

The Nature of Money

Sebastian Parsons
October 2017

Abstract

There are three soul-forces: thinking, feeling and willing, which, out of our activity, flow through, out and between us. Society and smaller groups of people contain the soul-forces of their members which aggregate, and which are reflected in the way we use money. Money can be categorised into: working capital, investment capital and surplus or gift money. Working capital relates to our will's activity in the world; investment capital is a response to feelings; and through thought, gift money comes to support cultural and individual development. Understanding the human dimension of the nature of money helps us diagnose social ills and develop organisational and meta-organisational forms supportive of human wellbeing.

The Nature of Money

The three-fold understanding of money originates with the soul-nature of the human being. Our soul is permeated by the three activities of thinking, feeling and willing. Like invisible forces, these flow and pulse, interacting, aligning, contradicting. Thinking, feeling and willing: the life of the soul.

Each soul-force has different qualities and powers, contributing capacities that we consciously and unconsciously deploy as we go through our life. Social life, the aggregated life of the members of the Society, pulse with these soul forces too. The forces and consequences of those forces of thought, feeling and will, powerful energies, ever flowing within and between us all.

Concepts, perceptions, thoughts and imagination, memories, knowledge ... our consciousness! Thought matter can be written down, shared, conveyed through writing, speaking, drawings, gestures. Rich, textured, multi-layers, spontaneous, dawning, fading. The life of thought is the most consciously accessible of the soul-forces, it is so incredibly present in our lives.

Emotions and feelings – a huge part of life, but quite different in nature from thinking. Not easy to conjure up deliberately, rather they respond to our world... for instance, pain or empathy are responses to a physical injury or psychological wound, likewise for instance: joy, fear, love, hate, confidence and doubt rise within us in response to the outer world or our inner life (for instance, a thought or an instinct).

People go to great lengths to obtain positive emotions, or overcome negative ones. Sometimes they try to find a short-cut, for example: drink, drugs, food, sex or fast cars; and sometimes they use healthier techniques such as mindfulness, meditation or counselling. The American constitution notably includes “the pursuit of happiness” as an unalienable right. Feelings can be expressed, but expressing them accurately in any form is an effort and an artist can be lauded for having the capacity to accurately express emotions – bring them to being within the hearts of an audience.

Our feelings also make judgements: for instance, yes, no and fair. It is impossible for the human being to self-propel across the threshold of a decision without a feeling of “yes”. Even if something is done to the accompaniment of internal screams of “no”, there will still be something being said “yes” to. For instance, “yes to life”, when compelled to carry out a deed at gunpoint. The capacity to judge what is fair arrives early in our lives and is honed over the middle years of childhood. The sense of fairness is deeply embedded and we are profoundly sensitive to it, and despite an infinity of options, people will consistently be able to agree whether something is fair or not.

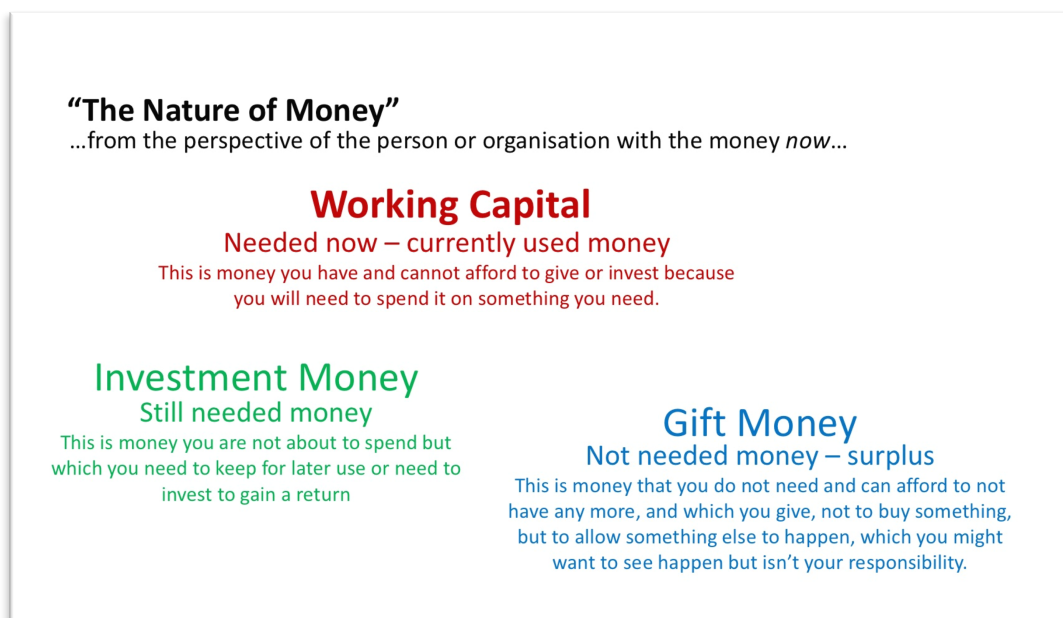
Still more mysterious than our feelings, is our will. The will is the threshold between the non-material and material worlds. It is our will for life that drives all our unconscious physical processes such as breathing, heart beats, moving legs and arms, and our digestion. A great deal of the activity of our will is completely unconscious unless the unwelcome

onset of illness draws attention to a part of our body that is not working properly through some sort of pain. We are also aware of “gut instinct”, a knowing that is even more fundamental than are feelings, and yet can cut to the very essence.

It is interesting to contemplate that although it is the most hidden of our soul-forces, it is our will that manifests in the world, that is *material* because it changes the material world. Whether physical (material) change is a “blush” that provides an unwelcome revelation of deep flowing emotions, or the pulling of the trigger on a gun in a battle, the consequence of our will, is what we do. We also suffer the consequence when our will does not flow into the world, because tremendous and very difficult emotions can be generated when our will is thwarted or held back, when we cannot do what we want, for any reason at all, on a matter of almost any significance! For instance, if we break a leg walking becomes challenging, or failing a driving test and having to continue to use the bus.

This “Nature of Money”¹ hypothesis draws connections between a categorisation of money into three types linking them to these three soul-forces. The categorisation divides money (capital) between working capital, investment capital and surplus or gift money.

It is easy to tell surplus money because it isn’t needed for anything else, and the donor can afford to give it away and to never see it again. Working capital is the opposite, it is money that is needed now, being used now, and needed in the current possession of the person or organisation. Investment capital is money in an in-between state, it is still needed, perhaps to provide a return or for use at some point in the future, but is not being directly used by the owner of it now, in other words, it does not have to be kept “in-hand”; savings are a good example of this sort of money.



¹ Others, notably Geoffrey Ingham, have used this term to try to deepen the social understanding of money. The use of this phrase has been picked up by others, such as the LSE’s lecture <https://goo.gl/VP9X2A>. Similar themes include the Theology of Money by Philip Goodchild, which examines whether money’s social purpose has become that of a religion.

The first question is, which type of money matches which soul-force? Once that question is resolved the next question is whether this information is in any way useful in real life?

Gift money is used to support the development of people, charitable-giving funds, health care and education when other sources fail. Culture is funded by gifting (philanthropy for instance) and gaps are filled in social-care from charitable giving. All these provisions support the individual on their journey through life: education, health, surviving adversity and the arts are all things that everyone should have access to whether they can pay or not, but which are individual to each person's path through life. Gift money must be surplus, or it won't be given.

The soul's journey through life encounters many other souls also travelling through their lives, and we meet each other: engage, ignore, relate, get to know, frighten, love, hurt, support, transact, collaborate, work ...

In all these moments there are, again, three perspectives: Me, myself, I; you, the other in the moment of relating; and us, all of us, in this group, this family, this team, this company, this country, this world. Three perspective: I, you and we. Three soul-forces: thinking, feeling and willing.

In relating to another person there are exchanges: giving and taking, emotional, cognitive, physical, financial. Transactions which have consequences for ourselves and the other. These consequences will be both external to us (including the impact on the other person), and our feelings will also respond. What makes an exchange or transaction that both parties feel good about? Fairness – the 'we' perspective must work. Giving: the person giving must do what is wanted, must meet the needs of the other. Receiving: the person receiving must want what they receive, must experience it as part of their path, part of what it is for them to be them.

Three more gestures have been identified that help reveal the soul-relationships to money in Society: fairness, giving and receiving. Working capital is money that is used for meeting immediate needs. Whether that is a family's domestic economy or the finances of a company, the money in use is being used to buy things needed now. Whether in finances of a household or an organisation, it is notable the degree to which the focus of the spender of the money will be on meeting someone else's needs. The underlying truth of organisational success, is that it comes when the customer gets what they want; similarly, in a household budget a responsibility to others is fulfilled through providing for the household. Working capital relates to spending, for the purpose of meeting another's needs or fulfilling responsibilities to others. In all our organisation and domestic work we are meeting each other's needs, we are deploying our will: through our work, we serve.

Many of the activities that happen when gift-money is being spent are needed by the receiver, either existentially needed as in the case of healthcare, or by right, as in the case of education. Art and culture may not appear to be needed, but the consequences of not having them are severe for the individual and society – again, perhaps a debate to be had,

but for another place. There is a continuum on which need and want lie, and every exchange has components of both.

Gift money is needed when a feeling of fairness recognises that something is needed but can't be afforded by the receiver. But is fairness the critical component for understanding the soul connection, or is the need of the receiving human being in these situations the critical factor?

The human soul develops through life with certain experiences deliberately such as education, and other experiences such as illness occurring unasked for. Living life with an open mind and heart is transformational too, as is engagement with art and culture. In all these transformational moments, the "Higher I" encounters its human soul in development: and sometimes, in the everyday consciousness of soul-life we find a sense of connection to our Higher-I, in moments of crisis and enlightenment. Gift-money is being spent on human development, it is being used to fund the capacity of the human being to think in freedom, to grow and transform, to work through their karma. Therefore, the critical aspect of gift-money is the "I" connection².

Investment money is the last to be matched, and feelings are there waiting for them. Understanding the soul-force of feelings is helpful to understand how investment is related to the Social feeling-force. Feelings arise within us, mirroring our experiences, reflecting our thoughts. We do not summon feelings as we can thoughts, they are responses and useful to us in understanding what we like, don't like and think is fair. We make decisions through experiencing the feelings of "yes" and "no". Investment allows us to create structures that support fairness, for instance pensions funds that provide for old-age. We can also see how unfair use of investments are generating huge gaps in wealth through mergers, buy-outs and ultra-wealthy hedge funds.

Thinking, feeling and willing: gift money, investment money and working capital.

The nature of money with regard to the soul-forces of Society
...from the perspective of the person or organisation with the money now...



² Many of our transformational experiences are publically funded as a matter of "right". However, this is because of a collective acknowledgement that health, education and culture are so important that they should be available to all. The driving force is not fairness, it is the need of the human soul to develop.

With this understanding we can start to diagnose some of the craziness of our mixed up, muddled up, shook up world. For instance, many see the business as being about self-interest and profit-making, however, the deeper reality that is revealed through examining the soul-forces at work in society, is that the economy is the realm of service in which we meet each other's needs. The current conventional understanding of the economy is an inversion of true soul-forces at work in the economy as we serve each other's needs and wants.

We can also experience that although investment can provide a layer of wealth-distribution to provide for those that cannot earn, terrible unfairness enters the system because we allow investment to be taken up by speculators that buy and sell companies. Buying and selling companies seems such a common-place concept to us, but alarm bells start to ring when we are reminded that a company is called a "company" because it is a "company of people", and that when we buy and sell companies we are buying and selling people. The commodification of corporations on stock-markets leads to inappropriate decision making as investors cash-in and managers loyalties vacillate between shareholders, customers and staff.

This analysis underpins some of the alternative / ethical financial projects that are emerging. For example, the Biodynamic Land Trust and Stockwood Community Benefit Society work together to allow gift money (Biodynamic Land Trust) to restructure land ownership and make ethical investment opportunities available (Stockwood) to those wanting their money to shape a different future for rural communities. Another emerging concept, the Commons Equity Society, is designed to emancipate corporations from share-holder tyranny whilst ensuring their autonomy and that surplus money (distributed profit) will, in part, be gifted directly to education, cultural and health projects by organisations such as the Calyx Trust.

Sebastian Parsons
30th October 2017

Biodynamic Land Trust: www.biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk
Stockwood Community Benefit Society: <https://stockwoodcbs.org/>
Commons Equity Society: <https://www.commonssociety.org/>
Calyx Trust: <https://calyx.elysiahealth.org/>

Contact email addresses: sebastian@biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk /
sebastian@stockwoodcbs.org / sebastian@elysiahealth.org

