

Reading Diary “Sharing”

I found the readings for this class interesting and varied. They broadened my conception of intellectual property, symbolic value, and how we as human acts as givers and respond to gifts.

I was uplifted by the article, *The Sharing Turn*, as it explored ingrained human altruism. I was intrigued that in this article, as so often in anthropological work a separation from the world of animals comes in the form of “only humans have this behavior/capacity” I think dogs and other animals share ideas and information, but this is a side point. It is interesting to find that, sharing is so much to our survival advantage that it has in fact become part of our genetic architecture. This “we identity” is a fantastic thing. The we identity may be responsible for many of our festivals, art, and culinary joys. But this “we identity” now needs to evolve further for the boundaries of we as a species and reach to the edges of ecology. Our family needs to not just be our own, but all families, weather they be the microbes in a rich soil ecology, or our village. I find this human centric view of excluding nature from having the capacities that we have as humans view this provincial, or a “my kind” attitude, as ultimately endangering our survival as a species.

Looking at the formation and workings of patents and copy writes was an exploration with interesting moral and dialectic ambiguities. In *Genius and Copy Write*, was told a history of how the modern sensibility of intellectual properties evolved. I found interesting the tension between the pirate publisher and original publisher who purchased the manuscript from the author. One of the down sides of the practice of pirate publishing stated that it undermined the original publishers ability to pursue the publication of less popular or more challenging material. I found this interesting as often especially within the last decade, many copy writes and patents seem to in fact do the opposite, to narrow possible innovation in the field of arts and culture. I heard recently (on the radio show, *This American Life*) that the period of time it took the American patent office to issue its first one million patents was nearly a century and now it takes only 6 years for the same number to be issued. Even more interesting is how vague some of the patents dealing with technology and computers can be. One patent holds ownership to the idea of backing up files from one’s pc to a larger network. In recent lawsuits the owner of this patent has collected undisclosed millions from many companies who use this “idea” even though the patent itself is non specific about any technique or process. This is an example that can be understood by what Judith Butler surmises in her investigation of subjects and subjugators. A power system is dependent upon its subjects. For the system to have power over the subjects these subjects have to have internalized their own subjugation as part of their identity and sense of security. In the case of the patents, the inventor is dependent and relies on the patent system to protect his intellectual capitol giving him a sense of security, yet with large companies buying up numerous and often vague patents, inventors in bringing their inventions forth are constantly facing potential litigation and subjection.

Then we have notions of gifts and how with a gift comes social rituals, obligations and expectation. A gift usually necessitates a delayed reciprocation. Without the delay the original

gift and the gesture associated is voided. Without reciprocation the receiver may find themselves ostracized. I could even compare this cycle and expectation to Oscar Wilde's allegory of the giant. When he shares his property, his majestic garden with the little children, he is "counter gifted" by eternal winter leaving and the return of blossom and leaf. Yet his real gift is a joy which is internal.

The market of Symbolic Goods, I found interesting but challenging, perhaps because it is a translation? It was interesting to follow Bourdieu intricate and complex argument that the value of symbolic good is a complex affair involving the opinions and acts of many different institutions and individuals. In Bourdieu argument the value of a work of art is far from being intrinsic to the work. Instead it is an opinion that has arisen from being "consecrated" by institutions and individuals who wield such power. This leads to a circular feedback loop in which the establishment creates its own taste and values. This feels in so many instances accurate, although it is limited to those who participate (consciously or unconsciously) in such a system. It does not speak to the power of art to communicate beyond whether it is thought of as important or valuable by an establishment. It also does not explain many artists who could care less about the institutions of consecration and instead follow an initiative born of an inner desire to create and seek, an example would be Simon Rodia.