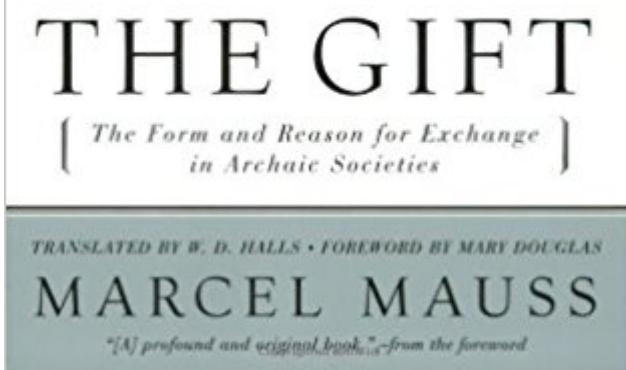


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The Gift: The Form And Reason For Exchange In Archaic Societies



Synopsis

Since its first publication in English in 1954, *The Gift*, Marcel Mauss's groundbreaking study of the relation between forms of exchange and social structure, has been acclaimed as a classic among anthropology texts. A brilliant example of the comparative method, "The Gift" presents the first systematic study of the custom widespread in primitive societies from ancient Rome to present-day Melanesia of exchanging gifts. The gift is a perfect example of what Mauss calls a total social phenomenon, since it involves legal, economic, moral, religious, aesthetic, and other dimensions. He sees the gift exchange as related to individuals and groups as much as to the objects themselves, and his analysis calls into question the social conventions and economic systems that had been taken for granted for so many years. In a modern translation, introduced by distinguished anthropologist Mary Douglas, "The Gift" is essential reading for students of social anthropology and sociology.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'The Gift is quite undeniably the masterpiece of Marcel Mauss, his most justly famous writing, and the work whose influence has been the deepest.' - Claude Lévi-Strauss --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Text: English, French (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Marcel Mauss was Emil Durkheim's nephew and protégé.

Durkheim's attention and support paid off. In *THE GIFT*, Mauss ponders The Big Idea. The idea of reciprocal giving may be the primary act of all individual human relationships and all societies. Mauss examines gifts and giving across several cultures from American Indians, Asian Indians, Polynesian Islanders to Ancient Romans. These phenomena of exchange he says are "at the same time juridical, economic, religious, and even aesthetic and morphological, etc." He justifies this statement on many levels. This is a profound work that allowed me to see things as I had never seen them before and can never see again in the same way. It's a brief, but pithy book. I don't think it's possible to do a superficial reading. The actual text covers 83 pages, but there are an additional 74 of notes that are essential. Allow yourself some time to read this. I'm not really sure that I agree with Mauss's conclusion, which seemed a bit wishy-washy to me, but I'd nonetheless recommend this to any thinking person. Pure gold. Five stars.

Worth the read because it responds to the lurking suspicion in my mind that there is more to philanthropy than selfless giving. Mauss posits the notion that all so-called "free gifts" are actually part of a complex and deeply ingrained cultural practice in us all of exchanging gifts. Whether for religious or charitable purposes, this insight suggests that in fact they are all part of a set of mutual obligations and are not "free" at all.

A well-researched historical and anthropological work; an enlightening perspective on gift economies and social consciousness. A book that clearly distinguishes contemporary one-dimensional society from advanced culture in many archaic societies. A mite difficult for the lay reader.

This book reports on the traditions and obligations surrounding gift exchanges in primitive societies. Very interesting, although the author's style is somewhat stilted. The idea that objects have their own "personalities" and "want" to be exchanged was intriguing. The obligations surrounding gift exchanges in primitive societies were similar to our current obsession with giving equally valuable Christmas gifts, though much more extensive.

This is what I still see in the South Pacific. A very good account of systems such as kerikeri.

Good reprint of this classic work.

amazing book.

Good book.

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