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Metaformic Economics

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How does one measure that which is sacred? If something or someone is valued beyond measure, they are called “priceless.” Trees are priceless, like clean air, safe water, and a healthy body. We care for the things that are priceless to us, not only because we want to protect them, but because they lack the protection that comes with having a measurable value. If you could measure the value of your very favorite tree, by adding all of its gifts such as oxygen, shade, habitat, soil integrity, inspiration, peace, etc., and come up with a number, then that very special tree of yours could perhaps be considered by the global economic system to have some sort of worth. Because this system refuses to recognize anything that cannot pass through the economic market, then a tree in its living state is not considered “priceless,” but “worthless.”

I have been inquiring into the nature of value and of how we internalize external systems of value. I investigated the roots of economics and money and looked at my findings with a metaformic lens. The presence of blood in the economy is plentiful, easy to find, and fueled my research. Where and how this blood is present translates into belief systems of what is and is not considered valuable, priceless, and even sacred. By sacred, I

mean a profound sense of something greater than oneself and connected with the whole of existence. According to our global economy's accounting system, only those things that are visible can be measured, and only those things that are measured are considered to have value. What does this mean then, for menstrual blood whose influence is unstoppable, but much hidden?

For example, isn't it simple to find images of and ideas involving blood in the newspaper, on the television, on the internet, in video games, movies, books, sports events, and even the blood spoken of in churches? All of this blood is socially acceptable. In all of these cases we could find how marketable the bloodshed is, whether tallying the profits from a country at war or from a bloody, box office smash-hit. We are both drawn to it and repulsed by it.

There is a form of bloodshed that is not socially acceptable, not allowed, not lawful to be shown in the media, nor have its name uttered on the radio. It is menstruation, the bloodshed so powerful, that its name spoken out loud invokes all natures of emotional and social response. If we agree not to recognize it, not to speak about it or let it show, we can pretend it does not exist. Modern culture creates products to help hide it away, to criticize it as a nuisance and even call it obsolete, all the while capitalizing on its concealment, on its shaming, as well as on those who bleed. How does menstrual blood fit into our global economy, along with the other things which cannot be measured?

The "eco" in economy comes from the Greek word *oikos*, meaning home, house, habitat, life-bearing space, and Earth, while the end of the word comes from *nomos* meaning managing, caring, and stewarding. Our economy really is how we care for our

Earth and all life on it. The rules by which our global economic system is designed make it appear as if we do not value the Earth. We know different. It is our job to protect the things that are priceless to us, while finding creative ways to return to the roots of economics – caring for our Earth, her inhabitants, our communities, and all things we hold sacred. Originally, economics was not about money, and metaformically, had everything to do with menstruation.

Economics and the Business of Ritual

What is the “blood economy” and what does it have to do with the Sacred Feminine, the energetic, creative feminine principle, or lack thereof? Ritual bloodshed is as old as we are human, but it did not begin with war. At the dawn of our humanness, economics was the way in which we related to our newly acquired world of self and other.

Metaformic Theory says that our minds became human and that consciousness was created through the act of menstrual separation, of distinguishing menstruation from other activities. Separation is the first creation principle of menstrual theory and set the stage for the birth of human consciousness. This act of separating, of intentionally, ritually setting oneself aside during menstruation had to be, as Judy Grahn says, “very carefully managed.” Through exacting actions and careful management, we were able to keep the order of the universe as we knew it.

Economics was about relationship, exchange, ebb and flow, cause and effect. It was about reciprocity, intent, and faith in cycles. But it was not about money. Those who synchronized with the moon’s cycle secluded themselves and bled with the dark of the

moon. As this became a humanly conscious act, played out again and again at the dark of each moon, a relationship was built – I seclude, shed blood, then emerge, and the moon secludes into darkness and emerges to shed light.

Currently, the relationship between the blood economy and the presence of the Sacred Feminine is this: Where there is an increase in bloodshed and an increase in profit, there is a decrease or lack of presence of the Sacred Feminine. The universal sexual bias¹ leans towards the masculine in religion, in politics, in language, and even in bloodshed rituals. How could this be? Before there was blood of war, there was menstruation. Before there was blood of hunting, of circumcision, of scarification, and of piercing, there was menstruation.

The blood economy came from the very careful attendance, vigilance, and management of menstrual seclusion rituals. This was not economics in the way that we currently know it to be. This was communication with what was Sacred. The economy was the sacred act of carefully, ritually tending to the bloodshed rites, in order to reenact the original awakening of consciousness. Economics was the orderly care taking of the menstrual hut, the blood bank. At the dark of the moon, the sacred menstrual blood was given as payment for our consciousness.

This form of blood economics repeatedly confirmed that the “world” was something other than “I,” there was an “out there” and an “in here,” and that separation

¹ Rita Gross describes the universal sexual bias with three central characteristics present in androcentric scholarship and in a generally androcentric-thinking world:

1. The male norm and the human norm are collapsed and seen as identical.
2. The generic masculine includes the feminine, making it unnecessary to study women specifically.
3. Females are presented in relation to the males being studied, women dealt with as objects exterior to "mankind".

was necessary, and essential to being human. Separation enabled an externally based mind, a human mind.

Acquiring an externally based mind required early humans to connect to something outside of themselves as a frame of reference, to connect physically; and this was accomplished when the females evolved a menstrual cycle capable of synchronous rhythm, or entrainment. Entrainment is the quality of two similarly timed beats to link up and become synchronized in each other's presence.²

Looking at current economics with a metaformic mind allows one to see the menstrual origins of our modern practices.

The Menstrual Hut as Original Dwelling

The menstrual hut is the original dwelling, and the "template" for further structures. It is the first temple, the first palace, the first bank, the first home. I credit all architectural structures ever built to the menstrual hut. Mathematics, geometry, and science were born within the menstrual hut. The counting of time - the consciousness of time first arose within the rituals of menstrual seclusion. Again, with science we see the menstrual creation principle of separation: the source of the word science and its meaning "to know" comes from the Latin word *scire*, meaning "to separate, to discern." The word "conscience" is based on the Indo-European root word *skei*, "to cut, to split."

As Judy Grahn tells us,

'temple' has roots in 'time' --- as do 'tempo', 'temporary', and
'contemplation' --- from Latin *tempus*, 'time', and *templum*, 'space
marked out for the observation of auguries.' It is also related to *tempestas*,

² Grahn. *Blood, Bread, and Roses*, 13.

‘season’ or ‘storm.’ What besides time has been kept in temples?

Orientation, statuary, ritual paraphernalia, fire, water, books, grain, fruits, cattle, money, and crafts. As temples became centers of trade, the earliest known cities grew up around them. It is entirely likely that the menstrual hut, as the original dwelling, was the axis around which the village grew.³

The activities which are separated out in our modern lives used to take place under one structure of the temple: our spiritual worship, our community socializing, our banking, and even our birthing and burials. The menstrual hut is the oldest known structure, and became the template for our temples, our banks, our homes, and our businesses.

Menstrual Blood as First Form of Currency

The moon will be new tomorrow. Yesterday morning my moon-blood came flowing. Along with the blood, the word “currency” came to mind. I recalled reading that currency has to do with flowing, and looked it up again. The etymon of “currency” is from the Latin *currentum* “condition of flowing,” and of *currere* “to run.” Besides the common use of the word “currency,” which is synonymous for “money,” I think of the word “current” as to what is very present right now, in this moment, in the sense of something solid, something grounded. Of course, it makes perfect sense that this word actually has more to do with flow, movement, and exchange, than with the money we consider countable, quantifiable, and tangible. This is because the first form of currency was menstrual blood, itself.

³ Ibid., 243.

As the menstrual blood flowed from our ancient ancestor, she “paid” for the return of and the increase in light with her blood. As our ancient bleeding sisters followed menstrual seclusion rites, they reenacted the original awakening of human consciousness.⁴ In a sense, their blood-flow which was synchronized with the dark of the moon was the payment to ensure consciousness, and was extremely valuable. This form of currency paid for roots in the earliest openings of consciousness, and ensured a future of existing with this new awareness of both what was within and without, this new relationship of cause and effect with the world.

Grahn reminds us that both blood and money are stored in banks, that emergence from menstrual seclusion was often a time of gift-giving, and that the metaformic rose - which is symbolic of love, respect, and the blood red vulva – is often used as a “payment” and a token of love.⁵ This giving of metaformic gifts help men, or non-bleeding members to engage with menstrual consciousness.

Reciprocity: Bridges Between Spirit and Matter

The currency of menstrual blood is the earliest form of reciprocity. Reciprocity was based on a contract of faith between the earliest humans and the world they inhabited. Karl Polanyi, the influential mid-twentieth century essayist, proposed an alternative approach to economics,

The substantive meaning of economics derives from man’s dependence for his

⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁵ Ibid., 231.

living upon nature and his fellows. It refers to the interchange with his natural and social environment.⁶

and, “Most, if not all economic acts are found to belong to some chain of reciprocal gifts and counter gifts, which in the long run balance, benefiting both sides equally.”

Jacob Needleman, professor of philosophy and author of *Money and the Meaning of Life*, says

...money was created – by the keepers of the sacred teachings underlying all human societies – to maintain a relationship between man’s (sic) spiritual needs and his material needs....money is intrinsically a principle of reconciliation, of the harmonization of disparate elements.⁷

Needleman’s theories on money and its origins can be looked at metaformically.

Human life has meaning only insofar as we consciously and intentionally occupy two worlds at the same time. One force alone can never bring meaning into human life. Meaning appears only in the place between the worlds, in the relationship of two worlds, two levels, two fundamental qualities of power and energy.⁸

I hear him speaking about menstrual-lunar synchrony and the ability to separate the light and the dark, and our relation to its cycles.

But where there is relationship, there must be contact between the things related. For exchange to take place there must be contact between the elements in the exchange. A principle of reconciliation allows this contact to take place. Money was invented to allow contact and exchange between fundamental aspects of human life, the

⁶ Dalton. *Primitive, Archaic and Modern Economics*, 21, 139.

⁷ Needleman. *Money and the Meaning of Life*, 114.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

material, external life, and the internal life, in the sense of man's relationship to God within and above.⁹

This can also be read as woman's relationship to Goddess, or a person's relationship to Spirit. However it resonates best, it echoes the understanding of menstrual blood as being the first currency and the first example of reciprocity.

Menstrual Blood Debt

“Hers was the power of raveling and unraveling
since what consciousness (spirit, mystery, and mind)
gives us, it can also take back. And the power of creation
and destruction, as at one time evidently all humanity believed,
was in the woman's blood”

Judy Grahn, *Blood, Bread and Roses*, 18

In a series of articles under the title of "Goddess of the Blood of Life," Judy Grahn presents for us an essay on horticulture, the blood debt, and the exploration of farming as a possible source of women's shame towards menstruation, though she concludes that it is indeed, not, and that early horticultural practices show a kinship between the farming women and the menstrual power of the plants they were cultivating.¹⁰ Incorporating ethnographic studies of horticultural practices in areas of earliest horticultural development of “people whose maternal ancestral lines have passed

⁹ Ibid., 115.

¹⁰ Grahn. “Goddess of the Blood of Life”.

along cosmogonies and rituals completely interwoven with the intimate act of cultivation of plants,” she clearly unveils the metaformic relationship of reciprocity.

Grahn explores the ethnographic accounts of Michael F. Brown on the Aguaruna Jivaro people of Alto Rio Mayo, Peru, who use

what western anthropology calls “magic” in hunting and horticulture, their most important crop being manioc roots which the women cultivate, using ritual practices and a relational cosmogony.¹¹

The Aguaruna women have deeply personal relationships with the plants and consider the manioc “as a being, a powerful being with a soul, and they treat her and approach her as both a mother and a child.” They nurture their gardens metaformically, following ancient taboos like not going into the garden during menstruation, “lest the power of their menses “burn” the plants.”

At planting time the women paint the tubers red, and they also paint their own hands and foreheads with red so to the plants they will be known as friends. The plant will recognize them as “blood kin” - as menstrual beings.¹²

Grahn explores the relationship between menstruation and shame and finds a menstrual kinship between the Aguaruna people and their plants.

It is the vocabulary of a dialogue and a reciprocal economy based in familial mother-child relations of love, respect, negotiation of powers, and exchange of the central life force: blood.

Grahn reminds us through this account, as with her research into menarche celebrations

¹¹ Ibid., 3.

¹² Ibid., 3.

of dozens of other cultures: “Menstruation is at the heart, mind, and soul of what they are doing.”¹³

I particularly love the poetic way Judy Grahn invites me to see the menstrual economics at play between the Earth and her peoples. Through exploring the wisdom of the Aguaruna people, Grahn expresses how we are in a reciprocal relationship with the Earth, the source being how we need her for everything that contributes to our nourishment and sustainability, beginning with food. It is as if the horticultural peoples are saying,

Please let me eat of you, let me take the life of your plants, your babies, but please do not take my life or the life of my babies. Let me eat of you, because eventually, in the end, you will eat me, you will take me back into you. I come from you, and to you I will return.

Is the act of bleeding and giving back to the Earth enough to sustain her? Can balance be restored to Earth through paying off our blood debt? Is the blood of war a form of payment for how we as humans have stripped the Earth of Her sources, turning them into re-sources? Or is this reciprocal relationship with Earth about kinship, empathy, and caring for that which sustains us?

Lunar Economics

We are in a reciprocal relationship with the Earth, and menstrual-lunar synchrony teaches us through the opportunity to give back each month in exchange for what the Earth gives to us. To look at economics in a lunar way means having faith, an incredible amount might I add, in the ebb and flow of life, in the ability to meet one’s needs even in

¹³ Ibid., 4.

the face of financial adversity. Our modern economy is about growth and gain at all costs. It favors what I consider the “full moon of economic cycles,” and refuses to acknowledge the dark of the moon.

This cycle of abundance and growth in the waxing half of the lunar cycle corresponds to the “emergence” from menstrual seclusion – an essential part of Metaformic Theory. After separation, when the menstruant’s blood ceased to flow and she emerged from seclusion, the light emerged with her, and she was endowed with the power to create the light, just as she created the darkness with her seclusion. Grahn’s cross-cultural studies of menarche celebrations and parallel menstrual rites affirm that prior to celebration, a washing occurs in the form of a ritual bath after the menstruant emerges from the darkness. Money has this same ability to wash, to launder, to wipe away a debt, originally a blood debt.

Metaformically we can see that our modern economics came from this lunar cycle of dark and light, of ebb and flow, of less and more. The economics, the careful management of the menstrual seclusion rituals at the dark of the moon would lead to gain and abundance as the light of the moon returned. The waxing half was not necessarily equated with greater value, as the roots of value do not have to do with quantity, but with worth. A patriarchal worldview equates light and above and abundance with “good” and dark and below and lack with “bad.” It is not possible to live fully in only one half, for the birth of human consciousness came only when we acknowledged that they only exist simultaneously.

Modern economics is based on systems of value created out of scarcity, and fear of lack. Our global economic system was designed to measure the national income of a

country at war, a country engaged in continual bloodshed rites. The logic of economics as we know it emphasizes the full moon, the time of abundance, greed, and hoarding money, because there is a lack of trust in the cycle, rooted in a focus on scarcity.

Since menstrual bloodshed is linked with the cycles of the moon, there is no need to artificially induce bloodshed, as it will surely return. Menstrual logic brought to consciousness an awareness of relationships within cycles, and opportunities for dealing both with loss and gain, ascent and descent, growth and decline. The problem with today's logic is that it suppresses menstrual wisdom and strives only towards growth, light, and continuous ascent, while denying the chthonic, dark ebb of life, and the undeniable descent life brings as well. Today's logic teaches us to value only one side of the lunar cycle, the waxing half, and teaches us that this is the only way we will survive: growth at any cost, even if it costs us our lives and the life of the world we inhabit. This is the unfortunate mis-instruction which our world is greatly in need of reassessing.

When and why did scarcity and fear first come into play? What would cause the need to hoard money, to live in the light of the fictional ever-waxing moon, denying the essential other half, the dark half? When did the new moon, the darkness, menstruation, and the Sacred Feminine become associated with a negative value, and with evil and shame? Wasn't the seclusion necessary to have something to emerge into light from? Weren't we reflecting the cycles of light and dark we began to see outside ourselves, and didn't that recognition lead us into consciousness? What happened within this gift that is human consciousness, that we lost touch with the importance of honoring both sides of the cycle?

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