

# Marcel Mauss: In Pursuit of the Whole. *A Review Essay*

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Emile Durkheim assembled a team to promote his vision for sociology, but he and Mauss were in many ways a double act, like Marx and Engels. There was room for only one leader of the movement, so we speak of the Durkheimians and the Marxists. Mauss and Engels each assumed leadership of the movement they jointly founded after their partner's death, but the intrinsic inequality of the partnership was made worse in Mauss' case by age difference, kinship seniority, and his inability to write books of his own. The publication of an abridged English translation of Marcel Fournier's *Marcel Mauss: A Biography* (2006 [1994]) allows us to reconsider his historical relationship with Durkheim, as well as his legacy for anthropology, history, and the social sciences today. French scholarship on Mauss is, of course, much more advanced than its Anglophone counterpart and it is less confined to academic anthropology. Fournier's 800-page collection of Mauss' *Écrits politiques* (1997) remains virtually unknown to English-speakers and the collective organized in his name, the *Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales* (with its journal, *revue du MAUSS*), continues the eponymous founder's commitment to integrating progressive politics and intellectual work over a wide range of issues. In both cases, *The Gift* (1990 [1925]) has iconic significance as Mauss' most discussed work; but, as Sigaud (2002) has already pointed out, the Anglophone academy, with assistance from one or two leading French anthropologists, has taken up its message in ways that depart seriously from the author's original intentions.

This short review essay accordingly has two parts. In the first, I will outline a schematic trajectory of Mauss' life, conceived of first as Durkheim's junior partner and afterwards as himself. The initial phase lasted from 1895, when Mauss entered academic employment as an *agrégé* in philosophy aged twenty-three, to the outbreak of war in 1914. This was followed by a decade of great

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personal fulfillment, first in military service and afterwards as the leader of his uncle's cause, following Durkheim's premature death in 1917. Mauss now flourished as a political journalist, while redefining his main academic interest as the relationship between socialism and the nation. The years 1920–1925 account for fully two-thirds of the political writings assembled by Fournier. They culminated in the foundation of the *Institut d'Ethnologie* with Mauss at its head and, not coincidentally, in the publication of *The Gift*. Mauss lived another twenty-five years after that. He achieved considerable renown as a teacher and public figure, managing to be acknowledged both as Durkheim's heir as a professor of sociology in the *Collège de France* and as the guru for a new school of ethnographers. His political engagements waned in this period and his academic publications even more so. His last decade was a sad one, when he was first forced to withdraw as a Jew in German-occupied Paris and then was more or less abandoned by people who later claimed to lionize him. He died in 1950 in his late seventies.

The second part of this essay considers “The Strange History of *The Gift*.” My aim here is to show that the essay's prominence in contemporary anthropological discourse owes almost nothing to Mauss' agenda in writing it. This is because his political program, articulated so fully in the same period, has dropped out of sight, being replaced by the star-struck concerns of an academic elite. But it has to be acknowledged that his text is in some ways rather obscure, permitting a variety of interpretations. It was also a vehicle for Mauss to assert himself against Durkheim's sociological reductionism in pursuit not only of an integrated intellectual politics, but also of an opening up to the full complexity of human existence which he summarized in the rather mystical phrase “total social fact.” This message was hard to understand at the time—as his long-term collaborator, Henri Hubert, told him—but is even more so in our age of academic bureaucracy and specialization. I conclude that Mauss' value for us today lies in his attempt to integrate politics and intellectual life in the heady years after the First World War, of which *The Gift* was one enigmatic outcome (cf. Godelier 1999).

Marcel Fournier's achievement as Mauss' biographer and archivist is hard to overstate. Without his patient labors, Mauss would be even more the creature of myth and legend than he is. A Montreal sociologist, Fournier describes this as an intellectual biography, yet his treatment of the main texts is rather cursory and much concerning Mauss' central ideas remains opaque. For example, we learn that he was a methodological tiger, often attacking authors in his countless book reviews for their errors in this regard. Yet readers of this book would be excused for wondering what Mauss' methods actually were. Instead, what we get is a very rich account of Mauss' social life and relationships. This balance is appropriate, since the protagonist occasionally expressed doubts about the intellectual life and his uncle, for one, sometimes wondered if he was more suited to café society than to hard academic work. Reflecting his own

personality rather than Durkheim's, Mauss kept pushing for a more concrete and complex approach to studying the human condition than the modern social sciences allow for. He supervised a revolution in French anthropology that he was never able to participate in directly, while the sociology he professed came under acute pressure during the interwar years. Marcel Mauss' own life is the "total social fact" whose meaning he sought to illuminate and which we have to excavate. Even his apparent failures offer us much opportunity for reflection. While the twentieth century denied his enterprise at every turn, he sought a method for placing the whole person in society as a whole.

#### A LIFE IN THREE STAGES

##### 1. 1895–1914

Émile Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society*, a version of his doctoral thesis written while teaching at Bordeaux, was published in 1893 (1960 [1893]). It provided a template for the school of sociology he sought to found and his nephew, Marcel Mauss, was still addressing its central concerns more than thirty years later, when he wrote *The Gift*. The idea of economic progress through specialization was at the core of the British economics founded by Adam Smith (1961 [1776]). A century later economic individualism was the cornerstone of an evolutionary social theory articulated by Herbert Spencer [1897] and popularized as the native ideology of a triumphant western bourgeoisie. Durkheim sought to show that division was a dialectical process of separation and integration, that society became stronger as labor was divided and as the scope for individual action was enhanced. Emphasis on the making of individual contracts obscured the social glue of "the non-contractual element in the contract" that made the economy possible—a combination of law, state, customs, morality, and shared history that it was the sociologist's task to make more visible. The individual is the result of social development and not, as in Smith's origin myth, its source.

Durkheim's aim, in a socialist tradition begun by Saint-Simon, was to uncover the sources of solidarity, of which he identified two main types: mechanical and organic. The first was grounded in the sameness of "primitive" or stateless societies and was expressed as a *conscience collective*, while the second arose from higher levels of interdependence in economies whose differentiation obscured common interests. Modern nations draw on a culture of sameness while organizing a complex division of labor. Durkheim hoped to promote the stability of the French Third Republic through a syndicalist politics (the professional association of occupational groups) that was antagonistic to class-based socialism. Above all he hoped to nurture the development of a secular science of ethics to replace the traditional mixture of religious and class prejudice. Following the academic trend of the day in fields such as chemistry, he aimed to establish an exclusive and reductionist method for sociology

and, in the following years, before moving to a more central base in Paris, he did so with the publication of two books: *Rules of the Sociological Method* (1964 [1895]) and *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (1966 [1897]).

Marcel Mauss came from the same Jewish family of small embroidery manufacturers in the Vosges region of Eastern France, Durkheim being his mother's brother and fourteen years his senior. His academic training was in philosophy, philology, and the history of religions, with a strong emphasis on ancient languages. When qualified to teach, he joined the section of religious science at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* and took up a chair there in the religions of uncivilized peoples in 1901 when he was twenty-nine ("there are no uncivilized peoples," he said). The decades around the turn of the century were the heyday of a new scientific approach to the study of religion in France, being a time of anti-Semitism (the Dreyfus affair) and the separation of church and state in education. Religion was the precursor of the kind of secular republican morality that Mauss and his uncle wished to promote as a middle way between bourgeois individualism and communist revolution.

Mauss wanted to discover the elementary forms of religion through studying the ancient Indo-European texts and the new ethnography of primitive peoples coming out of Australia, Oceania, and Africa. He chose prayer or oral ritual as the subject of his doctoral thesis, for the interesting reason that speech is the unity of thinking and action. But his first major publication was a collaboration with his historian friend, Henri Hubert, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (1968 [1898]), an attempt, focusing on Hinduism and Judaism, to place the individual at the centre of the collectivity through communion with the sacred. Many of Mauss' abiding themes are to be found here—contract, atonement, punishment, the gift, the soul, etcetera. The essay was published in *Année Sociologique*, Durkheim's ambitious review of new work in sociology for which Mauss was in effect the co-editor. In sixteen years (1898–1913), he reviewed and summarized hundreds of books and articles, producing a quarter of the 10,000 octavo pages published. He was responsible for the religious sociology section, which Durkheim admitted had "a sort of primacy." Uncle and nephew collaborated in "On Some Primitive Forms of Classification" (1967 [1903]), an audacious attempt to reduce the categories of understanding to social morphology, for which Mauss dryly remarked, "I provided the facts." Mauss could thus be said to have been Durkheim's full partner in an engagement with religion and philosophy that culminated in the latter's supreme achievement, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1965 [1912]) (See also Besnard, Durkheim, and Fournier 1998; Tarot 1999). Certainly they drew on the same Australian ethnography; but Mauss never completed his own book on prayer, interrupting work on it in 1909 despite having written 120 pages. (An English version of *On Prayer* came out in 2003.)

Mauss actively embraced socialist party politics, maintaining an affiliation to the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO). He was a founder of

and contributor to the journal, *Mouvement Socialiste*, and wrote regularly for the left-wing press—first for *Humanité* and later for *Populaire*, his party newspaper. He was committed to voluntarism and to social action, being heavily involved in the cooperative movement; indeed, he lost 10,000 francs in sponsoring a cooperative bakery, *La Boulangerie*. He openly embraced an anti-capitalist ideology, believing, unlike Durkheim, that only the working class could lead society to a more universal form. He never sought to separate his scientific work from politics and this led to some tension between them, especially since Durkheim was able to link this trait to his nephew's inability to settle down (he remained a bachelor and something of a socialite) and to follow through on his major writing projects. Mauss' rejection as a candidate for a chair in the *Collège de France* in 1908 brought much of this to a head.

## 2. 1914–1925

In the run-up to the First World War, Mauss embraced pacifism and internationalism, but, when it broke out, he signed up with some alacrity, serving for four years as an interpreter with British and Australian troops, for the most part on the front line. Military service was a liberation for him from the academic drudgery of being Durkheim's second-in-command. "I'm doing wonderfully. I just wasn't made for the intellectual life and I am enjoying the life war is giving me" (Fournier 2006: 175). Of course, long before the end, he and everyone else became fed up with the reality of the war. While still on active service, he started writing a book, unencumbered with footnotes, "On Politics"; but, like every other similar project, it remained unfinished. In 1919, he returned to Paris and his old job at the *École Pratique*, heavily decorated and in the novel situation of being his own man at last. Durkheim lost his only son André in 1915 and died of grief two years later without having yet reached sixty. Even Mauss' friends told him that now was the time for him to grow up, and he accepted responsibility for leadership of what was left of the team Durkheim had brought together. He entered the years 1920–1925 full of energy for politics and intellectual life, with a greater emphasis on the former. It was without doubt the high point of his career and its main academic outcome was the "Essai sur le don" (1950a [1925]).

Mauss wrote scores of articles for political publications in this period—especially for *La vie socialiste*, *Action coopérative*, and *Populaire*. His intellectual energies were focused on the nationalization of socialism and he began a book on "The Nation" that remained his dominant writing project for the next two decades (Mauss 1953 [1920]; 2006: 41–48). He was much taken with English versions of socialism, not just the Rochdale Pioneers of his beloved cooperative movement, but also the Fabians, especially Sidney and Beatrice Webb, for whom nationalization of the means of production was a priority. Mauss returned to internationalism after the war and was pleased that Durkheim's idea of the division of labor was now being applied between societies as

well as within them. Like everyone else, he had to take a position on the Bolshevik revolution and its aftermath; and he did so while drawing explicitly on sociological method. He was highly critical of the Bolsheviks' coercive resort to violence, especially against the most active classes, and of their destruction of the market economy along with all the confidence and good faith it represented. He advocated an "economic movement from below," in the form of syndicalism, cooperation, and mutual insurance. His greatest hopes were for a consumer democracy driven by the cooperative movement. He even enjoyed a brief period as a financial commentator on the exchange-rate crisis of 1922 and argued, "economic revolutions are always monetary." His ethics were based on "gentleness and legalism," his politics on the need to add economic self-organization to juridical socialism. He was increasingly fascinated by the national variations in socialist practice emerging at this time. Mauss also edited for publication his uncle's lectures on socialism in the tradition of Saint-Simon (1958 [1928]).

In all this time, Mauss continued his academic career at the *École Pratique's* section of religious science. His researches were no longer focused on the elementary forms of religion, but rather on the political sociology of the post-war period—nationalism, socialism, and the Bolshevik revolution. He revived the *Année Sociologique*, but the journal soon failed for lack of the committed manpower Durkheim was able to mobilize in its heyday (principally his own and his nephew's). In the early 1920s, he began to take an interest in the potlatch reported for America's Northwest Coast by Boas and his colleagues. This was amplified by the publication of Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1961 [1922]), confirming Mauss' view that the potlatch was a common feature of Melanesian societies. He read the ancient Indo-European sources for analogous phenomena; and we may recall that his essay with Hubert on sacrifice was also in part about the gift.

The result was the "Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," published in the first volume of the new series of *Année Sociologique* (1925), a medium-length tract with over 500 footnotes and a hundred references, but still offered as a preliminary report on ongoing inquiries. Along with his incipient interest in joking relationships, this essay was intended to "...counter the Durkheimian image of a society functioning as a 'homogenous mass' with the image of a more complex collectivity, groups and subgroups that overlap, intersect and fuse together" (Fournier 2006: 245).

### 3. 1925–1950

In the same year, the *Institut d'Ethnologie* was founded in the university with a remit to train professional ethnologists and offer support to amateur inquiries in the colonies. Mauss took his place in the Institute's leadership along with Lévy-Bruhl and Rivet. Not long afterwards, despite an unexpectedly close fight, he won a chair in sociology at the *Collège de France*. Sociology was

under considerable pressure at this time, as witnessed by *Année Sociologique*'s failure; but Mauss won great renown in his twin capacity as Durkheim's heir and as the *de facto* guru of the new discipline of ethnology. Apart from a very brief sojourn in Morocco, Mauss did no fieldwork, but he was an engaging teacher with a dialectical style of improvisation who had plenty of time for café conversation with his students. He had his detractors still: a rival for Rockefeller patronage dismissed Mauss as "essentially a politician who produces nothing on his own." And it is true that much of his effort was devoted to publishing the posthumous work of former friends and colleagues, including Henri Hubert, Robert Hertz, and Émile Durkheim. In *The Gift*, he acknowledged the validity of criticisms by historians and others that social scientists tend to abstract too much and proposed instead to address the full complexity of "individuals in their moral, social, mental and above all corporeal and material integrity" (Fournier 2006: 240). Consistent with this anti-reductionist stance, his two major publications before retirement were essays on "the person" (Mauss 1950b [1935]; 1985 [1935]) and "techniques of the body" (Mauss 1950c [1938]; 2006: 77–95), opening up sociology to technology, psychology, and the humanities in general.

Mauss married his secretary in 1934 and she was soon bedridden after an incident involving poisonous gas. He suffered a prolonged sequence of personal bereavements throughout the second half of his life; and was forced out of his job and spacious apartment by the German occupation of Paris (but escaped being sent to Buchenwald). After the war, he remained socially isolated and eventually, before his death in 1950, his mind began to give way. A new school of French ethnographers was happy to claim him as their inspiration, and his international reputation, which was already considerable, has continued to grow ever since. In the same year as his death, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1950), on the invitation of Georges Gurvitch, edited and introduced a collection of his principal essays (*Marcel Mauss: Sociologie et anthropologie*), Mauss' first and only book-length publication. Despite ongoing evidence that these essays have not been closely read by the bulk of anthropologists outside France, Mauss' reputation as a founder of the modern discipline appears to be secure; and every undergraduate student of anthropology in the world at least pays lip service to having read *The Gift*.

#### THE STRANGE HISTORY OF *THE GIFT*

Mauss' essay on *The Gift* is offered as a provisional fragment of a more comprehensive study (which never appeared). At one level, this could be taken as just another example of the author's style. But I would suggest that the essay's greatness lies in Mauss' aspiration to embrace the human condition in its entirety by exploring the moral relationship between concrete persons and society as a whole, a heroic aspiration that is bound to fail. The French words he uses are *totalité* and *intégrité*, which have their direct analogues in

the Latin register of English. Moreover, he claims that this wholeness is better approached through concrete description, in the manner of the humanities, rather than as scientific abstraction.

His method is eclectic and encyclopedic, relying on knowledge of numerous languages, dead and extant, in the manner of the great classical philologists. But Mauss claims that his is a controlled comparison, drawing on selected ethnographic phenomena of Polynesia, Melanesia, and the American Northwest, plus western legal traditions as revealed by documentary sources, while seeking always to preserve local color and the original context. The argument is inevitably only a partial realization of such an ambitious project and is often obscured by an accumulation of detail. Mauss provides extended conclusions on the relevance of his study for contemporary societies, but these do not include even a summary account of prevailing economic and legal institutions, so that the reader is forced to make numerous imaginative leaps in order to keep up with the author. Fortunately for Mauss, his essay has encouraged many to join him in this enterprise, but he must be held partly responsible for the wide range of interpretations that have subsequently emerged.

*The Gift* is in a direct line of descent from Durkheim's *The Division of Labor in Society*, published over three decades before. Following Durkheim's emphasis on the non-contractual element of the contract in his critique of Spencer's utilitarianism (Chapter 7 of the book), this essay is focused explicitly on that issue. Mauss summarily eliminates the two utilitarian ideologies that purport to account for the evolution of contracts: "natural economy," Smith's idea that individual barter was aboriginal; and the notion that primitive communities were altruistic, giving way eventually to our own regrettably selfish, but more efficient individualism. Against the contemporary move to replace markets with communist states, he insists that the complex interplay between individual freedom and social obligation is synonymous with the human condition and that markets and money are universal, if not in their current impersonal form. In this way he fleshes out his uncle's social agenda, but also questions the accuracy of his model of mechanical solidarity for stateless societies.

Mauss' key term for the range of archaic contracts he intends to investigate is untranslatable into English and something of a feudal relic in French. *Prestation* is a service performed out of obligation, something like "community service" as an alternative to imprisonment. According to him, the earliest forms of exchange took place between entire social groups and involved the whole range of things people can do for each other, a stage he called the *système des prestations totales*. But his main interest is in a form that probably evolved from this, named after the Northwest Coast example as "potlatch," which he considers to be general in Melanesia and Oceania, where his chief examples are the *kula* ring (Malinowski 1961 [1922]) and the Maori. Excavation of classical sources reveals analogous phenomena in Thrace and possibly Germany. These forms of gift-exchange involve aggressive competition

between the individual leaders of groups, which he labels *prestations totales de type agonistique*.

As is well known, Mauss' guiding question is: "What is the principle of right and interest in backward or archaic societies that makes it obligatory to return a present one has received? What force is there in the thing given that makes the recipient give something back?" (1950a: 148, my translation). He rarely refers to this process of giving and making a return as "reciprocity." His answer, broadly speaking, is that human beings everywhere find the personal character of the gift compelling and are especially susceptible to its evocation of the most diffuse social and spiritual ties. Potlatches provide a clear instance of this principle in action. Mauss goes on to trace its appearance in sacrifice (*do ut des*), in early Roman law and in the Germanic *wadium*, even in the apparently negative instance of alms-giving, where the recipient is assumed to be incapable of making a return except in the form of spiritual deference. A lot of ink has subsequently been spilled on this part of the argument.

Mauss' concluding chapter addresses the relevance of all this for contemporary societies without offering an explicit analysis of capitalist markets (which we are all supposed to know about). There are three sections: 1. *Conclusions de morale*; 2. *Conclusions de sociologie économique et d'économie politique*; 3. *Conclusion de sociologie générale et de morale*. The logic of the structure is that Mauss will consider first "moral" questions and then the economy, returning to morality in the context of sociological method more generally. The difficult term for us is *morale* which in the first instance clearly refers to the science of ethics that Durkheim aimed for in the *Division of Labor*, but in the latter case it probably means more generally the human aspiration to place relations between person and society on a just footing of shared morality.

Mauss' chief ethical conclusion is that the attempt to create a free market for private contracts is utopian and just as unrealizable as its antithesis, a collective based solely on altruism. Human institutions everywhere are founded on the unity of individual and society, freedom and obligation, self-interest and concern for others. Modern capitalism rests on an unsustainable attachment to one of these poles and it will take a social revolution to restore a humane balance. If we were not blinded by ideology, we would recognize that the system of *prestations* survives in our societies—in weddings and at Christmas, in friendly societies and more bureaucratic forms of insurance, even in wage contracts and the welfare state. With regard to the economy, Mauss, who had earlier insisted that the *kula* valuables are money, if not of the sort we are familiar with, takes Malinowski to task for reproducing in his typology of transactions the ideological opposition between commercial self-interest and the free gift. The economic movement from below that he advocated in his political journalism—professional associations, cooperatives, mutual insurance—is a secular version of what can be found in the religions of archaic societies, as well as in the central phenomena described here. These are all *faits sociaux*

*totaux*, total social facts, in the sense that they bring into play the whole of society and all its institutions—legal, economic, religious, and aesthetic. And this is the challenge they pose for sociological method.

Mauss claims that he has studied these societies in their dynamic integrity, not as congealed states to be decomposed into analytical instances of rules pertaining to law, myth, or value and price: “By considering the whole together, we have been able to perceive the essential, the movement of everything, the live dimension, the fleeting moment when society or rather men become aware of the common feelings they have for themselves and others. This concrete observation of social life gives us the means of discovering new facts that we are just beginning to glimpse. Nothing, in our opinion, is more urgent and fruitful than this study of social facts” (1950: 275–76, my translation).

We must follow the example of the historians and observe what is given, rather than split up social phenomena into separate abstractions. The reality is always a concrete person acting in society—“the middle-class Frenchman, the Melanesian of this or that island” (1950: 274). Then sociologists will furnish psychologists with material they can use, while maintaining their distinctive pursuit of the social whole and of group behavior as a whole. This is Marcel Mauss’ manifesto for how he will carry forward his uncle’s academic legacy. In some ways it entails the inversion of Durkheim’s reductionist program for social science. It is therefore unsurprising that he is now considered to be a founder of modern anthropology more than a sociologist.

Lygia Sigaud (2002) has provided a trenchant account of *The Gift*’s subsequent trajectory in twentieth-century anthropology which I will just summarize briefly here. She argues that the essay became famous only in the second half of the last century and then in a distorted version that privileged economic exchange to the detriment of Mauss’ other concerns. The chief culprit is Lévi-Strauss (1950), whose introduction to the collected essays was designed to harness Mauss’ reputation to his own theory of reciprocity as previously published in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1969 [1949]). But *The Gift* really took off as a staple of Anglophone anthropological discourse following Sahlins (1972 [1969]) article, “The Spirit of the Gift,” which entrenched Lévi-Strauss’ claim that Mauss’ essay hinged on a faulty understanding of the Maori concept of *hau*. She notes that the opposition between “commodity economy” (the West) and “gift economy” (the Rest) began to take root after 1980; and she identifies this trend with Carrier (1995) who sought to subvert it, while characterizing the dichotomy as “Maussian Occidentalism.” We could add that this is the period of neo-liberalism.

Sigaud makes no connection between Mauss’ essay and his political commitments. The trajectory she describes is a purely academic one. As a result, when trying to account for the remarkable discontinuity between what Mauss wrote and what he is now thought to have written, she relies for explanation on the cult of personality and the power of gossip in small-scale oral

communities such as academic anthropology. In fact, Chris Gregory launched the modern trend with his book, *Gifts and Commodities* (1982), even though, as he states in *Savage Money*,

I have never used the distinction between gifts and commodities to classify societies nor have I ever suggested that ‘we’ are to commodities as ‘they’ are to gifts. Such an approach is anathema to me. My problem in *Gifts and Commodities* was to explain the paradox, brought about by colonization, of the efflorescence of gift exchange in a world dominated by commodity production and exchange. I characterized Papua New Guinea as an ‘ambiguous’ economy where things are now gifts, now commodities, depending on the social context (1982: 117). Thus I developed the logical opposition between gifts and commodities in order to try to understand the ambiguity of the historically specific situation of colonial Papua New Guinea (. . .) Ethnographic classification is quite distinct from conceptual division by the logical principle of dichotomy (1997: 47–49).

But it did no good. The “fictions” employed ingeniously by Marilyn Strathern (1988) in *The Gender of the Gift*—that “we” (the West or “Euroamerica”) are opposed to “them” (the Rest or “Melanesia”), and that the gift is the conceptual opposite of the commodity in some linked way—are now routinely reproduced in introductory anthropology courses everywhere. Mauss’ text is adduced in support of this notion, even though it is the very ideology his essay was intended to refute. But then who reads anything closely these days?

The French literature is, for obvious reasons, much more respectful of Mauss’ actual rather than his invented legacy (Godbout and Caillé 2000 [1992]; Godelier 1999 [1996]). There are honorable exceptions in the English-speaking tradition, among whom I would include myself (Hart 2000: 191–96). Jonathan Parry’s (1986) article also argues correctly that the purely altruistic gift was for Mauss the inverse of the market conceived of as a sphere of pure self-interest, whereas the archaic gift was a mixture of the two; so that market ideology leads us to think of Christmas presents as pure gifts, an idea that we then project onto our reading of Mauss’ text. But chief among the exceptions must be counted David Graeber (2001:151–228), who offers a full-length reanalysis of *The Gift*, complete with detailed attribution of Mauss’ socialist views and acknowledgment of the continuation of his intellectual politics by the MAUSS group, among others. It will be interesting to see if this long chapter makes any difference to the wholesale adoption of bourgeois ideology by Anglophone anthropologists who affect disaffection from it, while imagining that Mauss was as opposed to the market as they claim to be, at least in their classrooms.

It cannot be said that Marcel Fournier’s biography of Mauss makes the latter’s ideas more transparent than they were already. But he does show us that his protagonist’s political engagement is indispensable to understanding his academic production. Moreover, his account of the life should be the baseline for all future judgment of Mauss’ intellectual significance. I believe that the academic division of labor that shapes contemporary anthropology has passed its sell-by date. Mauss already felt so eighty years ago. When we come to

consider how anthropology might contribute to the formation of a more just world society, Mauss' example will be even more influential than at present. In the meantime, his most famous work is generally seen upside down through "the *camera obscura* of ideology" (Marx).

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