (Buber, 1958, p.11)

When Buber says, of his relation with the tree, that '*it can, however, also come about ...*', he is making a point about the grace or gratuity of the meeting of I and You. It is a gift. For Buber, gifts (and meetings) are not impossible just because subjects cannot generate them intentionally, for Buber insists that there are situations where the language of desire and volition does not apply. When he says that relations in the I-You world are both 'chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one', Buber is making the claim that 'The life of human beings is not passed in the sphere of transitive verbs alone. It does not exist in virtue of activities alone which have some *thing* for their object' (1958, p.4).

Just as Buber uses the idea of grace to suspend the presumption of causality, he uses the ideas of presence and meeting to suspend the presumption of trajectory that characterises discussions of subjects moving in Euclidean space through linear time. As Buber points out, the meeting occurs not in the present of chronology but, rather, in ‘the real, filled present, [that] exists only in so far as actual presentness, meeting and relation exist’ (1958, p.12). Whereas gift-exchange is always restlessly moving toward the next action, the gift relation is based on stillness, a grateful appreciation for the uniqueness of *this*. This is sometimes described as an experience of time standing still, but such stillness is misunderstood if thought of as stasis or oneness. Instead, it is an experience of being *in* time: rather than implying that nothing happens, it implies that nothing has to be desired or *made* to happen, that there is faith that everything will unfold in its own good time, that, just *now*, there is nowhere else to be. Because stillness is an experience of openness it suggests, moreover, that everything, including the past and future, is already implied, already part of the here and now.

Gift Relation

We will conclude this article by briefly indicating how the relational logic of the gift might enrich understandings of experiences of everyday multiculturalism. Let us turn to Wise’s description of the ‘magical moment’ of the Zorba dance, which, she says, shows ‘the importance of certain non-ethno-specific forms of social space that

facilitated togetherness in difference' (2005, p.181). Wise concludes her description in these terms:

The accordion player kept playing different songs, from Greek tunes to 'Waltzing Matilda' which everyone sang along to. It was magical and seemed to produce this space of exchange between mutually shy and suspicious seniors – who by the end of the day were new friends – and parted with genuine joy and warmth for one another.

What I think worked about this space was the fact that it was a non-ethno-specific space, the participants were all there in support of their individual groups yet sharing a common fundraising cause. The music had ethnic roots yet joyfully translated across a myriad of ethnic lines, and the participants were spurred through this joy to connect across their difference. (2005, p.182)

This description reveals conceptual tensions. Wise implicitly uses gift-exchange logic when she says participants 'connect across their difference': difference is opposition bridged by exchange. However, she also implies gift relation logic when she talks of a non-ethno-specific space that allows 'togetherness in difference': difference is shared and non-identifiable.

We think it is possible that gift relation logic more accurately describes the Zorba experience. When Wise says the experience is 'magical', she could be implying that it is gratuitous and not the realization of intentions. Furthermore, rather than

consciously deciding to join in, people might just find themselves dancing. They would not be experiencing themselves as separate volitional identities; instead they would be in a relational state. As Yeats says, 'How can we know the dancer from the dance?' (1961, p.89). The joy and warmth would arise from the 'real living' of the meeting, and not from individuals; people would be *in* joy and warmth just as these qualities would be *in* them.

When music is understood directly like this, without being filtered through attachment to an ethnic identity, it does not need to be 'translated' and the experience is not hybrid or based on multiplicity. We imagine that there might be no sense of incongruity when 'Chinese', 'Polish' and 'Anglo' people open-heartedly join in a 'Greek' dance. If it is, for *all* participants, the 'real, filled present', the dance would feel both surprising and just right; even the 'Greek' dancer would have to re-learn its meaning, to acknowledge potential previously not recognised. It would be the dancing's accommodation of difference that makes it an experience of belonging; because people would not be required to identify themselves, they could accept both others and their own otherness. This acceptance of difference would be at once a receiving and a giving.

Buber insists that these moments of I-You are ever-present and that it is only the armour of identity that masks them (2002, p.12). They might be found, for example, in the shared smiles and little courtesies upon which Wise focuses. We imagine that

this relational logic might have been at work in Teresa's housewarming. Had Teresa developed a willful good-neighbour strategy, acting on her own initiative, the invitation she gave would have seemed awkward and threatening, in the way that Derrida describes. We imagine she could only ask with good grace because, in a sense, she and her neighbours had already shared lives. Not looking at them from the outside, or as a mirror to herself, she could openly respond to what her neighbours called for. Not action, or reaction, Teresa's invitation could have been what Buber calls the 'suffering and action in one' of the I-You relation (c.f. Wise, 2009). Through her openness to them and their difference, she could have made it possible for *them to give her* the appropriate words for *her to simultaneously give them* an open and non-threatening invitation. In *giving* this open invitation, she could have been *accepting* her neighbours and also her difference to her own identity. This would be the logic of gift relation rather than gift-exchange. Whenever there is the acceptance and attunement of belonging, there is this simultaneity of giving-and-accepting, an experience of difference in openness.

These possibilities raised by Wise's empirical research highlight limitations with the identity- and subject-based theories upon which she mainly relies. We have argued that a logically coherent account of belonging and social inclusion must begin with relation. Only when the possibility of gift relation is in play can empirical distinctions be made between situations which involve exchanges and those that involve the

mutuality of, for example, 'non-ethno-specific space'. Only when we acknowledge that relation does not derive from identity can we realize that there is a fundamental difference between the form of belonging that derives from identity and the form of belonging that derives from relation.

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