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LOVE AND MONEY: A COMMENT ON THE  
MARKETS DEBATE

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*This essay is a response to Lynn Duggan and Jennifer Olmsted's essay, "Where Has All the Gender Gone," Richard Wilk's essay, "Taking Gender to Market," Susan Feiner's essay, "A Paradigm of Our Own," and Linda R. Robertson's essay, "Debating Markets": A Rhetorical Analysis of Economic Discourse," which appeared in Feminist Economics, Volume 2, Number 1.*

ABSTRACT

It is true that economics needs a theory of moral sentiments along with an account of the nature and causes of the wealth of nations. Economics is damaged analytically by ignoring love, or care. But love is not always nice, and is sometimes a threat to freedom.

KEYWORDS

Feminism, trust

The original e-mail battle (Deirdre now apologizes for Donald's bellicose style, and really wishes she could take back the injuries) focused on the market versus the state for two reasons. One is that some feminists neglect the issue; another is that some feminists know about it. Stripped of the unnecessary shouting and sneering, the debate was a chance for real conversation and real education. The renewal here in a quieter tone is an even better chance.

I don't think gender was eclipsed. Gender kept shining through. The main issue was whether relying on *state* methods to disable patriarchy is wise. After all, men run the state. My own position, which I've significantly

modified but not abandoned, was a set of questions: Can't there be a *libertarian* feminism, which disables *all* force? Or, less utopian, isn't it often the case that a marketplace is a more friendly and cooperative place than the local police station or psychiatric ward?

Any time such questions are asked, it is hard to avoid reheating the courses in the 150-year-old dinner-table conversation of socialism versus capitalism. My friend Rick Wilk, for example, finds "free markets" a nonexistent dish, *nouvelle cuisine* at the limit (1996). But I believe he in fact feeds heartily on free markets every day. It's hard to keep in mind the food preparation, guided by an invisible hand back in the social kitchen. I agree with Rick that culture and markets are mixed (even Donald was starting to get this straight). But that sugar is mixed into a cake with the flour doesn't leave the cake "nonfloury."

My friend Susan Feiner (the words about "friends" aren't cheap: the friends have recently shown it) says that on markets "warmth and affective connection disappear, too" (1996). I see what she means. It's an old socialist charge. But consider just for a moment how going to market was and is experienced. A free exchange may not be a loving gift, but it's nicer than male violence, which is often the alternative method of allocation. Women worldwide staff markets, and the invisible hand gently guides them to ask from the market stall or department-store counter, "How can I help you?" Further, substituting a market for the burden of homework has often been perceived by women as liberating, giving them time for affection, even for a room of their own. Shakespeare's sister had no time to make sonnets. New England mill girls in the early nineteenth century viewed market employment as freedom.

But I said I see what Susan means, and I'm not just saying that. What Susan and I (now) agree on is put clearest by Nancy Folbre. The unpaid, nonmarket work may be falling as a percentage of GDP, correctly measured. But it's still massive. Women still mind children, humor husbands, care for aged mothers, listen to friends, all outside markets. The crux, as Nancy points out, is that all this is done for love, not money (1996). And in fact if it were paid labor the love would disappear. Love is in this regard the opposite of market exchange. Aristotle put it well. The third, best kind of friendship, he said, is friendship for the friend's own sake *not* for utility or amusement (Book VIII). (Most women know this perfectly well. It is amazing how many men, especially economist men – not all, but many – do not. Donald didn't.)

Yet there is a problem with love exercised outside that mannish realm of autonomy, the market. I speak as a woman from my first serious (no: terrifying) experience of female powerlessness. My sister Laura McCloskey and an economic historian named David Galenson did not like me changing gender. So they twice in November of 1995 called on the state (two, actually: Iowa and, when that didn't work, Illinois) to seize me

and examine my sanity. (Fine, thanks. I'm the only member of my circle certified sane by six psychiatrists in four different places.) McCloskey and Galenson did all this out of love unbounded.

I think acts of love are sometimes dangerous when done through the state or even through some state-like households. Love linked to coercion can justify a tyranny greater than mere self-interest could imagine, in a household or in a society. The notion is an old one, articulated by Hannah Arendt (1968). A regime merely greedy and authoritarian, aiming to make the Boss as rich as possible, will stop short. By contrast a totalitarian regime, motivated by unbounded love of The Future Proletariat or Das Deutscher Volk, stops nowhere. In Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge the love for The Revolution justified killing everyone who wore eyeglasses (as probably bourgeois).

I recognize that the point Arendt made is gendered. In the 1950s there were lots of books by men complaining about mothers' love as a threat to male independence. The linguist Deborah Tannen (1989) notes that women and men see help, advice, comfort in entirely different ways: women see them as acts of love; men see them as declarations that the beloved is incompetent and needs help, a terrible thing, like having to ask for directions.

So it is possible to exaggerate the threat love poses to autonomy. Yet it can when exercised coercively be a real threat. The father who lovingly beats his children for their own good excuses it by his sincere love. For we liberalists the essential identity of people, in Tom Weisskopf's vocabulary, is the right to life and liberty over which society has nothing collectively and coercively to say except, "well, ok." My recent experience brings home a suggestion that people might be collectively and coercively restrained if the consumption they propose will change them. That's just what McCloskey and Galenson argued about Donald/Deirdre. The potential for abuse by authoritarian is vast.

A liberalist and feminist vision is *not* of a society without love. It merely limits the coercive side of love by offering a large realm of uncoerced autonomy, called a market.

And yet it underpins the society with love. The original liberalist, Adam Smith, published two books in his lifetime, one in praise of autonomous self-interest (as against state-sponsored coercion) and the other in praise of love. Most economists, even feminist economists, haven't read *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790). The balance between love and autonomy in Smith was lost in Bentham and then in economics since then. It's one thing a feminist economics can supply. One place to start is with the observation that markets cannot work without trust (thus Janet Landa 1994). Or that markets encourage politeness of a nontrivial sort, "sweet commerce" as the French said in the eighteenth century (thus Albert Hirschman 1977). Or that love is bettered when between equals, made

## DIALOGUE

equal by access to dollar voting. I got more love from my plastic surgeon whom I paid than from the psychiatrist coercively pushed on me by the state of Iowa.

I read Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) a few months ago. De Beauvoir was then a committed socialist, as most advanced intellectuals were then. What stands out for me, though, in her rhetoric about love between men and women is that it is expressed in metaphors of free exchange. Emma Goldman (1976) (a childhood heroine of mine, by the way) used the same metaphors. We can I think have both, love and money, and the two can support the best in each other. That is the vision of a liberalist feminism.

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