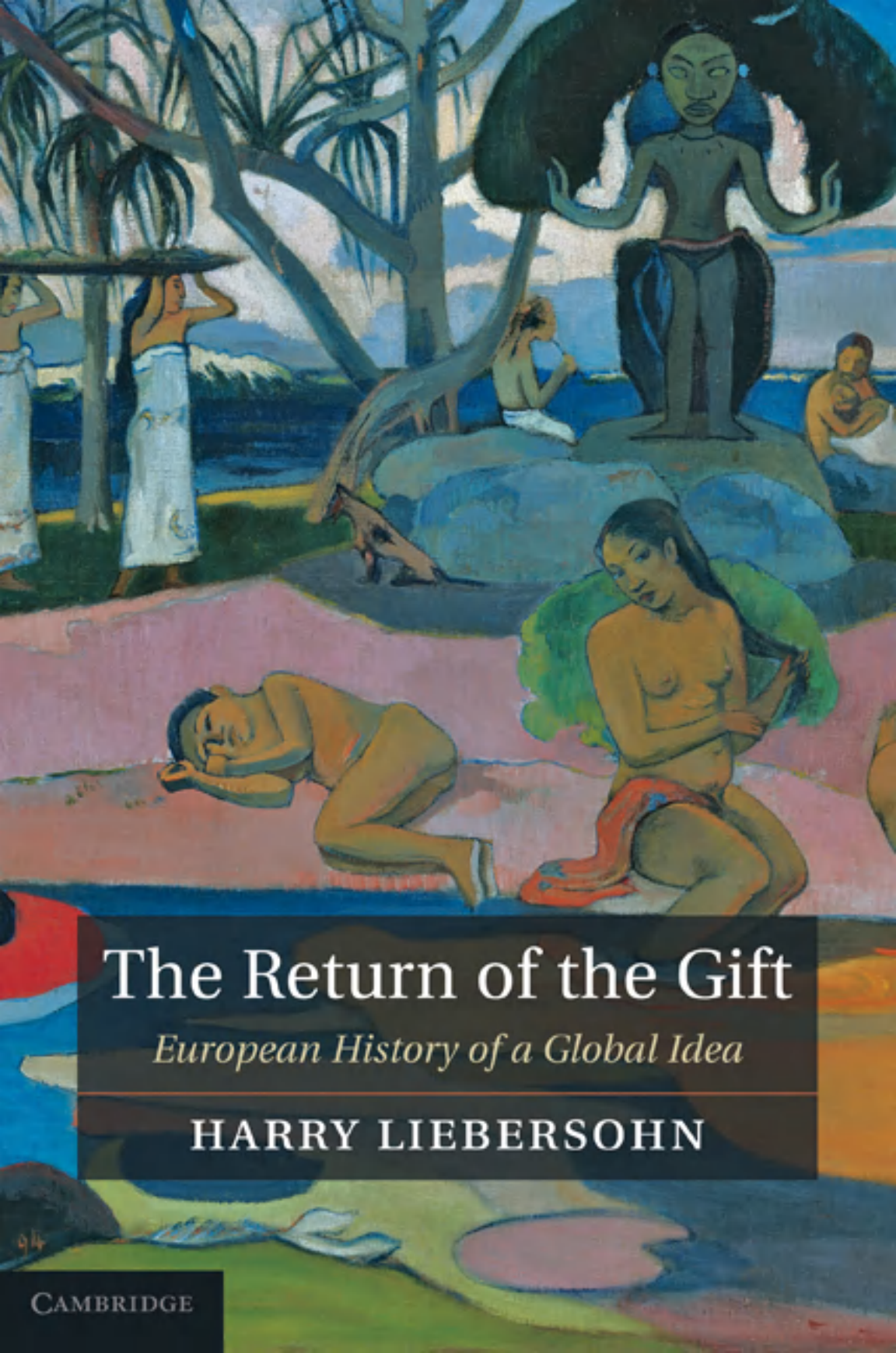

# The Return of the Gift

*European History of a Global Idea*

HARRY LIEBERSOHN

CAMBRIDGE

**The Return of the Gift**

This book is a history of European interpretations of the gift from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth century. Reciprocal gift exchange, pervasive in traditional European society, disappeared from the discourse of nineteenth-century social theory only to return as a major theme in twentieth-century anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, and literary studies. Modern anthropologists encountered gift exchange in Oceania and the Pacific Northwest and returned the idea to European social thought; Marcel Mauss synthesized their insights with his own readings from remote times and places in his famous 1925 essay on the gift, the starting point for subsequent discussion. *The Return of the Gift* demonstrates how European intellectual history can gain fresh significance from global contexts.

Harry Liebersohn is a professor of history in the Department of History, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of several books, including *Fate and Utopia in German Sociology, 1871–1923* (1988); *Aristocratic Encounters: European Travelers and North American Indians* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); and *The Travelers' World: Europe to the Pacific* (2006). His article "Discovering Indigenous Nobility: Tocqueville, Chamisso, and Romantic Travel Writing," which appeared in the *American Historical Review*, was awarded the 1995 William Koren, Jr., Prize of the Society for French Historical Studies. Professor Liebersohn was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1996–1997 and a Fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute for Advanced Study, Berlin) in 2006–2007.

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## EUROPEAN HISTORY OF A GLOBAL IDEA

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107002180



First published 2011

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data*
Liebersohn, Harry.
The return of the gift : European history of a global
idea / Harry Liebersohn.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-107-00218-0 (hardback)
1. Gifts – Europe – History. 2. Ceremonial exchange.
3. Anthropology – Philosophy. I. Title.
GT3041.E85L54 2010
394.094–dc22 2010031319

ISBN 978-1-107-00218-0 Hardback

*To Carl Schorske*

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The first draft of this book was written during my year at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Institute for Advanced Study, Berlin) in 2006–2007. I am grateful to Dieter Grimm, director during the fall semester, and Luca Giuliani, director during the spring, for their hospitality. I continued my research and writing during a stay at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin, in June 2008 and wish to thank Lorraine Daston, director of Section II, for her invitation to join the Institute during this time. Antoinette Burton as chair of the History Department at the University of Illinois approved an academic leave from teaching for the fall of 2009, permitting me to complete the book.

Audiences offered valuable criticisms of my ideas on gift exchange at the Philadelphia 2006 meeting of the American Historical Association; the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin; the Forschungskolloquium Neuere und Neueste Geschichte (Research Colloquium for Modern and Contemporary History), University of Konstanz; the Berliner Kolleg für Vergleichende Geschichte Europas (Berlin Seminar for Comparative European History), Free University of Berlin; the Institut für Religionswissenschaft (Institute for the Scientific Study of Religion), Free University of

Berlin; the Canadian Center for German and European Studies, University of Montreal; The Gift in History: Symposium in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis's Eightieth Birthday, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University; and the St. Louis 2009 meeting of the Society for French History Studies.

Friends and colleagues have deepened my understanding of gift exchange and its milieux from Polynesia to Paris. I especially wish to thank Jeffrey Bowman, Mario Bührmann, Alice Conklin, Natalie Z. Davis, Peter Fritzsche, John Gascoigne, Thomas Head, Jürgen Osterhammel, and Vanessa Smith for conversations, comments, and all that I have learned from their writings; in addition, I thank Vanessa Agnew, Philippe Despoix, Catarina Krizancic, and Mark Micale for commenting on individual chapters of this book. Two anonymous referees provided detailed, constructive criticisms of the manuscript that greatly aided my revisions.

My research was aided by archivists and librarians at many institutions. I particularly wish to thank Mary Stuart of the University of Illinois Library for her stewardship of the University of Illinois history collections and Anja Sommer, archivist of the Berlin Ethnological Museum, for guiding me through the museum's archival holdings. The staff of the Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC) did everything possible to make my visit to use Marcel Mauss's papers comfortable and fruitful. I am also indebted to librarians and archivists who made original source materials available to me at the University Library, Leipzig, Special Collections; and the University of Rochester Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections.

My family – Dorothee, Ben, and Jack – brought zest to conversations about the gift as I researched and wrote; Dorothee helped at

a critical late moment with finding the right title and pulling the book into a unified whole.

Eric Crahan has been an ideal editor at Cambridge University Press, judicious and helpful at every stage; it has been a pleasure to work with him and his colleagues.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the University of Rochester Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, for permission to quote from a letter from Ely S. Parker to Lewis H. Morgan, of which they are owner; and to Robert Mauss and to the Institut Mémoires de l' édition contemporaine for permission to cite from the personal papers of Marcel Mauss.

# Introduction

I began this book with an interest in writing about civility in politics – about the habits and conventions that can acknowledge the humanity of one's opponent, however bitterly contested the relationship may be. It was a subject that did not fit into any of the ready-made areas of study within my native ground of European intellectual history. As I looked around for a way to give past shape to my present preoccupations, I found myself gradually drawn to Marcel Mauss's famous essay, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (1925). His essay was my point of entry into the larger history of gift exchange as it disappeared from and returned to the conversation of modern Europe.[1]

Mauss turned to the practices of "archaic" or indigenous societies with an eye to the conflicts of his own time, when four years of total war had gone far toward destroying elementary civilities. What he found in premodern societies was a different principle of social organization. In Oceania and the Pacific Northwest, the central sites of his essay, gift giving was a system of mutual obligations. His famous definition asserted that it was always reciprocal, contrary to the modern assumption that a gift implies something given without expectation of a return. Mauss's analysis wove individuals

and groups into ongoing patterns of giving, accepting, and returning that involved all aspects of the society in a network of shared responsibilities. He sketched this basic pattern of gift giving for indigenous communities around the Pacific, but did not stop there. Instead he went on to point out that gift giving had a long history in Indo-European societies as well. Evidence from ancient India, classical antiquity, and the Middle Ages revealed societies with pervasive and obligatory expectations of gift and countergift. Wherever it was the rule, reciprocal giving was not always a friendly act; on the contrary, entire societies could be devoted to competitive gift giving, with debt, loss of status, or enslavement as the outcome for the losers. Nor did gift giving necessarily imply equality, for subjects regularly affirmed their subordination through tribute to their masters. Mauss also emphasized how the role of gift giving had changed over time, especially in the realm of economics, where the gift giving practices of precommercial societies set them apart from the contract-based logic of their modern successors.

The gift according to Mauss was different, past and remote, but nonetheless urgently relevant: Despite all the contrasts between traditional and contemporary European societies, traditional gift giving had important lessons for his own time. He viewed Europe of the 1920s, exhausted by war and battered by the political differences between left and right, as a civilization in crisis. Gift giving as he had learned about it from island and ancient peoples embodied a wisdom that modern societies could embrace and make their own.

Although Mauss, writing in the aftermath of World War I, provided the initial definition of the gift for the twentieth century and beyond, the history of this discourse overflows the boundaries he set for it. This is not just a book about Mauss, but an inquiry into the larger ways in which Europeans since the seventeenth century have

understood gift exchange. Our story takes its intellectual point of departure from Mauss but is not restricted to his definition of it. In reconstructing the history of the gift, I have not traced a logic of "scientific discovery" culminating and ending in Mauss's achievement; rather I have reinserted his essay into a larger discourse that has existed before and after his time. As part of this discourse the word "discovery" itself suggests a historical irony. Like a European explorer in the Americas or the Pacific, Mauss himself did not "discover" the gift; as he himself emphasized, he merely recovered what people in other times and places already knew.

Moral instruction in the art of giving and receiving has been plentiful in Western letters since Homer and Herodotus and has counterparts in other civilizations. Gift-giving practices have been widespread around the world and widely written about in European travel accounts. But there was a striking poverty of systematic reflection on gift exchange in the century preceding Mauss's essay: From the end of the Napoleonic period to the end of the Great War, it almost disappears from the writings of Europeans thinkers; one looks in vain through the sociological theories of the nineteenth century for anything like a systematic or extended discussion of the gift. Neither Mill, nor Tocqueville, nor Marx, nor Weber, nor Mauss's own master, Durkheim, was interested in it. A few thinkers like Emerson and Simmel noticed it, but not in a revaluation sustained enough to leave an impact on their contemporaries.[2] Why this departure of a hundred years from the collective lore and practice of mankind? To be sure, as we shall see in the course of this book, gift exchange was not entirely forgotten, and more marginal and nontheoretical scholars were feeling their way toward it. And yet the absence remains: A near-silence among the founders of modern social thought about one of the elementary rituals for creating human solidarities.

The gap of a century in social theory is even more striking when one turns to the subsequent stream of writings. Mauss was a legendary teacher and scholar in the 1920s and 1930s. A steady succession of the most famous French scholars took the insights of his essay into their own work; British anthropologists befriended Mauss and admired his essay; in the decades after 1945 American anthropologists took up *The Gift* as a classic to use and to challenge; in many countries around the world classicists, medievalists, early modernists, analysts of gender, and other historians and literary scholars made imaginative use of Mauss's suggestive work.[3] In recent years there has been yet another wave of writings on the gift. Despite repeated attempts to assimilate the gift into other theories like structuralism or Marxism, Mauss has lately been revalued as a great thinker in his own right whose essay is best understood on its own terms. There has also been a growing recognition of the large role of gift economies in contemporary societies, both Western and non-Western, in addition to their more widely acknowledged role in traditional societies.[4] Others have made creative expansions of Mauss's theory of the gift to gender, aesthetics, and religion.[5] Mauss initiated a discussion that has restored the gift to what it has been for most times and places: a perennial topic of conversation like love or honor or power – all of which may be embodied in gifts.

This historical return of the gift to the discourse of European thinkers invites closer historical questions about how a social institution of such fundamental importance could escape notice for a century and then seem widespread, indeed pervasive, in human societies. Answers may begin with recent scholarship that has laid out some of the most important contexts for a historical localization of Mauss's essay. Marcel Fournier's biography of Mauss provides important political and personal contexts for *The Gift*: Mauss wrote

as a democratic socialist who after World War I confronted a deep crisis in French and European socialism to which his essay is in part a response. Other scholarship too, like Gérald Berthoud's admirable essay on one of Mauss's forerunners, Felix Somlò, illustrates how fruitfully one can turn to Mauss's sources and can situate his essay between liberal and communist theories of economic anthropology; while others have pointed out that medieval studies in Germany did not lose sight of the gift and offered sources for Mauss's research.[6] We shall return to these political and scholarly contexts, which permit us to grasp Mauss's intentions and the originality of his essay with greater clarity. Yet there is more to be said about this rich and complex idea if we go beyond its local contexts and study it at the convergence of European traditions and overseas encounters.[7]

During the nineteenth century the creation of mutual obligations through material and symbolic exchange was still a thriving practice in European societies that valued status as much as wealth or power. Yet this status orientation directly conflicted with modern habits of commerce and government: Possessive individualism that respected the individual maximization of profit and guarded private property rights, and bureaucratic power earned through merit on the job and exercised through the impersonal application of rules. Without ever disappearing, gift giving as a reciprocal practice, uniting disparate partners in networks of mutual obligation, underwent a demotion in economy and government that made it seem irrelevant to the workings of modern societies and even difficult to grasp when contemporaries looked beyond Western Europe to remote places where gift exchange continued to structure economics, politics, and society.[8] Yet when nineteenth-century Europeans sought out contact with extra-European societies, gifts remained an unavoidable means of interaction. They could not rule, they could not trade, they could

not begin to have social relations of any kind without entering into a gift economy. In one way or another throughout the nineteenth century, Europeans might overlook their own extensive gift exchange networks at home, but they had to come to terms with them abroad.

These extra-European encounters revealed the disruptive power of the gift. As Nicholas Thomas has pointed out in *Entangled Objects*, power relations pervaded colonial gift exchanges. The gift in this critical perspective was a language inseparable from authority and self-assertion, part of a larger struggle for political and economic control between colonizer and colonized.[9] Misunderstanding and violence become more visibly a part of giving in these exchanges between cultures. The nineteenth-century example suggests a more general feature of these personalized exchanges between cultures: Gift giving is an alternative to verbal means of communication, but one that is slippery at best. The stranger the cultures to one another, the greater the importance of the gift, as verbal language becomes difficult to use and gestures fail to convey their intention; yet the gift at the margins requires the guesswork of a gamble, likely to be misread on either side, its intention hard to gauge, its impact uncertain. The volatility of the gift exists within the bounds of any society, too, and may grow during times of political instability – but during Europe's self-confident century of global expansion, alien encounters more fully exposed its risks.[10]

The discourse on the gift within and beyond Europe, then, involves the *return* of the gift in several senses. First, the gift in question is the reciprocal gift. Western societies conventionally think of a gift as a voluntary offering that does not anticipate a return; the theory of the gift since Mauss has argued just the opposite – that in our society as in other times and places, seemingly altruistic

generosity hides a deeper expectation of reciprocity. Second, there is the chronological dimension: the gift disappeared from and returned to Western thought. A part of the everyday experience of early modern Europeans, the gift vanished from theoretical view at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but it returned at the beginning of the twentieth century in a gradually accumulating stream of observations. Finally, there is the geographic return. Unable to recognize their ongoing gift practices in their own societies (which continued throughout the nineteenth century), European overseas travelers, above all some of the founders of modern anthropology, recovered the idea of gift exchange at the colonial margins. From Pacific islands and the American Northwest they brought it back to their contemporaries in places like New York, Paris, and London. Mauss's essay synthesized their ethnographies and set in motion a conversation about the gift that continues to our own day.

We begin at the critical moment in the late eighteenth century when challenges to traditional European conceptions of gift giving came from industrial and political transformation at home and colonial quandaries abroad. It was vitally important for Europeans to master the practice of gift exchange as they traveled around the world, yet their grasp of it by the end of the age of privilege was unsure. One famous conflict over Britain's nascent rule in India will dramatize the dangers of the gift; this conflict in turn set off loud debates about the larger meaning of gift giving. It is a starting point for understanding how European theorists in the nineteenth century could no longer comprehend the gift.

# 1. The Crisis of the Gift

## *Warren Hastings and His Critics*

Historians have singled out the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a period of broad cultural transformation. In addition to the obvious changes of the period – the "dual revolution" (Eric Hobsbawm) in politics and economics that go by the names of French Revolution and Industrial Revolution – this was a moment when ancient European habits and assumptions about the world were undermined and gave way to new ones. Even before 1789, when the world visibly turned upside-down, old ideas took on meanings that presaged a new era for Europeans and the rest of the world. More recently global historians have argued that this was a watershed moment not just for Europeans but also for civilizations and peoples around the world: C. A. Bayly has delineated the decay of old empires and invention of new ones in China, India, and elsewhere, out of a mixture of internal crisis and response, often innovative, to pressures from European merchants and arms.[1] These changes were the setting for uncertainties and dramas in the face-to-face encounters between European and non-European cultures and how those encounters were interpreted on both sides. One way of acting out these controversies was through the kind of reciprocity that we now broadly identify as gift exchange.

## Hastings and the Gift on Trial

One day late in the eighteenth century – the century of wigs and silk stockings and privilege based on birth – English society took the measure of its destiny at home and abroad in a public trial. The date was February 13, 1788; the place was Westminster Hall, where dignitaries assembled for a trial in the House of Lords; the prisoner, as he was called at the time, was Warren Hastings, formerly governor general of Bengal; his chief accuser was Edmund Burke, later to become famous as author of *Reflections on the French Revolution* (1790) but already a celebrated speaker, writer, and member of the House of Commons. Burke had behind him a great victory, for the lower house had already impeached Hastings in 1787 on charges of high crimes and misdemeanors during his tenure as highest British authority in India. Now the case moved to the upper house, where Burke opened his prosecution with a four-day speech.[2]

About eleven o'clock on the first day, the queen and three princesses entered discreetly, "a few with feathers and variegated flowers in their head-dress, but nothing so remarkable as to attract public attention," followed by a procession of earls, bishops, viscounts, dukes, marquises, and barons, and great officers of state, all in their parliamentary robes, and finally the peers. Hastings, who entered only after the lords had been seated, had a sickly appearance and was dressed in a plain-looking suit. In the gallery to his left sat members of the House of Commons – very few of them in full dress, noted an unsympathetic contemporary, and some in boots. After the charges were read, Burke got the case for the prosecution under way with a speech that lasted two and a half hours, outlining India's history and calling Hastings's rule a disgrace. So began the long test of arguments that one contemporary called "in the emphatic language of

the Sacred Scripture, a *Fiery Trial*." The volleys of accusation and defense went back and forth until 1795. By then public opinion had long since swung against Burke, and the peers voted to acquit Hastings on all charges.[3]

One of the chief crimes on trial in parliament was the giving and taking of gifts. Hastings was accused of many kinds of corruption and misgovernment, but none was more central to the case Burke and others brought against him than the gift exchanges that were supposed to have amounted to an illicit system of misrule. Burke brought twenty-two charges before the House of Commons but for the sake of legal effectiveness reduced them to four charges for the trial in the House of Lords. He accused Hastings of extortion, forced settlement of debts, awarding contracts as patronage, and accepting large presents for personal enrichment. The acceptance of gifts went to the heart of the matter because it was such a clear violation of law with a general principle at stake. In 1764 the Directors of the East India Company forbade their employees from accepting presents. The Regulating Act of 1773 gave this ban the force of parliamentary law. Hastings himself in his testimony before the House of Commons declared that he had signed a statement accepting the Company's prohibitions against accepting "any Gift, Reward, Gratuity, Allowance, or Donation, from any of the Indian Princes, or any of their Ministers" beyond allowable amounts without Company permission and denied that he had ever violated its rules. He recognized, then, the *principle* that there were licit and illicit forms of exchange. But which acts of giving and receiving were gifts? And which kinds of exchange distorted, which ones strengthened relations between Indians and Britons? Disagreement about the nature and meaning of the gift, as much as the record of his rule, hung over the Hastings trial.[4]

It was difficult to state what exactly amounted to a gift because the rules and political realities that defined gift giving were changing for late eighteenth-century Britons in India. A many-sided competition for control of Bengal and its neighbors was under way. The Mughal emperors, the legitimate political authority, had for decades been unable to control the ambitions of local princes and their wars with one another. Internal disorder tempted outsiders to intervene: The French and the British in India, starting out from small trading posts, began to take advantage of domestic conflict. Robert Clive, a soldier in the Company's army, scored a decisive victory at the Battle of Plassey on June 23, 1757, defeating the nawab (princely ruler) of Bengal, Siraj ud-Daulah, and replacing him with a reliable ally, Mir Jafar, as nominal ruler.

Clive and other Company employees plundered the wealthy province and its government treasury, making private fortunes – Clive returned to England in 1760 with the staggering haul of £300,000 – even as the Company struggled to establish political control over Bengal. They left behind a trail of destruction. Clive defended his actions by talking about the Indian custom of giving presents, but he and his successors turned gift exchange, even when they were building on tradition, into another name for extortion. With every subsequent change of Indian rulers or British governors, extravagant new presents were given out; Britons lent money at exorbitant interest rates, encouraged Indians to go to war to recoup their debts, and expected the Company to guarantee their profits. The looting of state treasuries, warfare, tampering with taxation, and destruction of existing patterns of merchant moneymaking took place on a scale that disoriented and impoverished Indian society.[5]

The nabobs, as Clive and the other Company employees who enriched themselves were called, stirred consternation in

England: They were regarded as *nouveaux riches* who had harvested dishonest gains and would advance their interests by corrupting the political system at home. A series of parliamentary investigations beginning in 1767 worked to uncover the misdeeds of the Company employees and to create a new regime of greater public responsibility in India. Private interest and public weal, in the public mood and parliamentary determination, had to be clearly separated, so that a newly rational administration might be created. The Company employees, however, had a different view of their privileges and responsibilities. Young men took great risks to go so far abroad, and they felt that they had a right to get rich quick if they could. As the Company itself and parliament limited their gains, they still claimed that they could distinguish between accepting gifts that were their rightful due and bribes that would distort their political judgment.[6]

Hastings's career in the East India Company overlapped with its political triumph in Bengal and the British public's revulsion against the nabobs and their methods of rule. Born in 1732, he was supported after the death of his parents by an uncle, Howard Hastings, who sent him to Westminster School. After the death of his uncle, his next guardian refused to continue his schooling and instead arranged for him to go to Calcutta in the service of the East India Company. Hastings arrived in 1750 as a lowly writer. During the following decade he rose to higher responsibilities as the Company took over Bengal. After setbacks – he and his patron, the then-governor Henry Vansittart, tried without success a policy of collaboration with Indian elites – and a return to England in 1765, Hastings went back to India four years later and in 1772 was made governor of Bengal.[7]

Hastings began his administration with a firm policy agenda: reform tax collection, beat down local power holders, and create a

strongly centralized state administration. In a memorandum to his Company superiors, Hastings wrote in 1775:

> The extent of Bengal, and its possible resources, are equal to those of most states in Europe. Its difficulties are greater than those of any, because it wants both an established form and powers of government, deriving its actual support from the unremitted labour and personal exertion of individuals in power instead of the vital influence which flows through the channels of a regular constitution, and imperceptibly animates every part of it.[8]

A "regular constitution" as Hastings imagined it would institute an administration that was authoritarian and efficient. So much for the dreams of ambitious leaders; it was in fact difficult for Hastings (or his successors) to budge local practices and successfully create a streamlined revenue system. He tried to increase revenues by displacing the zamindars, the traditional landlords, and farming out their powers of tax collection. His aims were comparable to those of enlightened absolute monarchs in France, Austria, or Prussia (C. A. Bayly has noted that British administrators who chose an authoritarian style seemed to be emulating Continental models), but his task was made more difficult by the newness of British hegemony and the foreignness of the society he was attempting to control. By the end of his administration, he had made little headway with increasing state revenues and had also lost prestige by spending heavily on unsuccessful wars. Successful or not, Hastings represented one important governing style in the British Empire of his time, a coercive despotism that used rational administrative methods for the systematic extraction of wealth from forced labor.[9]

Alongside his ruthless policy of centralization, there was another side to Hastings: his belief that successful rule was inseparable from deep familiarity with Indian culture. Here, too, he was acting like

an enlightened European ruler, making learning serve political ends. He became a speaker of Urdu and reader of Persian, able to conduct his own diplomacy without the aid of translators; he collected pictures and books; he supported European attempts to understand Hindu and Muslim law. Under his patronage William Jones (who was serving as a Supreme Court judge in Bengal) researched Sanskrit and its structural similarity to Latin and Greek, a discovery with an incalculable influence on European scholarship; and he supported the translation by Charles Wilkins (a Company servant) of the *Bhagavad Gita* into English. An urbane curiosity about exotic cultures was not unusual in the late eighteenth century, but it was rare for anyone, whether as ruler or as scholar, to invest such serious effort into learning about them. Hastings did so out of a typically eighteenth-century belief in the utility as well as the humanistic value of such researches. He was genuinely interested in Indian culture and at the same time promoted understanding of it as the path to effective government.[10]

Hastings's behavior in India combined large doses of ambition and confusion. He desired to retrieve the fortunes of his genteel but impoverished family and to repurchase the family estate; finding himself short of income as he was leaving India, he accepted a huge gift from a prominent Indian, the nawab wazir of Awadh. According to P. J. Marshall a closer look at his financial books opens up a maze of small gratuities recorded, large ones left out, loans that could be presents, and presents that could be payments to the Company. Hastings emerges as a careless spender and a casual manager of his own estate who did not do very well for himself in India by the standards of the day but ran awry of the newly emerging system separating public and private finances. In the 1780s as the

impeachment began, his insouciance looked like a continuation of the profiteering of Clive and his contemporaries.[11]

## Edmund Burke on Hastings's Corruption of the Gift

Hastings was not the only Briton striving for a deep understanding of traditional Indian culture. His nemesis, Edmund Burke, was no less determined to understand it in order to facilitate British rule. This was less a case of modernizer versus traditionalist than of conflicting conceptions of Indian tradition and how to modernize it. Burke entered the House of Commons in 1765, the year in which Clive arrived in India for the third time. By the early 1770s Burke was educating himself about British government in India and by the mid-1770s he was a confident expert who was appalled by one story after another of corruption in which East India Company employees enriched themselves at the expense of Indian society and Britain's imperial interests.

From Burke's point of view Hastings had come to power in Bengal after parliament and the Company itself had set down unambiguous rules for honest administration. Instead of trying to change Company habits, Hastings seemed to be simply continuing the old system of bribery, extortion, and outrageous injustices. By 1785, the year of Hastings's return to England, Burke had made up his mind that he was guilty of great evils that had to be exposed in order to bring about a better imperial regime. In addition, Burke was convinced that the nabobs and others with a financial interest in India were using their wealth to distort political decision making in England. As he launched the impeachment proceedings in the House of Commons in 1786, Burke doubted that he could win, but he thought of himself in the role of Cicero bringing corruption to

light in ancient Rome. The virtue of the political order was at stake, and, win or lose, he was going to throw himself into the struggle to rescue it.[12]

Burke opened his case before the House of Lords in April and May of 1789 with the charge that Hastings was criminally guilty of accepting gifts. This accusation was originally the sixth out of twenty-two presented to the lower house, and now – in the dramatically foreshortened list of four – was moved to the forefront of his theater of high crimes and misdemeanors.

One of the melodramas he unfolded for his audience over two of his four days of presentation of the gifts charge was the story of Hastings's rivalry with Maharaja Nandakumar, a high-ranking Mughal official. Hastings and Nandakumar had an uneasy relationship, sometimes needing favors from one another, sometimes behaving as rivals, when three British appointees arrived in Calcutta in 1775 to join the Company's council, which together with Hastings as governor-general was responsible for governing Bengal. The newly arrived councilors formed a hostile block opposed to Hastings from the start. Nandakumar decided to throw in his lot with them and fed them stories that led them in 1775 to accuse Hastings of accepting bribes. One of Nandakumar's chief claims was that Hastings received several payments from a court lady, Munni Begum, whom he appointed as guardian to the young nawab (the presumed future legitimate ruler of Bengal). Hastings allowed only that he had received one sum worth about £15,000 as a customary recompense for entertainment expenses at the time of his visit to her. In the same year the British occupiers' newly formed Supreme Court in Bengal tried Nandakumar on charges of forgery, which in Britain, but not in India, was a capital crime; he was found guilty and executed. No direct link between Hastings and the trial

of Nandakumar was found, but Hastings's enemies were convinced that he was involved in a misuse of the machinery of law. Historians have not subsequently uncovered any trace of direct complicity, but they have concluded that Hastings must at least have been aware of the proceedings and condoned them. Much of the evidence that Burke used against him in the matter of illegitimate presents went back to Nandakumar's earlier charges; while hardly impartial testimony, they were irresistible material for a tale of power, greed, and possibly judicial murder.[13]

In a fragment appended to one of his speeches but not delivered, Burke put his finger on the fundamental difference between Hastings and himself on the subject of gifts. Burke distinguished between the traditional gift, which he defended, and what he regarded as Hastings's modern corruption:

> These people were subject to many exactions from their Lords; Many like the feudal Services – Aids to many aids for their tenancy and their lands themselves, their sons and daughters; for their progresses and pilgrimages – for their religious ceremonies – but the exactions for those we love are like gifts a sacrifice alleviating the weight of authority and softening the excesses of power. Hard to others they thought it would have been extortion to them it was homage Respect Admiration, Veneration inveterate opinion of Superiority, habitual hereditary connexion, between the protector and protected. When they are giving upon that, it does not look like a submission to man, but in confirmation to the order of Nature itself. When the Lord is identified with the Vassal, with the force of a recognised relation. His dignity is their pride. – His wealth is their opulence. – His entertainments are their *Festivals*. His funeral rites are the common consolation. His *onerous Visits* their Hospitality – His religious rights and pilgrimages their own favourite revered cherished superstition. On his best favourable aspects wish that he was a father and protector who had a common concern with his people. Such were the Zemindars.[14]

What Burke was working up to in this sentimentalized remembrance of the traditional gift was the contrast to Hastings's uprooting

of the established relationship between zamindars and their peasants. When Hastings put the office of tax farming up for sale in a spirit of enlightened rationalization, this amounted for Burke to the destruction of a gentry class and the security of private property. The great spokesman for the Whig party saw in the zamindars the counterpart of English landowners; they were the guardians of tradition and guarantors of freedom against despotic central authority. Here was where the gift came in: The traditional gift, recognized Burke, was the ritual incarnation of the primary social bond, the mutual affection between lord and peasant, master and subject, that held together traditional society whether in England or India. The challenge of his time was how to hold together this traditional society while allowing for the expansion of commerce, which Burke was also eager to stimulate. He thought the presents that Hastings received were not a continuation of ancient homage but a corrupt modern business practice that simply forced a contribution out of the giver. They corroded social relationships, and Hastings had set an example from the top that spread to his subordinates and corrupted the entire Indian body politic, from there spreading back to England. In the course of condemning Hastings, Burke memorialized the traditional reciprocal gift that nineteenth-century thinkers would find difficult to comprehend and twentieth-century anthropologists would struggle to rediscover.

## James Mill's Emancipation from the Gift

Reformers after 1800 turned to India with plans for modernization so uncompromising that by comparison Hastings and Burke alike look rather old-fashioned: Whereas the two great antagonists of the eighteenth century argued over the correct blend of respect for local tradition versus rationalization, the new generation argued for a

complete extirpation of Indian social and legal arrangements. India for these impatient empire builders was to become an idealized European society made up of competitive individuals emancipated from their social bonds and able to pursue their personal happiness. A leading intellectual spokesman for this revolt against the halfway approaches to Indian administration was James Mill. Best remembered today as the father of John Stuart Mill, he was – as his famous son's autobiography portrayed him – a formidable and fearless thinker in his own right. James Mill's influence spread through disciples who were attracted by his strong personality, lively conversation, and opinionated writings.[15] In contrast to both Hastings and Burke, he was oblivious to the uses of gift exchange as an institution that legitimated a political order different in kind from modern society.

Starting out as a poor Scottish intellectual in London with a family to support and no stable means of doing so, James Mill spent eleven years writing *The History of British India*. It brought him the position and recognition he needed after its publication in 1818: The following year the East India Company hired him as one of its correspondence readers, an important position controlling the flow of mail to and from India. Meanwhile Company officials as well as the educated public read his history. Mill wrote it as a follower of the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, with whom he formed a close personal and intellectual friendship beginning in 1808. Like Bentham, he believed that society in its simplest and most logical form consisted of individuals each of whom sought the greatest possible personal happiness through the pursuit of pleasure; like Bentham he sought to strip away the accretions of tradition and superstition that beclouded this simple natural logic of society and worked to the advantage of the privileged few at the expense of the

rest of society. Mill's special targets were aristocracy and established church: Take away their privileges, dispel their mystifications, and one could work out reforms that would multiply human happiness. When he looked to India, he saw the same kinds of enemy as in Britain: an aristocracy plus an obfuscating caste of priests. He completely rejected the notion held by late Enlightenment and early Romantic intellectuals that there was any value to Sanskrit or Indian literary tradition.[16]

When it came to British politics, Mill was a radical republican who was convinced that introducing representative government would be the key to overthrowing the corrupt regime of aristocracy and church. For India he recommended executive rule that would introduce sweeping changes unopposed by checks from Indian subjects or another branch of government. This placed him at odds with Burke's defense of the zamindars; instead of working through local middlemen or gentry, Mill advocated direct collection of taxes from the cultivators of the land. His hope was that this would increase tax collection but also permit the formation of an entrepreneurial class of farmers.[17] At the same time he brought back the charge that Hastings embodied the worst abuses of the East India Company as a private merchant company combining private greed with public administration. Gift giving in India, according to Mill, was just another name for a system of bribery, which Hastings found in place and adopted as the way to rule in an "Oriental" country and enrich himself. Hastings claimed that he had eliminated the debt in the public finances of Bengal – but in fact all that he had done was to plunder the wealth of the Mughal emperor without any lasting improvement to the system of public finances.[18] Mill went through all the old charges of receiving gifts and accompanying misdeeds that had begun with the hostile council of Bengal and run through

the impeachment: that Hastings shook down native Indian rulers, enriched himself, and claimed to be following native custom. But "custom, the custom of a country, where almost every thing was corrupt, affords but a sorry defense."[19] Mill dismissed the idea that there was any need to pay attention to native custom – and even if there was, Oriental promises of great tribute were a bluff, or a rhetorical flourish, not an earnest agreement for the governor to pursue ruthlessly to his own advantage. Indian critics could contemplate the fate of Nandakumar, who produced evidence against Hastings only to be tried for forgery and hanged according to the newly instituted British system of justice.[20]

The debates about Hastings ever since his time have generally had a whodunit tone (did he take gifts, or didn't he?) which takes for granted that a gift is a disguise for a commercial transaction. This was the starting point for Burke's accusations as well as Mill's later condemnation of the Hastings era, and indeed Hastings in his own defense could offer little more than the excuse that gifts were a practical necessity for doing business in India. There is, however, another side to the story. Bernard Cohn has analyzed the symbolic constitution of Mughal India, where gift giving was at the heart of any political transaction for Hindu and Muslim princes. At a durbar or court audience subjects presented valuables such as gold coins, jewelry, horses, or elephants and in return received clothing or jewelry. This was not a commercial exchange, and the objects on the two sides were not equivalent. Rather it was an act of investiture incorporating the subject into the body of the ruler. The objects received did not go into general circulation or become part of one's disposable capital, but became family heirlooms or objects for display on special occasions. In other words, they belonged to a traditional system of gift exchange. British observers misconstrued these ritual

acts when they treated them as commercial exchanges – hence as a widespread system of bribery that needed to be replaced by impersonal administration. Later Company servants dealt with their gifts by carefully assessing the cash value of objects received and giving objects of equal cash value in exchange. Hastings, however, was in a position to know better. It is not hard to imagine that he would have understood the symbolic function of the durbar or at least the necessity of working within it, giving and receiving gifts as the symbolic language regulating any Indian political relationship in his time. But that was not knowledge to square with one's sworn oath to abjure gifts, nor a practice one could explain to a British parliament and public already outraged by allegations of corruption.[21]

## Ghulam Hussain on Britain's Refusal of the Gift

A contemporary Indian historian analyzed the British failure to build into their regime reciprocities between rulers and the ruled. Ghulam Hussain came from a family of courtiers to the Mughal emperor, but after the Battle of Plassey he moved to Bengal and worked for British officials. He dedicated his three-volume history of India from 1704–1705 to 1781–1782 to Hastings, who had been one of his employers. Hussain naturally mentioned gift exchanges as part of the give-and-take between Indian rulers, and he also referred to gifts given and received from two British governors, Clive and Vansittart, without special emphasis. What mattered to him more than just gifts in the narrow sense was the cultivation of good relations with one's subjects. Hussain took as his model the Mughals, who, he wrote, had been munificent and kind rulers and in returned enjoyed the thanks of the people in a country that "was populous and flourishing, beyond imagination." Then came

the time of decline starting sixty years before his own time, when "the Emperors became negligent, and the Grandees refractory and rebellious." Still, very few people were made miserable by their behavior. That changed with the English conquest of India: Since then, "this country seems to have had no master at all." The zamindars tormented their underlings; in the past twenty years six or seven governors had come and gone from Bengal, governor and council were at odds with one another, and Indians had no idea who could redress their complaints.[22]

The underlying source of the problem was that the English came to get rich quick, not to stay. The Mughals, too, had started out as invaders, but they settled, intermarried, and promoted friendship between Muslims and Hindus; by contrast the English occupiers had no interest in improving the country. "Of so many English that have carried away such princely fortunes from this country," he wrote, "not one of them has ever thought of shewing his gratitude to it, by sinking a well, digging a pond, planting a public grove … or building a bridge." The exception was Hastings, for he had "lived long enough in this country to have conceived an affection for it." Hussain cited Hastings's establishment of a Muslim law seminar in Calcutta, settlement of wastelands in Bengal, and suppression of tollhouses on rivers and roads as examples of his improvements. He also appreciated Hastings's willingness to receive visitors, giving his government a face-to-face dimension that was part of traditional rule but altogether lacking in the tenure of other governors. Yet the example of Hastings was not an exoneration of English rule. Hussain, who knew that Hastings was on trial in London, wrote about him as an exception to the structurally exploitative nature of British rule and had no expectation of better administration from future governors.[23]

The language of the gift was contentious and confused in English political discourse of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Gift giving as an exchange of favors to create bonds of obligation and loyalty was a pervasive feature of English as well as Indian society, with patronage between more and less powerful politicians, between authors and aristocrats, part of the normal transactions of the day. Some observers continued to understand it: Edmund Burke idealized traditional gift exchange in defense of a gentry-dominated rural England, and Ghulam Hussain idealized it in memory of Mughal rule. These, however, were nostalgic programs with ebbing meaning for nineteenth-century European intellectuals.

James Mill illustrates the chasm that was opening up between the traditional world of gift exchange and the intellectuals of nineteenth-century Europe. Gift exchange never actually disappeared from late eighteenth- or nineteenth-century European society, as Mill's own career illustrates; he himself owed his education to a Scottish aristocrat, John Stuart, whose favor he acknowledged in the naming of his eldest son. Yet this kind of biographical experience and the language to describe it collided with the imperatives of a new ideal of impersonal, efficient government and the effort to imagine a new kind of society, one that would operate without the special favors that gift exchange systematically inculcates. Gift exchange in Europe appeared to a thinker like Mill to be a vestige of the old order and a disturbance in a modern democratic society.

When it came to the test case of India, the disastrous effects of unrestrained gift giving were plain for all to see. At the same time, no one could figure out what should replace it – and indeed it was impossible to rule in India without some system of gift exchange. Hastings brought to India all the familiar contradictions

of authoritarian rule in Europe, where enlightened administrations tried out new schemes of efficient government but could not dispense with the older give and take that held their societies together. The meaning of gift giving, however, was completely lost on utilitarians like James Mill, for whom it was another name for aristocratic corruption. His vision of radical reform from above had only a limited practical effect (and the Burkean tradition of greater respect for local elites remained strong among early nineteenth-century British administrators in India). But it revealed the impoverishment of contemporaries' language for talking about the reciprocal gift in a modernizing commercial society. Gift exchange had once been taken for granted in European society; now it became so contrary to rational administration that its legitimacy in the Hastings controversy was hard to reconstruct. Once intrinsic to European society, the language of the gift had become a submerged and problematic discourse.

# 2. Liberalism, Self-Interest, and the Gift

One can observe a confusion about gift exchange among late eighteenth-century makers of empire, who could not live with it and could not live without it. James Mill a generation later tried to put an end to the uncertainties surrounding gift giving in India by refusing to admit that it existed at all except as another name for corruption. In the liberal utilitarian tradition that he represented so robustly, British governors and Indian princes who exchanged gifts were furthering nothing but self-enrichment, which was poorly disguised by excuses about local custom or recognition of social rank.

Marcel Mauss, concluding his essay on the gift, thought that this kind of utilitarian incomprehension represented a turning point in modern history. He opposed the utilitarian "notion of interest, of the individual search after what is useful," to the gift. This conception of the useful, he wrote, hardly existed in indigenous societies around the world, or in the classical world, or in Europe itself as more than a subordinate principle until a few centuries ago. "One can almost date – since Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* – the triumph of the notion of individual interest."[1] Thus, Mauss offered a starting point for the theoretical controversies culminating in his own essay: the

theories of economic self-interest first clearly stated in early modern England. On this interpretation Bernard Mandeville's famous allegorical poem, first published in 1714, and its arguments for the unfettered pursuit of personal happiness prepared the language and presuppositions that later made it impossible for a thinker like James Mill to comprehend the social functions of the gift.

One can agree with Mauss that a utilitarian approach to social and economic life had the effect of shunting gift exchange to the margins of public behavior. Liberal thinkers in this tradition were so successful at developing a model of market exchange carried on by self-interested economic actors that it was difficult by the nineteenth century even to find a language to express what an alternative form of economic activity might look like, or what other social structures might foster solidarity in modern society. Nonetheless this dichotomy of gift and market mentality oversimplifies the liberal tradition and its relation to reciprocal gift giving; a survey of a few of the major thinkers in the liberal tradition and its predecessors turns into a more complicated and interesting story than Mauss imagined. At their crudest, liberal theorists did in fact exclude the gift from the workings of modern society. If we wish to understand the disappearance of the gift from modern social thought, the trail leads through the liberal tradition exemplified by a utilitarian thinker like Mill and his historical predecessors. Yet there was more to the liberal tradition than just this. More subtle theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries acknowledged that they lived in societies permeated by gift exchange and made allowances for it even as they developed an interest-driven model of social action; they could also worry about how modern societies could pursue ethical ends alongside their dedication to personal gain. In other words, there was more room for encompassing diverse human motives than might

appear at first sight in the liberal tradition. It did not abandon the gift so much as it redefined its scope and meaning.

## Hobbes and the Voluntary Gift

While Mauss took the modern discourse on the gift back as far as Mandeville, it is more accurate for a history of the utilitarian "notion of interest" to turn back further in time to Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651). In *Leviathan* one can observe the outlines of a modern society organized around conflict between independent agents struggling for survival, a model that later thinkers would take up and adapt to the needs of the world's first industrial society in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. While it would be anachronistic to call it a work of liberal or utilitarian theory, Hobbes's study of interest-driven egos, tamed by rational insight into averting the mutually destructive logic of the war of all against all, was an important source for utilitarianism at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[2]

Despite its reputation for narrowly grounding human society in personal selfishness, *Leviathan* from time to time took up the definition and function of the gift. Hobbes's book contrasted gift and contract – a fundamental distinction for a society organized around both gift networks and the verbally articulated, legally binding, finite agreements called contracts. What, in Hobbes's contract-oriented social theory, was left for the gift to do? Hobbes spelled out its logical limits and its motives in his definition:

> When the transferring of Right is not mutuall; but one of the Parties transferreth, in the hope to gain thereby friendship, or service from another, or from his friends; or in hope to gain from reputation of Charity, or Magnanimity; or to deliver his mind from the pain of compassion; or in

hope of reward in heaven; This is not Contract, but GIFT, FREE-GIFT, GRACE; which words signifie one and the same thing.[3]

Contract in Hobbes's definition was *mutual*, the gift was not; the general distinction left no room for a reciprocity of gifts. Hobbes instead characterized the asymmetrical gift, the free gift without right to expect a return, as the gift in his contract-based society. This restriction to asymmetrical gifts was a remarkable deviation from the reciprocal gift giving practices that densely permeated his own society and pointed the way to the modern conception of the gift as a one-sided act of generosity of the kind that one associates today with birthday presents from parent to child. Nonetheless, Hobbes's sharp distinction between contract and gift did not make gifts marginal. To exclude gift exchange from the workings of society would have made no sense to his readers at a time when the amount of gift giving seems to have been rising and some forms, like the endowment of charities, seem to have been expanding even as others, like noble household largess, were receding.[4] The passage lists friendship, of course, which in its modern form is defined by its spontaneous and voluntary character. Beyond this, Hobbes went on to mention other kinds of gifts that despite his initial distinction between gift and contract did include an expectation of mutuality, for from some gifts one awaited "service from another." More clearly in the public sphere were acts of charity or "magnanimity" – philanthropy, we would say today – that enhanced one's reputation, a return that may not have been material but could amount then and now to a large social return. Alongside getting and spending, there were plenty of ways in Hobbes's social model to enhance one's power and status by giving.

The subject of gift giving came up again when Hobbes turned to several subjects of lasting interest to modern political thought.

One of these was the relationship between political authority and subject: Hobbes imagined gift giving as a perquisite of high office and built on the analogy, already implicit in his mention of reward in heaven and grace, between human and divine gift. The gift was only a consequence of the giver's good will and free will: "[I]n this case of Free gift, I am enabled to Merit only by the benignity of the Giver." As with divine grace, so with rulers and their gifts: Rulers might hope for a return on their gift in the form of services, but they were not entitled to them. The only expectation the gift giver might have was gratitude. One can interpret Hobbes's strictures on gift giving between ruler and ruled by recalling that every reciprocal gift is another name for an obligation incurred. As Natalie Davis has observed for the early modern French monarchy, limiting gifts from subject to monarch was a way of strengthening the principle of royal sovereignty, removing the monarch from the networks of reciprocity that led to obligations to one's subjects and constraints on the theoretical and actual exercise of royal power. Hobbes also considered the impact of gift giving within civil society, apart from its relation to higher authority: ingratitude, he added in his remarks on gifts, was a disturber of the peace, creating resentment by frustrating the original design of the giver; so as a seeker of social peace, Hobbes enjoined against it. Acknowledgment of the gift was one of those acts of intersubjective recognition that worked beyond the arena of self-interest to bind individuals into a peaceful community.[5]

## Mandeville's Rejection of the Gift

Mandeville, whom Mauss singled out at the end of his essay for marking the watershed from premodern to modern European thought, was among the boldest of the thinkers after Hobbes to

affirm that self-interest was what motivated human beings and led them to form a society. Mauss was right to call attention to him as an early exponent of the psychological and sociological ideas that would later go by the name of utilitarianism. There was a radicalism to his thought as he applied it to modern society, which made him an exemplar of a new way of thinking about human nature with everything but self-preservation and pleasure stripped away.

Mandeville came to England from Holland, where his thinking may have been formed in his early years by exposure to free-thinking French refugees, including the famous proto-Enlightenment thinker Pierre Bayle (who possibly taught at his secondary school). From a well-established burgher family, he supported himself in his adopted country as a physician while jumping into the literary and philosophical debates of his time, upholding its burgeoning commercial freedoms and ridiculing the civic humanist idea, looking back to the ancient Roman republic, of a stable landed elite as the guardian of public virtue. Self-interest, he argued, sufficed to create a stable and enjoyably civilized public order. This comfortable view of the modern marketplace did not require a complementary set of gift exchanges in order to explain how human beings sustained their social relationships.[6]

Mandeville was a debunker, determined to show natural man as he really was; anticlericalism and hostility toward conventional morality were trademarks of his thought. *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, a changing compilation as well as a parable of the same name, pointed out the political benefits of private passions. In its revised and expanded 1723 edition the work attracted notoriety as well as an avid readership, for it announced that peoples' self-interested actions – their "private vices" – created the public goods of industry and wealth. The introduction to

his fable criticized other writers for "always teaching Men what they should be" rather than what they were. Man was rather "a compound of various Passions, that all of them, as they are provoked and come uppermost, govern him by turns, whether he will or no." Naturalistic observation dominated his analysis of human behavior: "[W]hen I say Men, I mean neither *Jews* or *Christians*; but meer Man, in the State of Nature and Ignorance of the true Deity." The history of civilization was a story of misbegotten attempts to subdue animal instinct. "All untaught Animals," he wrote, "are only solicitous of pleasing themselves, and naturally follow the bent of their own Inclinations, without considering the good or harm that from their being pleased will accrue to others." Governments had tried to subdue instinctive selfishness, but Mandeville doubted if one could do much to improve human beings; "moralists and philosophers" had tried to persuade them to give up their natural appetites, but without offering anything more than imaginary compensations. Morality according to Mandeville was only a tool of the powerful and the ambitious which they used to control ordinary people.[7] His work was a vote of confidence in modern commercial society as completely self-sufficient, without a need for any religious morality or classical ideals to keep it prosperous.

Unlike Hobbes, Mandeville did not bring gift giving into a significant connection with the main terms of his analysis of modern society. It came up only once as an aside to his ridicule of contentment:

> As Pride and Luxury decrease,
> So by degrees they leave the Seas.
> Not merchants now, but Companies
> Remove whole Manufactories.
> All Arts and Crafts neglected lie;

> Content, the Bane of Industry
> Makes 'em admire their homely Store,
> And neither seek nor covet more.[8]

In his commentary on this verse, Mandeville distinguished contentment, the bane of industry, from laziness. Contentment was a psychological attitude of at-oneness with one's environment and of feeling no inner motivation to change it. Moralists complained that laziness was the bane of industry, but, according to Mandeville, this was not so. Laziness had usually to do with social subordination: "We seldom call any body lazy, but such as we reckon inferior to us, and of whom we expect some Service." Building on this social analysis of laziness, he turned to a story from the man of letters John Dryden about "a Luxurious King of *Egypt*":

> His Majesty having bestowed some considerable Gifts on several of his Favourites, is attended by some of his chief Ministers with a Parchment which he was to sign to confirm those Grants. First, he walks a few Turns to and fro with a heavy Uneasiness in his Looks, then sets himself down like a Man that's tired, and at last with abundance of Reluctancy to what he was going about, he takes up the Pen, and falls a complaining very seriously of the Length of the Word *Ptolemy*, and expresses a great deal of Concern, that he had not some short Monosyllable for his Name, which he thought wou'd save him a World of Trouble.[9]

While this was Mandeville's only mention of the gift, the scene was a well-chosen one. It was a setting that mattered: the exchange between monarch and courtier that created bonds of loyalty and obligation between social inferior and superior. This act of gift giving oozed from an attitude of royal decadence. It was the opposite of the bustling self-interest that sent ships overseas and manufacturies in motion; Mandeville's monarch was a barely moving power, his gift giving a symptom of decline.

## Adam Smith on Modern Liberality

Looking back to James Mill, and before him to Hobbes and Mandeville, we can begin to outline a theoretical tradition that falls in with the logic of modern society. Whether monarchical in Hobbes, free-thinking in Mandeville, or democratic in James Mill, it constructs a model of rational, self-interested individuals who can form a harmonious whole without any need for countervailing instincts or social structures. Their declining attention to the gift looks like a symptom of their larger overestimation of human rationality and their inability to imagine the destructive effects of unrestrained economic inability and the violence of a society without a separately defined set of moral limits.

To identify liberalism so closely with its utilitarian strand, however, would be to rob it of its actual historical diversity. As we have seen, Hobbes himself allowed for some variety of human motivation in his rigorous grounding of society in the instinct for self-preservation. More broadly, liberal thinkers have been capable of defending the political, economic, and social freedom of the individual while combining it with an appreciation of other human needs and capacities. Turning from Hobbes and Mandeville to Adam Smith, we find a very different awareness of the limitations of modern commercial society as well as the virtues that flourish outside of commercial exchange and in premodern societies. Smith is popularly identified (at least in the United States) with a naïve glorification of economic selfishness and providential belief that the sum of self-interested acts adds up to the collective good of all. As scholars have often pointed out, Smith was in fact a more complex thinker who tried to account for sociability as well as self-interest

in his overall picture of modern society. He touched on many of the aspects of reciprocity that twentieth-century thinkers would later round up under the broadly encompassing name of the gift.

One of the puzzling features of gift exchange – especially from a utilitarian point of view – is its excess. In contrast to market exchange, it is not measurable and can involve giving more than enough; if the test of a fair market exchange is equality, gift exchange is supposed to show generosity. Smith was intrigued by this quality and tried to account for it: Sometimes he tried to do so in terms of the market, but at other times he emphasized that market relations do not encompass the full range of social interactions necessary for the functioning of any society. Smith spoke of "liberality" to describe just that excess of expenditure associated with a gift-giving society, the kind that called forth generous return, or loyalty, or social reputation for charity. Liberality figured in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) as an irrational moment in a system of commercial exchange. Liberal payment in certain occupations was a seeming irrationality, which Smith was able to reduce to economic sense: There were some people, wrote Smith, who were paid exorbitantly for artistic work, including "players, opera-singers, opera-dancers, &c."; Smith asked why we reward them with "the most profuse liberality." The answer was that their reward was not just for their time and their talent, but to offset the damage to reputation for what was considered "a sort of public prostitution." Hence, what first appeared to be excessive payment was actually the compensation for damage to a social good.[10] In another usage, Smith asked why liberality was sometimes a feature of rents. In a given area, the market level of rent rates was "naturally the highest which the tenant can afford to pay in the actual circumstances of the land." There were irrational deviations from this figure: "the liberality, more frequently the ignorance,

of the landlord, makes him accept of somewhat less than this portion," or the tenant's ignorance of the going prices made him pay more. The "liberality" of the landlord was another name for a personal willingness to do without potential profit. In another example Smith pointed out that generosity conceived for the long term might do immediate damage that undermined the giver's intent: A bank with a liberal policy of advancing the whole capital needed for long-term investments ended up simply feeding the bank accounts of those who borrowed from it. This kind of excess had the unintended effect of allowing them to borrow against the money thus advanced to their accounts.[11] The origin of these different examples of overpayment differed from case to case: One time it referred to an explainable market value, another time it went back to emotion, and in yet another usage it referred to a kindly but ill-advised policy. Whatever the individual circumstance, liberality was not an intrinsic part of market exchange; Smith analyzed it as an extraneous moment, sometimes explicable in market terms, at other times an intrusion of emotion.

While criticizing the disturbing effects of liberality in Britain's market economy, Smith recognized the different place of liberality in a different kind of economy. In a precommercial, premanufacturing society, the wealthy had a large supply of life necessities at their disposal. Since there was little opportunity for exchange, the proprietor "can do nothing with the surplus but feed and clothe nearly as many people as it will feed and clothe. A hospitality in which there is no luxury, and a liberality in which there is no ostentation, occasion, in this situation of things, the principal expenses of the rich and the great." Here he turned specifically to the European past: "among our feudal ancestors" estates stayed in the same family, an indication of the stability of this way of life. Largesse did not get

the generous lords of an earlier age into trouble – in contrast to his own time in which "the hospitality of luxury and the liberality of ostentation have ruined many." The liberality Smith was criticizing had its own rationality, then, in an earlier economic system, even if it only survived in his own time as a historical vestige.[12]

Was there, then, no intrinsic place for liberality in a modern commercial society? Actually there was, and Smith defined it in *The Wealth of Nations* with a sure grasp of the relation between manners and markets. Nations like England and France, he observed, produced an easy excess of wealth. Smith thought this was because they consisted largely of agriculturalists ("proprietors and cultivators") with industry, the cream on top, adding a surplus. On the other hand, predominantly merchant and manufacturing polities like Holland and Hamburg "can grow rich only through parsimony and privation." The impact on character: "As the interest of nations so differently circumstanced, is very different, so is likewise the common character of the people. In those of the former kind, liberality, frankness, and good fellowship naturally make a part of that common character. In the latter, narrowness, meanness, and a selfish disposition, averse to all social pleasure and enjoyment."[13] Liberality in modern societies should not be a form of behavior within the market system, where it can only do damage, but it might flourish as a *consequence* of it in a place like Britain or France; where there was a topping of surplus wealth, openness and generosity would naturally follow. Just as we might say today that other qualities – artistic originality, for example – are welcome, and indeed encouraged within a marketplace economy, but are not welcome behind a bank counter, so Smith here assigned liberality its place within commercial society.

Liberality survived and indeed thrived not just as a historical accident but as a response to an abiding impulse in human nature: what Avner Offer has called the economy of regard. He points out that Smith in his other great work, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), emphasized that all human beings wish to be noticed and held in high esteem by the other members of their society; this is a need that may exist independent of market exchanges or may accompany them. Smith also believed that in his society the rich and the powerful were admired by their social inferiors and approved of this impulse as reinforcing the existing hierarchy of ranks. Over time Smith did not retreat from this opinion, but he did worry about distinguishing genuinely admirable people from the meretricious. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* opened perspectives on the role of status in modern society that included sociological, economic, and moral dimensions. It did not contradict *The Wealth of Nations* but made its analysis part of a broader comprehension of the possible ethics, motives, and forms of exchange in modern society.[14]

At their most extreme, theorists in the Hobbesian tradition imagined individual self-interest to be a complete definition of human motivation and a satisfactory explanation for all the actions that take place in human society, including seeming acts of kindness, generosity, and service to others. Smith disagreed and offered an account of the admirable and generous kinds of behavior observable in a modern commercial society. While he did not offer an analysis of what we after Mauss would call the gift, he clearly identified the competition for social recognition that would be central to Mauss's analysis of gift exchange. His works made the case that, in Offer's language, the economy of the market and the economy of regard could be complementary in modern society.

## Friedrich List, German Economics, and the Turn to History

A programmatic turn to historical imagination in order to understand social behavior – and, eventually, an appreciation of gift giving as a socially binding form of mutual obligation – came from economic thinkers in Germany. They took a different approach to traditional societies because they perceived their own region as a latecomer to modernization. Beginning in the late eighteenth century they confronted British industrialization as an import; at the same time, they worked in a period of extraordinary creativity and determination to maintain the distinctiveness of German culture. Starting out from this consciousness of difference, German thinkers developed an acute sense of the local and temporal conditions of any cultural development. This historical consciousness extended to economics: German thinkers criticized the abstract models of British economists, which, they claimed, universalized from what was in fact a peculiarly British path to a liberal industrial economy. In reaction they developed their own conceptions of how Germany should follow a path of its own, and they founded their historicism in historical research and schemas that tried to account for the specificity of economic developments in different times and places.[15]

The early nineteenth-century German thinker who may be called the founder of historical economics was Friedrich List. A combination of publicist and economic thinker, List is still remembered today for his advocacy of a railroad system and a tariff-free zone among the different German states. With these goals in mind, List put his finger on the economic mechanisms that could break down the barriers to trade between the different German states and create a unified national economy. He was not a nationalist in the

later sense of a radical exponent of one's own nation at the expense of all others. Rather, he is best understood as a member, by training and for a while by occupation, of the enlightened civil servant class which in different parts of Central Europe observed the modernization of countries to the west and sought to force the pace of German industrialization and nation building.[16]

List came from a wealthy family in Württemberg, a small principality in the southwest of Germany that was notable for its enlightened civil service, universities, and vigorous parliamentary traditions. In 1805, as a sixteen-year-old apprentice, List began a promising career as a civil servant, professor, and member of the Württemberg parliament. His agitation for eliminating internal tolls in German-speaking Europe – the first step toward dissolving individual principalities and forming a nation-state – created enemies; in 1820 the Württemberg authorities accused him of slandering the state and threatened him with imprisonment. After fleeing to Paris and returning to Stuttgart, the Württemberg capital, only to be imprisoned, he was released and went to the United States in 1825. He once again launched a successful career, buying a farm in Virginia and publishing economic advice for his adopted country. List returned to Europe in 1830 as American consul to different states, including his native Württemberg. In 1841, while still living in Germany, he published his main work, *The National System of Political Economy*, which summarized his arguments for taking local conditions and political interests into account as part of the logic of any economic system.[17]

In the United States, List found the laboratory for his stage theory of history. Here he could see the recapitulation of all the advances from savage wilderness to civilization. Although he had traveled already through Austria, North Germany, Hungary, Switzerland,

France, and England, it was in the United States, he wrote, that he left his books behind. Life was the best teacher, he realized after crossing the Atlantic. "One sees wildernesses turn into rich and powerful states here. For the first time here, the development by stages of economies became clear to me. A process that in Europe required several centuries, takes place here before our eyes – namely the transition from a savage condition to a pastoral condition, and from there to manufacturing and commerce." The simple farmer, he continued, understood better than the sharpest intellectuals of the Old World how to improve his agriculture and earnings: by bringing manufacturing into his vicinity. Contrary to the teaching that the former colony should remain an agricultural nation, providing raw materials for industrial Britain, Americans asserted their economic independence, turning themselves into a nation of trade and industry. In this way they were masters of their own destiny and makers of their own nation-state.[18]

It was exciting for List to see how quickly the United States was making the transformation. The stages of economic history that he outlined – from wilderness, to pastoral life, to agriculture, to trade and manufacturing – were a convention of eighteenth-century theorists. For Enlightenment thinkers this schema outlined a historical development that had taken place over centuries and indeed reached back thousands of years. List instead infused the schema with a sense of urgency: Rapid change could, and was, taking place in their own time. If the United States could pass through the stages of historical development so quickly, then German states, too, could accelerate the pace of their economic modernization. List belonged to a generation of educated Europeans who visited the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century and were impressed by its abrupt movement from wilderness to settlement and industrialization.

Most Germans of his class were more ambivalent about this bustling new civilization; they were impressed by its energetic mastery of an entire continent but deplored its lack of high culture and returned with their loyalty to Europe enhanced. Democratic liberal that he was, List reacted more like the ordinary immigrants who saw in the United States a land free from the restrictions that had frustrated them in German society. List returned to Europe, but with a missionary belief in the twin goals of economic and political strength. The enemy throughout his book was British economic and political hegemony; he preached a revolutionary doctrine of overcoming dependence just as the United States had done.[19]

List's economic history was a part of a larger movement in the first half of the nineteenth century to make sense out of the rapid political and economic transformations of the age. With the French Revolution in recent memory and Britain's industrial and imperial hegemony unfolding before their eyes, many educated Germans (and other continental Europeans) had a dramatic vision of humanity in motion. List could not, like British observers, claim a comfortable sense of ascendancy for his German nation-in-the-making as he observed these rapid processes of change; rather he urged his compatriots to take part as aggressively as they could, to become participants in the transformations of their time. At first sight his economic theory does not seem to have contributed to an understanding of traditional societies compared to the writings of his eighteenth-century liberal predecessors. If anything, with his missionary excitement over the possibilities of modernization, he was less discerning than Smith.[20] Yet List's attention to the specificity of German conditions, together with his insistence on starting with its specific needs and culture, were the first approximation of a method of thinking about the historical particularity of different

societies. It was this training in recognizing historical particularity that sensitized German scholars to the contrasting legal and economic forms of different eras and, eventually, the importance in traditional societies of gift exchange.

### Karl Bücher and the Making of Economic Anthropology

List's writings were the point of departure for a widespread German rebellion against classical British economic theory. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, German economic thinkers instead self-consciously struck out on the different path of a historical school of economics. Following his example, the historical economists worked as contemporary policy advocates and analysts, writing histories that led to policy prescriptions. The rapid and disruptive industrialization of Germany after mid-century, which accelerated after Prussia's unification of German from 1864 to 1871, turned them from reporters of distant news of British factories and colonies into experts on the most urgent domestic policy issues. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the newly created German Empire seethed with class division and with the dislocations caused by the shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy. It was not unusual for historical economists to ground their contemporary advice in social evolutionary schemas and in detailed historical research on earlier eras. Medieval, ancient, and prehistoric economies could demonstrate how different was the economic logic of different times and places and, the economists hoped, could deepen their insight into the choices facing Germany in the present. Despite their country's success at nation building and industrialization, German social scientists retained habits of historicization inherited from earlier nineteenth-century scholarship and curiosity about the mentality of traditional societies.

Their leading forum for debating contemporary policy issues was the Social Policy Association (*Verein für Sozialpolitik*), founded in 1873. The combative professors who were its leading members struggled to influence the direction of a newly founded nation, powerful beyond their grandparents' dreams, and argued over policy decisions that became fateful for Germany and the world. The opponents within the organization ranged from an Anglophile liberal like Lujo Brentano, who stood for free trade in economics and civic freedoms in politics and society, to conservative "state socialists" like Gustav Schmoller and Adolph Wagner, adherents of the Prussian tradition of state entrepreneurship, regulation, and control of civic life. There was also a generational divide, in style and substance, between older economists who felt more comfortable with German state traditions and younger economists including Max Weber and Werner Sombart who affirmed the distinctiveness of modern capitalist society and the need to develop new analytical tools to understand it.[21]

One of the visitors to its first public gathering in the fall of 1874 was Karl Bücher, then a schoolteacher, in later years a professor of economics and leader of the association. Bücher once had a great reputation that extended to the Anglo-American world as late as the 1920s. His theories of primitive economics were an important part of his critique of classical economics. They became an important point of departure for the economic anthropology of Malinowski, whose *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) made gift exchange a central topic of anthropology and influenced Mauss's essay on the gift.

In the mid-1870s, at a time of middle-class anxiety about subversive working-class politics, Bücher's presence at the Social Policy Association's first meeting led to rumors at the Gymnasium where he was teaching, a private school named the Wöhlerschule

in Frankfurt, that he was a socialist. Actually he was commissioned by one of Germany's leading liberal papers, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, to report on the first and subsequent annual meetings. In the fall of 1878, Leopold Sonnemann, his editor, offered him a permanent position at the newspaper, which he took for a year and a half, writing on economics and social policy before going on to a university career and an appointment as professor of economics at the University of Leipzig in 1892. In the Social Policy Association he occupied a differentiated position as a liberal, but a historically sensitive one. Like Brentano he was generally an advocate of free trade, but without Brentano's admiration for the theory and practice of free trade in Britain; he was older than Max Weber in years, yet Weber urged him to stay active in the organization as a leader of the younger generation. Bücher was an expert on the modern newspaper (a subject that also interested Weber), but he retained a sensitivity to small-town and country life that went back to his childhood as the son of a village carpenter. He was a historical economist who combined attention to contemporary social issues with archival research in medieval urban history, and synthesized theory with insight into local conditions.[22]

The work that made Bücher's reputation – and stimulated anthropological discussion and debate into the 1920s – was *The Origin of National Economies* (*Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft*). This was a collection of essays which attempted along the lines of Friedrich List to develop a stage theory of the emergence of the modern economy. Bücher recognized List as the founder of the historical school of economics, but filled in his own narrative with deeper historical research and greater sensitivity to the specific features of different historical eras. The first edition of 1893 began with a critical reflection on the state of liberal thinking in Germany: Until

deep in the 1860s, he wrote, a widely held German view was that the state should leave the economy alone, but in his own time no educated person would deny that the state had serious and difficult economic responsibilities. Since the 1830s, he continued, resistance had grown to classical English and French economics, with its laissez-faire consequences for economic policy; this had led to a new direction, the historical school. The laissez-faire moment appeared no longer to be a state of nature, but rather a phase of economic history, with limited validity for society and economic doctrine. Economic laws, he wrote, were social laws that could be modified. As practiced by the historical school economics no longer tried just to understand the workings of contemporary economies, but rather the stages by which economies had developed toward their present state as integrated national economies.[23]

Bücher took as the point of departure for his developmental scheme a critique of the assumptions of Adam Smith and Ricardo about the state of nature. They took for granted that economies were always commercial economies with a division of labor. Smith posited a natural impulse to exchange; Ricardo treated primitive hunters and fishermen as capitalist entrepreneurs. Bücher argued that ethnological research had invalidated their assumption of inborn trading instincts. A historically sensitive study would show that human beings had only slowly developed systems of exchange and that the national economy of the modern era was the product of a millennium-long historical development. In the second edition of *The Origin of National Economies*, published in 1898, he dug deeper into "primitive" economics in order to challenge the assumptions of the classical economists. The first edition had already doubted that a single set of values determined economic behavior in all times and places; in making this point he was following the historical school's

general line of critique. In the second edition, he followed this logic backward to the classical school's axioms about human nature in a chapter on "the original economic state" ("Der wirtschaftliche Urzustand"). The opening lines of the essay tenaciously parsed the logic of classical economy. All scientific observation of economic behavior, he wrote, assumed that human beings had an "economic nature" and a principle of seeking the greatest possible satisfaction in return for the least amount of effort. One could seek the origins of this economic behavior in the natural instincts of self-preservation and self-interest. And yet, he continued, the satisfaction of these instincts had to take place through a series of intellectual steps: estimating the degree of displeasure of not satisfying a need, estimating the displeasure of doing work to achieve an end, comparing the two forms of displeasure, and deciding which involves the lesser sacrifice. These were not instinctual forms of behavior, but rather (as we would say today) historically specific choices.[24]

Economic man, and more important, the *values* of economic man, were the historical and logical beginning he wished to historicize: his aim was to stop projecting backwards from the mentality of one's contemporaries and instead come to an empirical knowledge of the distinctive psychological make-up of economic actors in different times and places. Economic behavior as the rational exercise of choice between alternatives for a minimum effort and a maximization of gain was acquired behavior; entire societies had had to acquire it, and every child had to relearn it; mature adults in modern society followed it to differing degrees. If there was not a natural economic behavior intrinsic to human beings in all times and places, then there must be a history to the acquisition of this kind of activity, with its many peculiar characteristics of saving, foresight, division of labor, and systematic exercise of choice between

alternatives. Bücher believed that a stage theory could portray the advancement of humanity through a logical succession of advances. Such a historicization of economic development required an anthropological origin from which one could define peoples' original nature and potentialities. Bücher insisted on the need for thoroughgoing empiricism in putting together a model of this earliest stage. No more "Robinsonades" wanted – no more of the classical economists' fanciful parables of earliest man; instead the starting point for his evolutionary history of economic behavior was to be gathered from the evidence of travelers and ethnographers.[25]

Putting together an empirical model of natural man was easier said than done, however. Bücher was not fully aware of the extent to which theorists in Europe had been making earnest attempts to do just that since the eighteenth century. His readings hardly extended beyond German sources, but British and French authors had also made serious efforts in scientific expeditions to find man in a state of nature, only to become more and more bewildered as they encountered the diversity of indigenous societies, including those within a single cultural and ethnic grouping like Polynesia. The evolutionary schemes that proliferated by the mid-nineteenth century arose partly in response to the flood of reports that were reaching Europe. By creating a succession of stages, European theorists could expand beyond the limits of a single category and try to order various peoples into different degrees of advancement toward northern European civilization. For his part Bücher was skeptical of attempts to find a people so primitive that it was actually a vestige of the state of nature. Nonetheless he went on to argue that one could deduce a model of what must have been humanity's original condition and was only partially able to shake off the speculative anthropology that he criticized.[26]

In Bücher's construction, primitive peoples – the ones he designated as such from around the world, and the earliest human beings whom they supposedly resembled – wandered in small groups like packs of animals, looking for food, taking shelter in caves or under a tree, the men armed with bow and arrow; they were shy toward more civilized people, but treacherous and dangerous. Despite this superficially collective existence, it was every man for himself; they had no loyalty to one another as each person struggled to survive. Their families were only loose groupings that easily fell apart, and even the relationship between mother and child hardly lasted. This primitive man lived for the moment. He did not think about the future; in fact he did not think at all; self-preservation was his foremost motivation. Wherever Europeans met Bücher's primitive man – in Brazil, Australia, Africa, or North America – they were impressed by his stupidity. All that this being cared about was eating and sleeping. The instinct for self-preservation was spatially restricted to the single individual, temporally to the needs of the moment: "In other words: the savage thinks only of himself and he thinks only of the present." Primitive man in his earliest state, concluded Bücher, had nothing to do with economics, for economics always presumed the circulation of goods within a society that demanded a goal orientation, valuation of things, regulation of their use, and transmission of cultural achievements from generation to generation that were beyond his reach.[27]

By returning to the assumption that human beings were by nature individualists driven by the struggle for survival, Bücher's model fit squarely into the liberal tradition. There was a clear lineage from Hobbes's original society, in which life was nasty, brutish, and short, to Bücher's cruel and selfish indigenous peoples. Novel in Bücher's presentation was his historicization of the brutishness. His primitives

were not yet rational actors, since rationality, with its thought for the future, was itself a mental trait acquired over millennia. Modern Europeans were not just natural men who had learned that their own self-interest depended on curbing their instincts and getting along with their fellow human beings; they were the inheritors of a long process of learning to think beyond the moment so that they could recognize an interest and the means to achieve it. This was liberalism with an added psychological dimension, which asked how the individual's categories of thought and forms of interaction with other human beings were themselves historically contingent.

Bücher's decision to add a new chapter had another context that made it a timely contribution to debates of the mid-1890s. Bismarck began to experiment with acquiring African colonies for Germany in the mid-1880s, but he did so half-heartedly; his attention was firmly focused on European great-power diplomacy, and the building of a world empire was at most a sideshow to further German business interests or distract dissatisfied middle-class intellectuals. After his departure from the office of imperial chancellor in 1890, a revolution in foreign policy began: The German Empire maintained its colonies in east and southwest Africa, added Pacific islands and other bits of territories to its colonial possessions, and debated about how far to push colonial expansion.[28]

Bücher advertised his newly discovered "primitive" stage of proto-economic development as an adjunct to Germany's new-found imperial mission. He began a lecture in 1897 by pointing out the connection to contemporary politics: "Ever since the German Empire acquired its colonial possessions, interest in primitive peoples and their way of life has come alive for us in a way entirely different from before." Scholars could not avoid the feeling "that the results of ethnology could some day be immediately practical, that namely

a far-sighted colonial policy might make use of them." This was true above all for economic scholarship, since economic considerations had motivated the policies of colonial expansion in the first place. But, he wrote, there was a gap in contemporary knowledge: "[H]ow little we know about the economics of the peoples and tribes whose fate is in our hands!" Travelers had recorded information about everything from flora and fauna to religious ideas, but on the whole they had ignored everyday life: how people satisfied their needs, set up their households, and shaped material life; at most they related how to use the tools and weapons that were piling up in ethnological museums. His own work gathered up the little scraps that were known about the economics of *Naturvölker* and gave his readers a first impression of "savage" institutions.[29]

Bücher's essay ended with a call for sensitivity to traditional economic forms, since disregard for them led to the destruction of native societies. He pleaded for a cautious modernization that would gradually transform native economies, but with respect for the historical conditions and appropriate means of change. In this way he introduced economic anthropology into German public life as an aid to colonial administration. Overall Bücher was vastly overconfident about the reliability of the ethnographic literature he was depending on: With rare exceptions even the best recorders of traditional communities in the German colonies did so with naïve assumptions about European cultural and racial superiority; at the same time German (and other European) observers underestimated the complexity of indigenous societies and the difficulties of reaching generalizations about them. The imperial atmosphere of the late nineteenth century was irresistible and intoxicating for most Europeans, and Bücher's writings were permeated by it. While he prided himself on his empiricism, he also indulged in speculation

about the historical development of traditional societies and disregarded their local features in order to fit them into his developmental speculations. Nonetheless his critique of ahistorical generalizations about economic motivations guided further study of exchange behavior in different times and places. He pointed in the direction that later led Malinowski and other, better-equipped scholars to the analysis of traditional communities on their own terms, including their practice of gift exchange.[30]

## Bücher and the Return of the Gift

Gift giving figured in Bücher's talk as an important means of economic exchange in premodern societies. One of his chief arguments for the historicization of economics was that commercial exchange was not a timeless feature of human societies, but rather a feature of a late stage of economic development. In the first epoch of his stage theory of economic history, production was exclusively household production. Within the household, there was a modest division of labor between men and women, but there were no specialized craft skills to distinguish one household from another – a claim he applied to indigenous peoples around the world. No exchange in a meaningful sense took place, and there were no markets, because there was nothing to be gained by going outside the basic social unit. While there might be a limited exchange from household to household or tribe to tribe in order to balance out talents and techniques, this did not amount to an organized exchange for profit carried out by specialists in trade. There could not be commerce in the economist's sense because occupational specialization was lacking; the differentiation of households was not sharp enough to make them dependent on one another.[31] Bücher was deeply

wedded to the idea of the autarkic or self-sufficient household, and he applied it with a remarkable disregard for centuries of travelers' accounts and contemporary reports of trade in virtually every part of the world.

Bücher was not entirely indifferent to the evidence against his idea of the autarkic household, and to defend it he used the example of gift exchange as a seeming alternative to market trading. Travelers, he conceded, reported markets and trade in many places, and arrowheads traveled far and wide through the American continent; so too prehistoric European gravesites contained objects that had traveled from afar. But these objects had not traveled through commercial exchange; rather they had come as gifts. Along with theft, booty, tribute, punishment, compensation, and winnings from games, gift giving explained the transmission of objects over long distances. Between tribes the rules of hospitality applied, and they were pretty much the same among all *Naturvölker*. The stranger received a present on his arrival, which after a time he matched with a present of his own, and this in turned was reciprocated with a second present given on his departure. These gift exchanges accounted for the wide diffusion of objects observed by travelers. Thus, he saw the role of gift giving in primitive societies – and did not see it; he turned to it to fill a gap in his theory of the closed household only to keep it apart from any economic role and any significant social function.

Later Bücher went beyond this threshold to a fuller appreciation of gift exchange as a living social institution, one that mattered for his contemporaries as well as traditional communities. In a remarkable essay published at the end of World War I, Bücher returned to it with a greater appreciation of its binding power. It was only an essay; yet it anticipated a fully developed theory of the gift.[32]

From the time Bücher published his early editions of *The Origin of National Economies* in the 1890s to the end of World War I, a new generation of increasingly professionalized anthropologists in Western Europe and the United States began to challenge the racial and evolutionary conceptions of mid- to late nineteenth-century anthropologists. In particular the work of Berlin-trained Franz Boas criticized evolutionary anthropology and provided striking evidence of gift giving among the native communities of the Pacific Northwest that was far more complex, and interwoven with political and religious institutions, than anything ever imagined before. Bücher did not cite Boas in his essay, but he drew on a work that did make use of Boas's research and Edward Westermack's anthropologically informed history of moral concepts: a 1914 Leipzig dissertation by Wilhelm Gaul on the gift.[33]

Gaul felt his way, in his introduction, toward a cultural anthropology. He began by citing the demand for "equal rights for all peoples in research as elsewhere" and calling for a universal cultural science. To be sure, he continued to use the division between *Naturvolk* and *Kulturvolk*, but he did so with a new uneasiness, criticizing the term *Naturvolk* for ignoring the "intellectual and cultural side" ("geistige Seite") of indigenous peoples and retaining it only until something better could be found. More important, Gaul struck out on his own method of understanding them. One could try to approach them through language, but instead he chose another subject: "a general human structure that however is reflected especially clearly in the life of primitive peoples (*Naturvölker*) as one encounters them in practically every travel work, but which has not yet been the object of a cohesive description: *the gift in its form and contents*, the gift in its various manifestations and motives."[34] This was a notable revision of the methodology that had hitherto guided anthropology and its

predecessors. European study of foreign cultures had been logocentric: Even the most sympathetic and insightful calls for insight into non-European worlds assumed that verbal language was the medium for understanding them. Gaul was instead opening up another avenue that had to do with ritual, performance, and everyday life.

Gaul called for the study of the gift as a human institution that had existed throughout human history and remained relevant to the present. With this program as his starting point, he puzzled over the relationship between the modern, altruistic conception of gift giving and the ancient conception that always implied a return gift: Could two such different ideas both be encompassed within a single category? In different ways, conceptual and historical, Gaul tried to define their relationship. "What is striking at once about the 'modern' gift," he wrote, "is the much freer relationship (*Verkehr*) between giver and receiver … which is based on the much freer relationship between individuals and a complete control over one's property. In both respects the subordinating force of normative as well as economic expectations of older eras is foreign to modern times." Social relations, legal relations, values and economic exchange – all had undergone a transformation, observed Gaul in a sentence that was a program for study of the many-sided implications of gift giving. The traditional gift gave way to other social forms: to the impersonal demands for tax and toll in the public sphere, in contrast to the personal tribute of older times, and to a personalization of the gift in the presents that accompanied engagement and marriage. It was a welcome development according to Gaul, who viewed it as part of the emancipation of the individual from the personal domination that went along with traditional gift giving and the creation of a private sphere personalized as never before. The gifts for events like engagement and marriage were not

a shriveled remainder of the public gifts of old; rather they embodied the emergence of a sphere of personal autonomy. Gaul wrote in the spirit of a historically informed liberalism that appreciated the traditional importance of the gift, even as it affirmed the changing definition of the gift in modern societies.[35]

Drawing on Gaul and other hints in ethnology and medieval studies, Bücher outlined practices of gift giving that were widespread, continuous, and systematic enough to be a cohesive social institution. He emphasized that "primitive" gift giving implied reciprocity: "Gift giving plays a large role among primitive peoples (*Naturvölker*) everywhere … But the gifts are never given without expectation of a response, in the expectation of a return gift, whose character the initial giver can help to decide." This kind of gift giving set in motion obligations: The gift giver sought to win the favor of the recipient and to profit from it. Bücher had changed his mind: He now recognized that regularized exchanges for personal interest did exist before the development of modern commerce, and that the medium of this earlier form of exchange was the gift. One could find evidence of this kind of gift-giving among *Naturvölker*, he wrote, in any travel book.[36]

Bücher still wrote about primitives versus cultured Europeans. But the divide disintegrated as he now turned to the European past for evidence of gift giving. In Germany itself the word *schenken* (meaning "to pour," and the root of the word *Geschenk* or "gift") revealed the deep history of gift giving in the simplest gestures, such as offering drinks, in the ancient past. Going through folklore literature, he pointed out how common gifts had been for important life events in Europe, above all marriage; the much-discussed purchase of women, he wrote, was nothing other than a gift to the bride's father. And, he added, the magician, the medicine man, and the singer all expected

their gift before they did their work. Striking out in another direction that since his time has regularly stimulated commentary, he made note of hospitality as a specialized case of gift giving: The gift helps the foreigner get a protector and the possibility of safe stay or passage. The loaning of tools, he noted, was ignored by anthropologists, but he remembered it from his own village boyhood, when nothing was more firmly established than helping out with the fruit tree ladder, the scale, the plough, the saw, or the draught animal; no one was compelled to lend, but whoever refused would soon have a reputation for unfriendliness. He also called prescient attention to objects that were removed from commercial exchange, especially weapons and jewelry, because they formed an essential part of an individual's personality. This anticipated a theme that was absent from discussions of the gift until Annette Weiner rediscovered it in her ingenious study of these "inalienable possessions."[37] Bücher's essay had no resonance among his contemporaries; rather, it and Gaul's dissertation were symptoms of a shift in attitudes and knowledge that would turn the gift into a prominent subject of scholarly discussion during the 1920s.

Bücher returned to the gift in a deeply felt way, embedding it in European history and personal memory. Before, in his writings from the 1890s, the gift was simply an insufficient form of exchange, one prior to commerce. Now it appeared as a great social force in its own right, for Bücher understood that the power of the gift had to do with its invocation of reciprocity; it set in motion obligations that wove individuals together into a social whole. In contrast to his earlier, relentlessly modernizing historical model in which the higher economic forms displaces the lower, he now discovered an ancient form of social exchange in the present. The gift, he concluded, had not disappeared despite initial appearances: Consider

the foundations and charity lists of his own time, and one could see that human beings remained what they had been in the earliest times, selfish, but attentive to returns that were not always material. The gift economy was a reminder that there was more human goodness than one might otherwise imagine. It would be terrible, he observed in the last lines of the essay, to imagine a German future in which unpaid assistance in different forms had been entirely eliminated. World War I was a moment when one could observe the extremes of selflessness and selfishness: the renunciation of personal interests and sacrifice of labor and life by civilians and soldiers from the opening days of the conflict; the profiteering and re-emergence of class conflict by its end. During the same period Bücher shook loose from his earlier conceptions to a novel appreciation of the need for binding social obligations. The gift made its passage in his essay from an outsider to an insider to European history and contemporary society.[38]

The liberal tradition looks at first like a dead end for thinking about the gift: Its emancipation of the individual as a being motivated by self-interest seemed to lead purely in the direction of a commercial society devoted to the maximization of gain through contract and exchange. Yet we can distinguish between the utilitarian current which at its narrowest in thinkers like Mandeville and James Mill relied entirely on individual self-interest for its explanation of human behavior and a broader liberal tradition that recognized a greater variety of human motives. The acknowledgment of the pursuit of status and other motives complementary to the pursuit of pleasure goes all the way back to Hobbes. While the cruder Mandeville could only scoff at gift giving, Adam Smith developed an analysis of moral behavior in modern society that was compatible with expressions of mutual recognition in systems of

gift exchange. A separate development took place in nineteenth-century Germany: the emergence over several generations of a historical school of economics that tried to analyze the distinctive motives of human beings in different eras. Karl Bücher extended historical economics to indigenous peoples and by doing so made an early attempt at economic anthropology. A novel approach to the gift emerged in his 1918 essay, in which the divisions between the primitive and the modern, the old gift-giving society and the modern commercial society, started to dissolve. There was never a liberal tradition entirely without the gift, and by the second decade of the twentieth century, Bücher, always a thinker capable of surprises, signaled the gift's arrival as a subject for theoretical discourse.

# 3. The Selfless "Savage"

## *Theories of Primitive Communism*

The liberal tradition mapped out the logic of a modern society made up of emancipated individuals, who might voluntarily join together for different purposes but who retained a high degree of freedom to pursue their individual ends. An antitraditionalist like Mandeville who wished to affirm the emerging freedoms of modern society could do so with little or no reference to the gift. Thinkers with greater breadth could ponder the inadequacies of a society that ran only on self-interest; they could appreciate the mutual obligations of traditional European society and the important place of voluntary acts of generosity in modern society. But gift giving remained a secondary topic, a historical memory or a corrective to modern society's unprecedented freedom from the past's dense network of dues. As late as the eighteenth century, Europeans went from one gift-giving society – their own – to other gift-giving societies overseas. But by the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans had little comprehension of the colonial societies they were attempting to subdue and rule. Even though gift networks had by no means disappeared at home, pragmatic administrators, soldiers, and businessmen had difficulty understanding the rudimentary social expectations of the people they were supposed to turn

into peaceful, productive subjects. A sophisticated social scientist like Karl Bücher struggled with limited success to understand the nonmarket rules of indigenous economies.

In contrast to the liberal tradition, which approached indigenous peoples only gingerly and indirectly, communitarian currents of thought beginning in the late eighteenth century could lead to a sympathetic interest in peoples who were supposed to be the embodiment of a premodern human community. Liberals started out from the presumption that human beings either acted as self-interested individuals or behaved with a childlike immaturity that did not even qualify as self-interested. Those thinkers who rejected the acquisitive behavior of modern societies had a different relationship to traditional communities: for an alternative to selfish individualism they might turn to remote times and places in search of republics of virtue. Whereas liberals viewed indigenous peoples as collections of ego-driven individuals, these influential critics of modernity viewed them as selfless communitarians. Their vision of a primitive communism in remote antiquity, imperfectly preserved in modern indigenous communities, was a powerfully argued alternative to the liberal vision of a timeless human individualism. It was also, however, a misunderstanding of the role of generosity and self-interest in traditional communities that anthropologists by the end of the nineteenth century were disputing on their way to grasping the importance of gift exchange.

The communitarian thinkers of the nineteenth century had historical antecedents in the long line of civic humanist thinkers who wished to drill republican virtues into the citizens of modern states and nation-states and who protested the softening of these virtues as commerce and trade corroded loyalty to the public good. We should not imagine too neat a succession from early modern

utopias of a virtuous republic to nineteenth-century visions of community. Nineteenth-century thinkers faced their own, novel intellectual challenges as they confronted the shattering of traditional European communities in the wake of French Revolution and industrialization, which introduced forms of individualism and democratic political participation unknown to earlier generations. Nonetheless, the inherited discourse of earlier travel writers and humanists continued to inform the perceptions of later intellectuals. In particular the image of North American Indians as hardy warriors and eloquent speakers who thought only of the collective good, widely adopted by the French philosophes of the eighteenth century, had a long afterlife as the model of primitive community.[1]

## Adam Ferguson and the Rude Republic of Virtue

One of the outstanding advocates of a civic humanism inspired by traditional communities was Adam Ferguson. A friend of Adam Smith and David Hume, Ferguson was appointed in 1759 to the chair of natural philosophy at the University of Edinburgh. His *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, published eight years later, asked what kind of society nurtures "a vigorous and cultivated spirit." Not, he answered, "great and opulent cities" in which rivalry is the rule, or court life and its hypocrisies, but "a situation where the great sentiments of the hearts are awakened."[2] He found the great public virtues in the "rude nations" who were the subject of the second part of his work, notably the native tribes of North America. Many Enlightenment writers admired the Iroquois and Hurons as the Spartans of the New World, but Ferguson was not just writing out of books: he had traveled in North America, spent time among Indians, and wrote from firsthand knowledge. It was not unusual,

however, for the perceptions of travelers to be so strongly shaped by their readings that they reaffirmed the ongoing discourse, using their personal experiences to legitimate rather than act as a critical check on it. Ferguson's praise of primitive communities looked back to the civic humanism of earlier generations and anticipated the idealization of them in democratic social theories of the nineteenth century.

Ferguson associated gifts with the corruption of an aristocratic society. He confidently repeated the belief of Pierre François de Charlevoix, a famous eighteenth-century Jesuit traveler to North America, that American Indians disdained gifts:

> This writer has observed, that the nations among whom he traveled in North America, never mentioned acts of generosity or kindness under the notion of duty. They acted from affection, as they acted from appetite, without regard to its consequences. When they had done a kindness, they had gratified a desire; the business was finished, and it passed from memory. When they received a favour, it might, or it might not, prove the occasion of friendship: if it did not, the parties appeared to have no apprehensions of gratitude, as a duty by which the one was bound to make a return, or the other intitled to reproach the person who had failed in his part. The spirit with which they give or receive presents, is the same which Tacitus observed among the ancient Germans: They delight in them, but do not consider them as matters of obligation. Such gifts are of little consequence, except when employed as the seal of a bargain or treaty.[3]

This is a revealing passage for the assumptions about human nature underlying Ferguson's conception of human society. Ferguson, like Charlevoix before him, understood perfectly well that a gift carries with it an obligation. "Rude societies" in their natural state, however, were supposed to be too selfless to behave in a calculating way toward their fellow human beings; they acted on the strength of their civic-mindedness. The absence of gifts was part

of the general straightforwardness and freedom of these societies, qualities Ferguson admired even though he thought of "savages" as rather simple-minded. Along the same lines, property for the "savage" warrior was "in reality a mark of subjection" and best left to the womenfolk.[4] With a look back to Charlevoix, Ferguson conjured up a historical phantom that would continue to haunt social thinkers during the nineteenth century, the notion of tribal peoples as primitive communists. It was nurtured on the humanist myth of Germanic tribesmen and their warrior virtues that went back to Tacitus, but it anticipated the nineteenth-century dream of a selfless human community that was indifferent to the notion of private property.[5] Such a community could not exchange gifts, which implied a more possessive personality than these thinkers were willing to admit into their primitive utopia.

The theory of primitive communism rose to great political and intellectual prominence through the anthropological speculations of Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx. They were indebted to Lewis Henry Morgan, an American anthropologist about whom they knew almost nothing, but whose writings included an evolutionary account of primitive communism, which they took over and made their own. Beginning with Morgan and continuing through the two great socialist thinkers, this conception of an original altruistic community became a barrier to understanding the balance between self-interest and social obligation that later anthropologists observed in gift exchange.

## Lewis Henry Morgan on Kinship and Community

After the death of Karl Marx in 1883, Friedrich Engels worked his way through his departed friend and collaborator's papers. Among

them were Marx's notes on his readings about primitive society, which impressed Engels as an incomplete project waiting for a caretaker. He knew some of the material from their correspondence and discussions, but one important work captured his imagination as he read: Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society*. Going back to Morgan's book Engels was so struck by its fit with his and Marx's historical materialism that he turned it into the core of his own book on human prehistory. In early April 1884 Engels started writing, and less than two months later – by late May 1884 – he had finished. The title of the book acknowledged its intellectual debt: *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State: Following the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan*. The book was a fantastic success, one of the most widely purchased and translated that Marx or Engels ever wrote.[6]

Engels was able to tell his readers very little about Morgan himself; he knew only that he was an American from Rochester, New York. Morgan was actually a well-known public figure, however. He had published one of his books with the Smithsonian Institute and was a member of learned societies; leading British scholars including Charles Darwin (who was greatly admired by Marx and Engels) welcomed him when he visited their country. At first sight it might seem strange that Engels was not more familiar with his name and work. But then, they came from different worlds: Engels came from a Rhineland German family and had spent most of his life as a revolutionary socialist in British exile; Morgan was a well-to-do lawyer from upstate New York who had barely moved from where he was born and raised, had respectably married, and was in regular attendance with his wife at the local Presbyterian church – altogether a "classical" example (as Engels might have said) of the kind of bourgeois whom he and Marx satirized in their writings. Despite their differences, Engels perceived a deep affinity in his and Morgan's

philosophy of history. Morgan's research into the Indians of North America added up to a confirmation of his and Marx's hunches about the earliest human societies and the evolution of mankind to their own time and beyond.[7]

Morgan was a more complicated figure than stereotypes of profession and social standing might suggest. (So for that matter was Engels, famously a manager of his family's factories in Manchester who hunted and socialized with the local gentry.) He knew how to prosecute his clients' business in court, but he was also a legal defender of the local Senecas and a profound recorder and analyst of American Indian social organization. Alongside his social respectability and American patriotism, Morgan was a critical observer of industrialization and the formation of antidemocratic elites in mid-nineteenth-century America. His researches led him to a democratic humanism that closely matched Engels's vision of humanity's past and future socialism.

Morgan's birthplace, Aurora, New York, was a mixture of isolated small town and bustling business center in the years after Lewis Henry Morgan was born on a nearby farm in 1818. His father died in 1826 but left the family well enough off to send his son Lewis Henry to a private academy for secondary schooling and then to Union College in Schenectady. He pursued a career as any other moderately enterprising young man in his time and place might have done: After graduating from college he first went back in 1842 to live in his parents' house in Aurora, waiting out bad business times; two years later he moved to Rochester and set up a legal practice there. Morgan became a successful corporate lawyer who represented the interests of Rochester investors in the upper peninsula of Michigan. Mining operations were growing there, but it was difficult to transport the ore to Great Lake ports; Rochester

capitalists, including Morgan himself, invested in rail lines that could take the ore to the peninsula coast. The Michigan railroads were still a mainstay of his law practice as late as the Civil War. In addition Morgan had his own business venture in Michigan, a blast furnace called the Morgan Iron Company.[8]

Prosperous in his business career, Morgan also had a strong interest in politics and got elected to the New York state assembly; he also applied for diplomatic posts during the Grant presidency but despite strong Senate support was turned down four times. Morgan's professional and public experiences left him deeply concerned about the state of American society: He stood for small business interests against the giant capitalists of New York City and for the ideals of the early American republic against the corruption of the Grant era.[9] He made his peace with industrializing America, but with the ambivalence of an honest, able public man who consistently set himself against unscrupulous business practices and was concerned, after the Civil War, that they were becoming pervasive in the world around him.

Overlapping with his political interests, Morgan led a second life with American Indians. While living at home after graduating college he joined a young bachelors' society first called the Cayuga club but soon after renamed the Grand Order of the Iroquois. It started out as an amusement for the college graduates who were its members (a number of whom went on to prominent careers). For Morgan, however, it was the starting point for serious research into Indian society. By chance in a Rochester bookstore he met a young Seneca (one of the tribes that made up the Iroquois Confederacy) named Ely S. Parker (Hasanoanda). Parker, who came from a family of Indian leaders, was a remarkable man who stood at the beginning of his own career as an interpreter between Indian and white

society, fluent in the languages and cultures of each. The Grand Order elected Parker a member and sponsored his secondary education at a nearby secondary school, Aurora Academy. Later, Parker rose to high office in the Grant administration as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He was an agile intellectual and politician, skeptical toward white society but able to work with it as he advanced his own career and Seneca interests.[10]

When Morgan met Parker, the Senecas were struggling to fend off land speculators and preserve their reservation. The controversy went back to the time of Iroquois military defeat and accommodation with white society: By the Treaty of Big Tree in 1797 the federal government guaranteed the Iroquois's claim to their reservations, while the tribes for their part relinquished other land claims. The Senecas settled in the Buffalo area on four reservations whose rich soil and proximity to the growing town on Lake Erie soon attracted the attention of a group of speculators called the Ogden Land Company. In 1832 the speculators lobbied with the federal government to push the Senecas off their reservation and force them to migrate to new reservations in Wisconsin. While many chiefs signed new agreements in exchange for bribes, others on the Tonawanda reservation refused to move. Parker went to Washington in 1846 to lobby for the Senecas before President Polk and the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. Morgan for his part was outraged by the depredations of the Ogden Land Company and offered legal advice to the Senecas; supported by his friends in the Grand Order, he too went to Washington and held his own meetings with the president and the Senate committee while also visiting New York's governor, Silas Wright. The Tonawanda Senecas fought their case for ten more years until finally, in 1857, Congress guaranteed their title to the land.[11]

Morgan's knowledge of the Senecas grew out of this political collaboration. In the mid-1840s Morgan played the role of patron who helped arrange for the funding of Parker's education and lobbied for his tribe. When Morgan showed an interest in the workings of Iroquois society, Parker returned the favor, sharing his knowledge of the tribe's inner workings. Morgan and two friends asked to be adopted into the tribe on a visit to the Tonawanda reservation in 1846; it was Parker who interpreted and made possible Morgan's adoption despite the reluctance of some of the chiefs and indeed of Parker himself, who had his own mixed feelings about seeing a member of the conquering people received as one of their own. Morgan for his part had in these early years his own unsteady brew of attitudes toward his Indian interlocutors. During the time of the Grand Order he imagined himself and his brothers to be the new dispensation of "Iroquois" who would succeed the old; at the moment when the native Iroquois were supposed to be disappearing, the "new" Iroquois of young gentlemen would rescue their lore. Later Morgan's pessimism gave way to an insistence, unusual for his time, that the drastic decline in Iroquois population had leveled off and that they needed to be dealt with as valued members of American society.[12] We get a glimpse of Parker as a self-confident young man in a letter of February 1847 that he wrote to Morgan from Washington. He gave a crisp commentary on articles on the Iroquois that Morgan had recently published, approving of most of Morgan's account but correcting his impression that the Iroquois councils were held irregularly: "The position that they 'depended entirely upon exigencies' may be true in case of a sudden invasion or some great political disaster. The fact of it is, however, as I told you last fall, and now repeat to you, that their councils were annual, and always held at Onondaga." Beyond that he thought Morgan's

account was accurate but superficial: "You have merely detailed the facts in your possession, though I am aware that a great deal more might be adduced upon those very topics. But I have not time to go into a disquisition of them now. I shall look anxiously for more from your pen upon the Iroquois." Parker may have counted on Morgan for educational and political assistance, but he was a literate, independent-minded critic.[13]

On his marriage day in 1851, Morgan gave his bride, Mary Elizabeth Steel, a copy of his first book, the culmination and (he then thought) conclusion of his Indian researches: *League of the Iroquois*. It was a remarkable work for anyone to have written at any age, much less the first effort of a small-town lawyer with a provincial education. As Thomas Trautmann has noted, for hundreds of years French and other missionaries and travelers had written about the Iroquois. Yet with the exception of the early eighteenth-century Jesuit missionary Joseph-François Lafitau, whose work Morgan did not know when he wrote the book, Morgan was the first non-Indian to state in print that Iroquois, unlike Europeans, followed matrilinear principles of descent and social organization. When a man married he entered into the family of his wife, as did his children, living in one of the famous long houses, dwellings that could hold several generations and degrees of relation within a clan. Morgan turned this insight into the starting point for ever deeper thinking over the course of a lifetime about kinship as a principle of social organization. The next century of social anthropology – down to Claude Lévi-Strauss, who dedicated *his* seminal *Elementary Structures of Kinship* to Morgan – had its beginnings in Morgan's insight that matriarchy was not just a curiosity but a key to a different kind of social and legal system.[14]

Morgan thought of the Iroquois confederation as a pure and admirable form of political democracy. The study of kinship was

not the central aim of the book; rather it was above all a study of Iroquois *politics* and the underlying social forms that structured it. *The League of the Iroquois* was divided into three parts or books (as Morgan called them): the structure of the league, the spirit of the league, and incidental topics culminating in Morgan's reflections on American Indians' current crisis. The first book focused above all on the Iroquois's "civil organization," with its divisions into tribes and kinship organizations, councils, and public institutions. The Iroquois League, the confederation of the individual Iroquois tribes, was what Morgan called an oligarchy – a friendly term in his vocabulary, signifying a government by the few who depended in this society on the consent of the many. Or rather it was a union of oligarchies: altogether there were fifty sachemships, which collectively held supreme power over the confederation; while these were hereditary offices, each sachem had to be invested in his office at a ceremony that made him a legitimate ruler. Sachems, and beneath them chiefs, had entirely civic, peaceful powers and could not in this capacity take their people to war. Instead warriors, who were often chiefs as well, could organize war parties that required the sachem council's approval.[15] "In legislation, in eloquence, in fortitude and in military sagacity they had no equals," wrote Morgan: He thought of this combination of heredity and consent, separate tribes and confederate council, and separate civic and military leaders as elements of a carefully worked out political order. Morgan knew that he was not the first person to admire Iroquois political and military skills; but he dug beneath the institutional surface to understand the underlying social structure that made their confederation so enduring across their great era of expansion from the early seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century.

Morgan's work had little to say about give and take within Iroquois society. Even though the Iroquois traded among themselves and with white society, economics was almost absent from his descriptions. On the whole, his observations were organized around static categories, as nineteenth-century ethnographies usually were. When his book turned to analysis of social organization, it also emphasized fixed, self-contained structures. This matched Morgan's attempt to understand the stability underlying a tumultuous history of territorial expansion, incorporation of outsiders, and challenges from European invaders. For his understanding of economics Morgan turned to Enlightenment stage theories that defined American Indians as hunters. It was their passion for hunting, believed Morgan, that kept them in "their primitive state"; here was "the true reason, why the red race has never risen." Morgan thought that as far as possible the founders of the Iroquois League had instituted countervailing principles of political organization furthering a lasting, large-scale alliance, but that the tribes' perpetual movement and dispersal made it impossible for them to go beyond this confederation to form a more permanent and stable polity. Beyond this Morgan's insight into Iroquois economics petered out. He made incidental mention of wampum, for example, but its manifold meanings and uses – as an heirloom, as an instrument of diplomacy, and as a valuable with its own patterns of production and exchange – eluded him.[16] Morgan's book was a profound investigation of the social foundations of Iroquois political life, but it ignored all the negotiations for material and symbolic goods that later went by the name of gift exchange.

Morgan's next book went from ethnography to ethnology, from richly detailed and categorized description to a theoretical model

with worldwide applications: in it he laid the general foundation for the study of kinship that became one of the central preoccupations of anthropology for the next hundred years. His *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* attempted a worldwide mapping of family relations. He described the strange and surprising diversity of kinship systems in the book's introduction. As far back as 1846 he had run up against an unfamiliar system among the Iroquois, the matrilinear system of reckoning descent that was so much at odds with European conceptions of family continuity and personal identity; next in 1857 he discovered matrilinear kinship again among the Ojibwas (Chippewas) and realized that what had at first looked like an isolated invention of the Iroquois might in fact be a key to the unity of all Indian societies. One can see, in his description, how his penetrating scientific imagination grasped the implications of stray bits of knowledge and pressed them into the service of a general theory. If this system was universal among Indians, then it went back to the moment of their dispersal across the Americas; if they had it at the moment of their dispersal, then they must have brought it with them from Asia. Kinship thus became a document of deep human continuity, of structures of social organization going back to remote antiquity and unchanged by migration.[17]

Morgan's grand scheme of mapping out human kinship patterns took shape at the intersection of two disciplines. The historical linguistics of the nineteenth century had for decades been working to reconstruct the family tree of humanity by using the systematic evidence deposited in vocabulary and syntax. Since the late eighteenth century, the scientific community in Europe had become aware that Sanskrit had striking affinities to ancient Greek, Latin, and other European languages; drawing on these resemblances,

scholars spoke of a unified Indo-Germanic or Indo-European ethnic family that had dispersed in different directions from Asia to Europe. These were the "Aryan" peoples who had left an ancient record of their unity in their languages. One could compare them to other peoples who constituted separate linguistic groups, notably the "Semitic" peoples of the Mediterranean. In retrospect it is easy to see that this linguistic science smuggled in gross errors, beginning with its confusion of language and race (there is no reason to assume that speakers of a common language share a common biological lineage). But over the course of the nineteenth century it looked like the successful culmination of generations of research, illuminating a human past for which there was no documentary evidence. The historical study of language had the deceptive fascination of family genealogy. With the aid of words that disclosed deep identities, one could hail long-lost relatives (Anglo-Saxons and East Asian Indians suddenly became distant cousins) and discover a primal distance from the "Semites" in one's own society.[18]

Morgan turned these philological discussions of lineage back on the family itself. He organized human kinship systems along a grand divide: on the one side were the systems he called "descriptive," which he thought described the real, existing systems of biology descent. Above all the Aryan and Semitic peoples used descriptive kinship systems, with the Romans especially adept at developing a vocabulary and syntax of descent conforming to biological relationships. By contrast, other peoples of Asia and the Americas used "classificatory" systems that grouped family members into categories different from their biological role. Aryan languages named parent siblings on either side as "uncles"; but for the Seneca Indians, my father's brother is my father, while my mother's brother is my uncle. Classificatory peoples rejected natural descriptions and instead

created large groupings of "apparently arbitrary generalizations." Their classifications looked to Morgan like a denial of biological fact and common sense.[19]

At first sight, then, Morgan's division of descriptive and classificatory systems seemed to contrast clarity and confusion, the Aryans' and Semites' superior grasp of reality and the fantasies of other peoples. From the beginning of his discussion, however, Morgan also introduced cautions, beginning with his awareness that his own system for organizing kinship was an artifice. It assumed "the existence of marriage between single pairs," but in some societies this point of departure might be "fluctuating, and, perhaps, altogether wanting." If one nonetheless accepted this axiom as a useful starting point, then one could begin to work out "blood relations" (consanguinity) and voluntary relations (affinity). How one organized these, however, depended on what one wanted to do with them: "When spread out in detail and examined, every scheme of consanguinity and affinity will be found to rest upon definite ideas, and to be framed, so far as it contains any plan, with reference to particular ends." In other words, Morgan recognized that the *names* for family relations belonged to a social system; the function of the family in the social system would determine the choice of words used to describe it. Classificatory systems that at first appeared senseless had their reasons within their particular social system. Morgan argued that descriptive and classificatory systems served different social ends. The descriptive system kept collateral lines distinct and had the effect of concentrating on an isolated line of descent, while the naming practices of the classificatory systems had the effect of bringing together collateral lines and holding them together in a larger group. Tribes, clans, and extended families all cozied comfortably together in their embrace, in contrast to the narrow

monogamous lines that logically emerged from Europeans' language of empirical description. Classificatory kinship systems guaranteed that non-European peoples were deep communitarians.[20]

Following the logic of his kinship theory a step further, Morgan argued that the most ancient human history completely dissolved the separate self. He pressed the history of the family back in time to a point before the monogamous family, which he argued was a late historical development. At the earliest stage of human history, he speculated, there was instead promiscuous coupling – originally between brother and sister, then in combinations of two or more brothers with their wives, or two or more sisters with their husbands. This systematic practice of polygamy "presupposes *communal families*, with communism in living, which, there are abundant reasons for supposing, were very general in the primitive ages of mankind: and one of the stages through which human society passed before reaching the family in its proper sense, founded upon marriage between single pairs."[21] So Europeans, too, he thought, had once had classificatory systems to go along with their non-monogamous families. What upset their communitarian bonding was the introduction of property:

> The persistency with which the classificatory system has followed down the families of mankind to the dawn of civilization furnishes evidence conclusive that property alone was capable of furnishing an adequate motive for the overthrow of this system and the substitution of the descriptive. There are strong reasons for believing that the remote ancestors of the Aryan, Semitic, and Uralian families possessed the classificatory system, and broke it up when they reached the family state in its present sense.[22]

Along with property went inheritance and the wish to guarantee inheritance within a clearly defined family line; the transformation in material relations led to a revolution in the definition of the

family. The divide between classificatory and descriptive kinships became a code for reading the evolutionary history of mankind from people and things shared in common to the finite, fragmented, isolated kinship units that maintained their separate lines of continuity over time. The modern monogamous family was an outcome of the history of property relations and the foundation of what Morgan called modern civilized society. This exclusive concentration on kinship, and sweeping categorization of non-Europeans as communitarians versus Europeans as property holders, precluded an examination of other social institutions that might shape the local, specific complexities of premodern societies, whether European or non-European.

Morgan's intellectual vision took him from what he could personally research to a worldwide mapping of kinship patterns. In order to expand his charts beyond the plains and woodlands of North America he turned to Joseph Henry, the famous American physicist and secretary of the Smithsonian, who together with the secretary of state provided the resources for Morgan to send questionnaires to missionaries around the world.[23] At the same time he continued his own fieldwork. This had begun, of course, with his Iroquois research, which in *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity* remained the paradigm of American Indian kinship organization. It continued when he made a series of trips in the late 1850s and early 1860s to Michigan and then farther west to Kansas, Missouri, and along the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains. His travel journals reveal a gifted observer with a talent for seeking out and winning the confidence of informants. And what interesting figures he could meet: Amid tragedy and demoralization, there were walkers between worlds with a precise knowledge of native societies. So, for example, he spent time at an Ottawa reservation near Lawrence,

Kansas, with John Tecumseh Jones, who could give him information about the Ottawa kinship system. He described Jones as "a Baptist, a member of the church, a gentleman in manner, fine looking, about 60 years old." Jones came from an Ojibwa family on his mother's side, while his father was an English officer; he had run away from home several times before starting his education in a Potawatomi Baptist mission and eventually finding a home with Ottawas. Native Americans were informants, but so were missionaries like Samuel Allis of Mills County, Iowa, a Presbyterian who stayed among Pawnees for many years. While waiting for Allis to return from a trip he met a Frenchman with a Brulé Dakota wife who spoke his wife's language and gave Morgan their kinship terms plus the names of more informants from mixed marriages.[24] Fieldwork did not have to wait for a later generation of professionally trained anthropologists; without the advantage of teachers, colleagues, or a professional discipline, Morgan developed his own program of field research.

When Morgan brushed up against what we would today recognize as exchange of gifts he struggled unsatisfactorily to understand it. In mid-May 1862 Morgan was on board the *Spread Eagle*, a steamer climbing the Missouri River, and met Alexander Culbertson, a wealthy trader who married Natawista Iksana, the daughter of a Blood Blackfoot chief. Morgan wrote down the following account of Blackfoot marriage negotiations:

> The Blackfeet sell their wives, or perhaps it would be fairer to state that presents are expected, and presents introduce the affair. The oldest brother has the disposal of his sisters, and if there are no brothers then the father. When Culbertson obtained his Blackfoot wife he sent nine horses to his wife's eldest brother. He told his men to hitch them at his lodge, and to ask for the girl as his wife. She was sent to him and the next day the brother returned nine other horses as a present to Culbertson. It is customary for

the brother to distribute the presents among the relatives, and for the same relatives to return presents to the groom. In this case the marriage was one that gave great satisfaction to the girl's family, and hence the manner in which it was acknowledged.

Presents of equal value are not always returned. Sometimes if the presents made by the suitor are of little value, they are not accepted and the girl is not sent. … If presents are made from time to time to prepare the way to get a wife, they are not returned if the application fails. If a wife is taken back by the family, and they finally decide not to return her on the husband's request, the presents are returned.

Morgan could not quite make up his mind about what was going on here: Was it barter or gift giving? Sale or family bonding? Blackfoot marriage preliminaries were just the kind of sequence of exchanges that intrigued later generations of anthropologists. Culbertson gave nine horses and received nine others the next day – at first sight, then, an exchange, and a puzzling one, since like was given for like. What, then, did the exchange achieve? In fact the older brother was a maker of social bonds: he *gave back* nine horses to Culbertson, who could leave as rich as he came; and if all went according to custom the brother *gave away* Culbertson's gift of nine horses to the relatives, in this way linking Culbertson and the larger family to one another through a demonstration of Culbertson's generosity; finally the family was supposed to reciprocate with presents to Culbertson. These demonstrations of goodwill created a precedent for trust and generosity between Culbertson, his brother-in-law, and the family. The family expressed its satisfaction over its alliance with this promising young trader, and Culbertson depended on his Blackfoot contacts for the furs that became his wealth.[25] The gift giving also achieved something else that Morgan saw all around him, but did not take special note of: It linked diverse societies and cultures. Gifts were the medium beyond verbal language – who

knows how much Culbertson and Natawista Iksana's family could make themselves understood through speech – that eased communication between Indians and whites, trappers and traders, in the commodity economy of furs. Emotion and advantage were thoroughly intertwined in this wedding that was also a marriage of interests. But this gift vocabulary did not fit Morgan's dichotomies of kinship community versus propertied interests, and he was unable to find the concepts to define what he wrote down.

After the publication of his kinship book, Morgan's scholarly imagination soared in even wider circles. His next work, *Ancient Society*, came out just six years later in 1877. It turned from the great divide between two kinds of kinship to an evolutionary history of society, or as he put it in his subtitle, "Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization." Morgan was not alone in his turn to millennial history. He belonged to a generation of researchers with concerns similar to his own about the earliest human institutions and the deep, perhaps invisible foundations of present-day civilization. John McLennan and Henry Maine in England and Johann Jacob Bachofen in Switzerland were among the scholars who similarly sought to plumb the history of the family to its depths in the savage and barbaric forms that preceded modern monogamy.[26]

Scholars such as George Stocking and Lionel Gossman cite several reasons for this near-simultaneous appearance of social evolutionary theories founded in the history of the family. Political revolutions beginning with the French Revolution in 1789 alarmed elites all over Europe, who had to contend with subsequent political tremors and earthquakes throughout the nineteenth century. The industrialization of Britain and then, more slowly, of continental Europe, created large classes of workers receptive to revolutionary

political ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, making traditional European elites feel that they were confronting a growing army of barbarians from within. While each scholar wrote from a different point of view, overall they sought to understand the deep foundations of existing European civilization and to make their contemporaries aware of the institutional achievements that separated nineteenth-century civilization from the libidinal anarchy of mankind's earliest existence.

From his side of the Atlantic, Morgan, too, was responding to social upheaval: Over the course of his lifetime he had seen the transformation of the United States from a rural and commercial society still resembling the early republic to an industrial society as dynamic and boisterous as any in Europe. He dissented from the antidemocratic reaction of conservative European contemporaries, however. His European tour of 1870–1871 left him skeptical toward the Old World; he came back a stalwart supporter of American democracy. The question facing him was not, as for his European contemporaries, how to defend hierarchy, but how to preserve the egalitarian society inherited from the age of Andrew Jackson. The growth of rapacious capitalism, the creation of a new oligarchy based on wealth, the growth of the state into a menace to citizen freedoms – these were the issues that preoccupied him, as they did European conservatives, but with the early American republic as his starting point. Like his patrician European contemporaries, he looked into the deep historic past for the same prehistoric predecessors to monogamy, but with a different set of political values.

Morgan's politics set him apart from most of his American contemporaries, too, for he developed a disenchanted view of human progress. This is not immediately visible: *Ancient Society* sketched

the conventional stages of development from savagery to barbarism to civilization, and the first part of the book was entitled the "growth of intelligence through inventions and discoveries." Morgan wrote a technological history, tracing the means of mastering subsistence and other inventions on each of the finely divided steps on the way to modern civilization. The acquisition of fire, the bow and arrow, pottery, domestic animals, iron, and the phonetic alphabet marked the advances. Whether these advances made humanity better or happier was another question. In this book Morgan remained what he had been since the beginning of his scholarly career, a passionate student of politics. Much of it was taken up with the "growth of the idea of government." Once again he singled out the democratic principles that guided Iroquois government, this time distinguishing three forms of organization in it and other ancient societies: the clan ("gens"), the male brotherhood ("phratry"), and the tribe. With the Iroquois as his point of departure, he pronounced the uniformly democratic ethos of ancient societies in words as bold as he could make them:

> All the members of an Iroquois gens were personally free, and they were bound to defend each other's freedom; they were equal in privileges and in personal rights, the sachem and chiefs claiming no superiority; and they were a brotherhood bound together by the ties of kin. Liberty, equality, and fraternity, though never formulated, were cardinal principles of the gens.

The principles of modern democracy, believed Morgan, did not have to wait until the late eighteenth century to make their historical appearance; they were rooted in the ancient history of mankind and had only undergone a recent rebirth after centuries of repression.[27]

This original democratic order inhabited the earliest home of European civilization; it was not just a curiosity among tribal outliers,

but belonged to the history of Athens. The archaic Athenians had three branches of government: the council of chiefs, the assembly of the people, and the basileus or general military commander – the figure Europeans would later call a king. Turning to the basileus, Morgan pointed out that he was neither a European-style absolute monarch nor a constitutional monarch. He delivered a class critique of the monarchical interpretation of his contemporary, the historian George Grote: "Our views upon Grecian and Roman questions," he wrote, "have been moulded by writers accustomed to monarchical government and privileged classes, who were perhaps glad to appeal to the earliest known governments of the Grecian tribes for a sanction of this form of government, as at once natural, essential and primitive." Morgan was equally frank about his own standpoint: "The true statement, as it seems to an American, is precisely the reverse of Mr. Grote's; namely, that the primitive Grecian government was essentially democratical, reposing on gentes, phratries and tribes, organized as self-governing bodies, and on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity." He continued with his alternative definition: the basileus-dominated Athenian polity was a "military democracy" with a free people and a democratic government. Morgan's sociological analysis attempted to look beneath surface political forms to the underlying democratic structures of Greek society.[28]

Morgan believed that the rise of property led to the decline and fall of archaic societies and their early democratic order. The decisive shift took place in Rome, which like Athens and the Iroquois confederation started out with democratic institutions. Clan-based society gave way to a territorial, property-based government with senators for life, inherited rank, and a popular assembly organized according to property holdings. "It was artificial, illogical,

approaching a monstrosity; but capable of wonderful achievements, because of its military spirit, and because the Romans were endowed with remarkable powers for organizing and managing affairs." With property, wrote Morgan, came slavery, aristocracy, "despotism, imperialism, monarchy, privileged classes, and finally representative democracy."[29] There was an astonishing freedom to Morgan's conclusions: the respectable churchgoer, good citizen and American patriot looked to earlier and later stages of historical development for a fuller realization of democratic political ideals. Evolution did not represent steady progress, as it did for most of his contemporaries, so much as a way of relativizing the deficiencies of the industrializing United States, which had not existed in the distant past and might disappear in a utopian future.

Morgan did not explain how democracy would return at the end of this long sequence, although he thought that the "germ" of all the great representative institutions was to be found in ancient society. With the rebirth of democracy in America, he expected "a modification of the present order of things," a euphemism for his critique of American capitalism. Having made his own career defending railroad claims, Morgan called property an "unmanageable power"; however triumphant it was at the moment, he expected the interests of powerful individuals to give way to the interest of society as a whole. "A mere property career," he wrote near the end of the book, "is not the final destiny of mankind, if progress is to be the law of the future as it has been of the past. … Democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights and privileges, and universal education, foreshadow the next higher plane of society to which experience, intelligence and knowledge are steadily tending. It will be a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes."[30]

This statement was a subversive historicization of the bywords of the French Revolution. Instead of emanating from reason, they were archaic social virtues that long predated the Enlightenment. They had been suppressed by the rule of property, but would return as a future advance of civilization.

Morgan was an ambivalent observer of traditional communities. On the one hand, he admired them for embodying ancient virtues and modern democratic ideals; on the other hand, he treated them as vestiges of an early stage in the history of mankind. Some of Morgan's American contemporaries, including important shapers of government Indian policy, missed the ironies and pessimism in *Ancient Society* and turned to it as a justification for a program of assimilation of Indians into white society.[31] Yet it is not surprising that European radicals read him in a different way: His admiration for ancient democracies, belief that contemporary European society was a passing phase in the history of mankind, and expectation of a future transformation of property relations looked to them like the pieces of a revolutionary philosophy of history. Democratic politics shaped an alliance across the Atlantic, a shared point of view in which the specific features of societies mattered less than their fit into the phases of social evolution. It was an inconvenient truth, contradicting this legend of a selfless society but easily brushed away if it was ever noticed, that human beings in traditional social orders had interests and personalities at odds with this utopia of selfless human origins.

## Engels and Marx on Primitive Communism

As we have seen, after Marx's death, Friedrich Engels started his book on prehistoric societies in the belief that Marx was well

advanced on a study that he, as Marx's friend and intellectual executor, felt obligated to complete. While this confrontation with the incomplete project may have been the immediate incentive for writing *The Origins of the Family*, it was not the beginning of Engels' discussion of the subject with Marx or the formation of his own views about the precapitalist past. Long before Engels discovered Morgan, he and Marx had begun an intensive exchange of ideas on noncapitalist societies; Engels' book was the outcome of decades of effort to situate their critique of capitalism in a longer economic history.[32]

One can already find this concern with remote antecedents in Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*, published in 1859 – with a note in the first chapter commenting that common property was a widespread form of property holding in early societies: It existed among the Romans, Germanic tribes, Celts, and early peoples of India and was not specifically Russian or Slavic, as many of his contemporaries believed.[33] Marx came back to the same point in a letter to Engels praising the work of a conservative Bavarian administrator and historian, Georg Ludwig von Maurer, who outlined a system of property held in common as the original form of European property relations. "He [Maurer] shows in detail that land private property only developed later, etc. … The view that I have put forth, that everywhere the Asian, more specifically the Indian forms of property form the beginning in Europe, receives new proof here (although M[aurer] knows nothing of this)." In a long letter to Engels dated March 25, 1868, Marx once again returned to the importance of Maurer's work for clarifying not only the earliest time but also later property relations: Up to the past few years, he wrote, vestiges of original communism remained visible, contrary to attempts by the eighteenth-century jurist Justus Möser and by the famous folklorist

Jacob Grimm to dispute that there was any such thing as property in common. Marx gave a subtle genealogy of this literature by conservatives like Maurer who despite their own intentions served socialist purposes. Their first reaction to the French Revolution, he wrote, was to go back to the Middle Ages. "The 2. reaction – and it corresponds to the socialist direction, although those scholars have no idea that they belong together – is to go beyond the Middle Ages and look to the earliest epoch of every people. They are then taken aback to find the newest in the oldest and even [to find] egalitarians to a degree that would make Proudhon shudder." Regardless of what reactionaries thought, this discovery of ancient communism hit Marx himself with the force of a revelation. He spoke of the "judicial blindness" that made one incapable of seeing the things right before one's very nose – though now he saw the traces far and wide, even in a legal case his father (a prominent Rhineland lawyer) had once told him about. Northern Europe seemed to abound in vestiges of this original communal social organization: "Such Germanic villages in the described form still exist here and there in Denmark; Scandinavia should become as important for German jurisprudence and economics as it is for German mythology. With this as a point of departure we could finally began to decipher our past."[34]

The property relations of prehistory, then, were a lively subject of scholarly controversy in Marx's time. Liberals, socialists, and conservatives argued over whether private property was the natural and abiding form of property in human history; the answer was a key to judging whether private property was necessary and what could or could not replace it in the future. Marx triumphantly thought that his own politics had received scientific confirmation as evidence

poured in from different sides for an ur-Germanic primitive communism.[35]

*The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* took up the same divide between natural and class society, but with a new concentration on preclass, archaic social forms. Engels thought that the basic cell of all preclass societies was the family and turned his attention to its inner workings. By analyzing the family, he could also start to follow the process of transformation from family to class; by following the movement from family to class he had the starting point for the full unfolding logic of the history of human society. The family in this historical perspective was not a timeless private institution, but a creative and changing form of human organization that had assumed a temporary form within capitalist society and would continue to change on the path to socialism.

Engels and Marx were impressed by the way Morgan had provided the key to tribal social organization by analyzing its reproductive units and how they determined the larger forms of economic production and political deliberation. *The Origins of the Family* stuck close to Morgan's stage theory of history. Like Morgan, Engels imagined a scheme of human development going through a logical development from savagery to barbarism and finally civilization. As in Morgan this social evolutionary schema was less the subject of the book than the changing forms of reproduction and cohabitation known as the family. Drawing on *Ancient Society*, Engels argued that the existing family of his time, the patriarchal, monogamous family of nineteenth-century Western society, was the most recent historical resting point in a series of changes going back to the earliest history of humanity. Bits and pieces of ethnological information, combining the practices of different tribes around the world, could

be pieced together into a single whole, and with the aid of logical deduction could be organized into successive stages.[36]

With the aid of Morgan, Engels burrowed backwards in time from the known to the unknown, the empirical to the logically necessary, the bright respectability of the Victorian family to the indiscriminate couplings of all with all. The conclusive shred of evidence for this was the so-called *punalua* family in precontact Hawaii. Engels wrote that a group of women shared a group of men, and the men were said to call each other *punalua*, "that is, intimate companions." Women in the same situation likewise called one another *punalua*. There was never any valid evidence to support the *punalua* thesis of primordial sexual community; it was a scholarly myth originating in Morgan's misunderstanding and decontextualization of the term.[37] It functioned as an antithesis to the liberal myth of social origin, the Hobbesian war of all against all in the state of nature. If liberals projected the pandemic self-interest of modern commercial society back to the state of nature, communists countered this by fashioning an original collectivism that could recur at a later stage of history.

For Engels – repeating a line of reasoning already adumbrated by Morgan in his explanation of descriptive kinship systems – this original stage of indiscriminate coupling had a social and economic consequence that set the course of human history: As long as paternity remained unclear, property could only be inherited through the female line. For this reason early societies preferred a matrilinear form of social organization. The disciplining of sexual relations inaugurated a new stage of human development, the era of the clan made up of smaller family units, which maintained its preference for matrilinear descent. This was tribal societies' hidden form of social organization as Morgan had still found it as a supposed evolutionary

vestige among the Iroquois. Economics and reproduction linked up again at a later stage of social development. Livestock breeding, agriculture, and the use of metals created unprecedented wealth in clan societies. Fathers were the primary accumulators of capital in this new society. Eventually a social revolution took place: As Engels imagined it, the fathers eventually overthrew the matrilinear clans in order to uphold their own claims to property. They could only hold on to their wealth and distribute it to future generations, however, if sexual reproduction was limited to the patriarchal household. Engels, still following Morgan, imagined a shift from matrilinear to patrilinear kinship systems so that the father's legitimate offspring could inherit his wealth.[38] This shift from the matrilinear to the patrilinear household paralleled the transition from natural production within the household to economic exchange outside of it. The producers no longer consumed their own products, but exchanged them. Other features of a market economy followed: money, usury, intensified division of labor, foreign immigrant labor, and the multiplication of wealth. The patriarchal household marked the beginning of "civilization" – but for Engels, as for Morgan, that was hardly an unambiguous good.[39]

Engels eagerly took up Morgan's picture of the Iroquois as a living embodiment of the clan society that one otherwise knew only from wisps of information about remote places or the fragmentary clues strewn through the literature of classical antiquity. He cited Morgan at length, for here was a detailed report on how human beings and society looked before their division into classes. "And it is a wonderful constitution in all its childishness and simplicity, this gens constitution! Without soldiers, gendarmes and policemen, without nobility, kings, governors, prefects or judges, without prisons, without trials everything takes its orderly course." Despite its dignity

and humanity the end of this society was inevitable, wrote Engels, for it was limited to the world of nature and natural production; the people of this historical era "still depend, as Marx wrote, on the umbilical cord of the naturally flourishing community." With the rise of paternal property the power of this natural community was tragically but inevitably shattered "as a fall from grace from the simple moral majesty of the old gens society." Engels affirmed the necessity of getting on to the next thing – the development of a market economy, a class society, and the state – but upheld Morgan's Iroquois republic as a sample of the just and well-ordered society that could be revived for all humanity one day.[40]

*The Origins of the Family* was written with passion, sweep, and insight; it summarized the researches of Morgan and an entire generation of researchers alongside him, and it turned their researches in the direction of a socialist philosophy of history. The vision of society's movement from ancient communism, to capitalism, to socialist society generated a century of discussions about the family and the role of gender and sexuality in modern society. Engels' use of gender analysis, and his emphasis on the family as a place of internal interest and conflict linked to larger social forms of conflict, were prescient presentations of themes still appealing to some scholars as late as the second half of the twentieth century.[41]

While Engels and the later Morgan opened up important themes for research, they also subscribed to an easy mid-nineteenth-century penchant for generalization about human social evolution. The ethnographic specificity of Morgan's early work gave way to speculation that tore bits of evidence out of their local pattern of meaning and inserted them into universal models. From Morgan's study of the Iroquois to Engels' history of the family, clan society turned into a universal stage of human history – and one with few differences

across time and place. With his emphasis on the "natural" status of clan organization, Engels rendered it history-less; Celts, Germans, Romans, Greeks, Iroquois – all had to fit the type. More surprising than this universalization of historical experience is Engels' lack of curiosity about specific forms of exchange that in his and Marx's view were the motor of history. These were not just a few details more or less, but the actual mechanisms through which societies took on form and direction. In the end, however, Engels' history of primitive communism had little to do with the actual societies he was writing about; Iroquois, Teutons, and the others were a prelude to class history and modern societies.

Profoundly influential, Engels' *History of the Family* was a distraction from the analysis of specific societies and the means by which they distribute wealth and power. By the early twentieth century, the first generation of professional anthropologists rebelled against the theory of primitive communism in order to clear the way for the experiences of their own fieldwork and the empirical analysis of tribal societies. The theory of endlessly generous primitive communists, who did not give a thought to personal advantage, yielded to an insistence on the existence of personal and group interests that traditional communities channeled into their own distinctive institutions – prominent among them gift exchange.

# 4. Anthropologists and the Power of the Gift

*Boas, Thurnwald, Malinowski*

Around 1900 there was a movement within European culture to get in touch with the instinctive creativity of archaic cultures – as some intellectuals imagined it. The writings of Nietzsche inspired artists and intellectuals to turn to "primitive" peoples for a vitality missing from European society; the new availability of indigenous art in Europe's expanding ethnological museums provided inspiration for movements like Expressionism in the visual arts; steamships, global trade and colonial governments made it possible as never before to visit and live in places like North Africa and Oceania. Most artists and writers knew little about non-European peoples and understood them only superficially even after visits abroad; their primitivism generally appropriated indigenous art for modern European purposes. Nonetheless, their appreciation of indigenous art suggests a nascent receptiveness toward peoples generally approached with ignorance and scorn by Europeans.[1]

Leading sociologists of the prewar era like Émile Durkheim and Max Weber made use of the information about peoples around the world that was pouring into Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, but they remained primarily interested in the

problems of industrial societies.[2] Other social scientists like Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Richard Thurnwald actually lived with tribal peoples and developed new methods for analyzing the specific institutions of their societies. While not entirely free of the evolutionary models and cultural presumptions of their age, they set in motion a fresh empiricism for understanding peoples of North America, Oceania, and other parts of the world whom Europeans governed with the intellectual aid of little more than cultural cliché. They were of course not the first Europeans to live with non-Europeans or work to understand their languages and institutions. On the contrary, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, settlers, priests, and soldiers had sometimes written acute and insightful commentaries on non-European peoples. Rather, the anthropologists of the *fin de siècle* were innovators compared to the evolutionary theorists of the late nineteenth century whose paradigms they overturned. Nowhere was this recovery of a willingness to listen and learn from foreign cultures more visible than in the study of gift exchange.[3]

One of the preoccupations that led the anthropologists to gift exchange was their nuanced exploration of power and status in traditional communities. They broke away from grand schemes of economic and technological development by recognizing that exchange in these communities was not an isolated activity, but an expression of who one was and how one fit into family, village, and larger society; production and trade could not be reduced to a grand scheme because they were inseparable from complicated local ways of demanding social recognition. Beyond the duality of selfish and selfless savages, there were variegated forms of gift exchange that renewed the social order yet encompassed competition and conflict. Honor, economic gain, and power were intertwined in the early anthropologists' descriptions of the acts of giving that require a return.

## Franz Boas and the Kwakiutl Potlatch

In the winter of 1895–1896, at Fort Rupert on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Franz Boas observed the winter ceremonial of the Kwakwaka'wakw, called by Westerners the Kwakiutl. Over the weeks to come he was witness to singing, dancing, feasting, and initiation of novices into secret societies. On November 24, amid a swirl of speeches and ecstatic dances, he watched X-ix-eqala, a Kwakiutl chief, stand up after dancing and singing around a fire to announce the destruction of his own wealth: He named one copper plate after another and declared that they lay "dead in the water off our beach." According to Boas by this X-ix-eqala meant that the clan had broken these so-called coppers, which ranged in value from 1,500 to 4,000 Hudson Bay blankets: a capital that still sounds like wealth today. The chief continued: "'That is the strength of my clan. None among all the other Kwakiutl clans ever broke as many expensive coppers as we did.' With every copper that he named he put his staff down violently, bending his knees at the same time." Then he turned to the members of another clan, thanked them for "'the button blankets and for the 2,000 bracelets'," and promised to distribute the blankets among a third clan.[4] This was only one event within the annual feast's cycle of consumption, a high point when the back-and-forth of giving was trumped by destruction of the valuable coppers. Gift giving turned into a pure act of display, useless for the rival tribe, beatable only through a similar act of destruction. These demonstrations of excess wealth were part of a larger competition for status; destruction, exchange, and ceremonial violence all channeled the warriors' ambition to accumulate honors and vanquish their rivals. This system of gift giving, which Boas witnessed at one of its dramatic extremes, was the Kwakiutl potlatch.

Born into a well-to-do, liberal Jewish family in Minden, Westphalia, in 1858, Boas started out his university education in physics before turning to geography, finishing his dissertation in Kiel in 1881. Boas was deeply impressed by the rigor of the German university's scholarship and science: All his later work retained its empiricism, insistence on thoroughness and breadth, and methodological self-consciousness. At the same time he was independent-minded enough to appreciate the humanism of the first half of the nineteenth century and its attempt to understand specific cultures on their own terms.[5] In talks and scientific papers, Boas precisely defined his differences with what he called the "comparative method" of anthropology – that is, the evolutionary approach that we have encountered in Morgan and Engels, which at the end of the nineteenth century was the dominant anthropological paradigm. This method assumed a uniform growth of human mind everywhere; in order to assert this grand unity it deduced from effects to causes, taking for granted that when it saw totems or tools, the reasons for inventing them must be the same in all times and places. Boas disputed the scientific legitimacy of the comparative method's deductions: Instead the anthropologist was to work in a small, well-defined area and observe specific causes that led to specific effects. Only by starting from rigorous local analysis could the anthropologist then proceed to comparison between different societies. In the space of a few pages his 1896 paper, "The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology," swept away the social Darwinist and other evolutionary models of his time.[6]

Soon after his move to the United States in the mid-1880s, where he worked at the American Museum of Natural History and beginning in 1899 as professor of anthropology at Columbia University, Boas launched on his decades of fieldwork with the Indian tribes of

the Pacific Northwest coast. Blessed with a fertile sea, mild climate, and rich woodlands, the Indians of this region made finely crafted wood carvings that had already attracted the attention of collectors from the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, where Boas had worked before his departure. Since the early nineteenth century, Kwakiutls, Tlingits (Lingits), Haidas, and other Indian groups had had contact with white traders and settlers who challenged and transformed their traditional way of life. Waves of smallpox and other epidemic disease devastated their communities, whose populations had dropped from perhaps 10,000 before contact to a few thousand by the time Boas arrived. At the same time Kwakiutls and others could work in canneries and take part in a cash economy, adding to the considerable wealth in produce and fish that they already enjoyed. Later scholars – notably Marcel Mauss in *The Gift* and Ruth Benedict in *Patterns of Culture* – sometimes made it appear as if Boas recorded the intact original life of a tribal people. Boas himself made clear to his readers that he was describing ceremonies and social institutions that had undergone constant change. The Kwakiutls were the most traditional tribe of the Northwest, but their potlatch, too, was the outcome of accommodation with their non-Indian neighbors.[7]

From New York, Boas made repeated trips to the Northwest coast and, when he did not travel himself, worked with material that arrived in packages and letters. His informant and collaborator in his Kwakiutl studies, whom he acknowledged on the title page and in the text of his 1897 monograph on Kwakiutl society, was George Hunt. Scholars have recently reconstructed the biography of this important figure in the history of anthropology. Hunt's father was a Hudson's Bay Company employee who was born in England and migrated to the recently founded settlement where George Hunt was born, Fort Rupert; his mother, Mary Evans, was

a high-ranking Tlingit. George Hunt grew up with Kwakiutls, took part from childhood on in their lives and rituals, and successively married two Kwakiutl wives. It was Hunt who gave Boas access to Kwakiutl society, collected ethnographic information beyond what Boas himself could directly gather, and sent Boas finely carved artifacts. As in his previous Inuit fieldwork, Boas worked in a fully modern, market-bound way with Hunt, paying him specified amounts for the artifacts he collected and sent. Although Hunt's written English was imperfect, he was well enough educated to be able to communicate with Boas by mail about the kinds of sculptures he was supposed to gather.[8] Like Morgan's informant Ely S. Parker, Hunt was poised between two societies.

Boas wrote about many different aspects of Kwakiutl society and culture, focusing on their social organization, legends, religious beliefs, ritual life, and language. Kwakiutls formed a highly hierarchical society, with hundreds of titles and powerful leaders who vied with one another for power, wealth, and status. In the summer they organized their social lives around tribal and clan divisions. During the winter season the clan system broke down, and in its place secret noble societies, some male and others female, many with animal names, brought in the youths who had been preparing for months to join them. Throughout his analysis, Boas emphasized complexity, historical change, and borrowing from neighbors. The members of a Kwakiutl tribe claimed a common ancestor, but they were not a biological unit and could take in outsiders who could be assimilated through legendary history to the tribal founder. Clans, too, had their origins in the social history of village communities organized for self-defense; Kwakiutls used animal totems but did "not consider themselves descendants of the totem" in contrast to their Tlingit and Haida neighbors.[9] In Boas's account the Kwakiutl

and other tribes lived in history; they changed in response to their Indian neighbors and white society.

Recent historians of the potlatch have pointed out that precontact exchanges must have been more modest simply because Kwakiutls would have had far less disposable wealth.[10] Indeed, it would have been a contradiction of Boas's own understanding of culture had the potlatch been an unchanging institution, for he was always interested in showing how cultures formed through exchanges with neighbors; in this way he opposed the folklorists and philologists who imagined national identities organically unfolding from prehistory to the present. Rather Boas tried to show how the interaction between different social groups was the normal condition for the making and remaking of cultures.

The potlatch as Boas described it was an agonistic competition. Partly due to his and Hunt's collecting, their wooden masks, totem poles, bowls, and other carvings have advertised their brilliant artistic imagination to white museum-goers, but they originally signified political and spiritual power. Men of rank competed to show off how much they could give away, showering one another with blankets, copper plates, and feasts. What particularly startled readers was the sheer excess of the potlatch, which carried over into destruction of the kind performed by X-ix-eqala: In their striving to outdo one another, potlatch rivals actually broke the valuable copper plates and performed other acts of annihilation. The loser in a potlatch, the person outdone by his rival, could suffer humiliation and loss of rank, while the winner could walk away with wealth and prized honorifics. Boas further described the potlatch exchanges as loans: The receiver of a gift at a potlatch feast would have to repay it in a year's time, according to Boas, with one hundred percent interest. Families of rank and ambition initiated their sons into the potlatch economy

by loaning them little amounts at first, which they in turn could loan out, in this way gaining experience, reputation, and capital.[11]

Potlatching was a form of exchange that overlapped with other Kwakiutl institutions. The acquisition of a wife depended on potlatching back and forth between two families; the son-in-law purchased his wife with a gift to his father-in-law. And as Boas described it, what a purchase it was! Not the commercial handing over of a lump sum, but a wedding ceremony in which the groom and his men might bring hundreds of blankets to the father of the bride, trumpeting their courage and ancestry and wealth as they came; in which the father-in-law might post two narrow rows of guardians with torches at the entrance to his house, daring the groom to show his fearlessness and pass through them to the bride waiting inside, with rejoicing on both sides when he reached and "lifted up" his prize. Once the groom had acquired his bride, wrote Boas, the bride's father had to repay with interest, as in any other potlatch: two hundred percent if the marriage produced one child, three hundred percent if there was more than one. The father-in-law was expected to provide a house for the couple too, and – a critical point – to award crests (symbols of privileges) for the son-in-law to distribute to his children or other kin. Boas told the story of one father-in-law who dragged out the repayment until the son-in-law finally carved an image of his wife, invited the people to a feast, and threw it into the sea – thereby ruining his wife's high rank and that of her father. When it was successfully made, however, a father-in-law's repayment posed a new challenge to the younger man. The wife was free of the nexus of debt – and could therefore decide whether to stay or leave. (If a husband wanted to make sure that his wife would stay, he might make a new payment to the

father-in-law, in this way financially securing her in his household). Kwakiutl feasting at marriages and other ceremonial occasions also oscillated between friendly and unfriendly gift giving, the offering of hospitality and the shaming of less wealthy guests. The potlatch as Boas captured it in these events barely contained its participants' grand ambitions.[12]

The potlatch was well known and widely described before Boas wrote about it. "The chief object of a potlatch feast and the attendant distribution of gifts," wrote the prominent Canadian geologist and anthropologist George M. Dawson in 1887, "seems to be the desire to gain popularity and honor." It was a long way from this observation, however (and Dawson's moral disapproval of the potlatch), to Boas's differentiated analysis. Boas's distinction was not to "discover" the potlatch but to document it with the help of Hunt's insider knowledge and to grasp how it operated as a pervasive principle within Kwakiutl and other Northwest Indian societies. Contemporaries (including Edward B. Tylor, doyen of British anthropologists) admired his early writings about the potlatch; Boas continued to write about the Kwakiutls and their neighbors for years to come, with a large outpouring of ethnography and analysis in the late 1910s and early 1920s, at just the moment when his contemporaries Thurnwald, Malinowski, and Mauss were discussing analogous exchange practices. Immersed in detail, Boas's writings on the Pacific Northwest Indians were uncompromising *Wissenschaft*, not made for a broad readership in his own time or since. Yet his professional colleagues read them and took note; Boas's studies of the potlatch were the vanguard of a generation of studies of generous reciprocity culminating in Mauss's essay on the gift.[13]

## Richard Thurnwald and Banaro Marriage

While Boas described the public exchange of commodities in his Kwakiutl anthropology, his contemporary, Richard Thurnwald, focused on a form of exchange that Boas dealt with only indirectly: giving and returning sexual favors. *Bánaro Society* (published in 1916 and followed five years later by a German translation) studied a people living on the Kerem River, a tributary of the Sepik River in what was then the colony of German New Guinea. It outlined a rigorously logical system of couplings that to Western eyes might seem bizarre, taken one by one, but that collectively formed a perfectly balanced system. Thurnwald excluded ethnography, whether as a you-are-there description or a narrative of the life of the Banaro, from his monograph; instead, it stuck strictly to analysis of their marital and extramarital system of sexual exchanges, which, in his account, worked with an almost perfect symmetry of parts linked into a social totality. Thurnwald thus anticipated the theme of the exchange of women as the archetypal form of the gift in Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949).[14]

Thurnwald's austere monograph hid the personality of a gifted but turbulent adventurer. Born in Vienna in 1869, Thurnwald started out on what looked like an administrative career; after completing one year of army service he studied law at the University of Vienna and in 1896 began two years as an administrative intern in the Habsburg provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This experience turned his attention in the direction of ethnology, with a special emphasis on economic conditions. From Sarajevo he wrote to Karl Bücher to introduce himself as one of the members of a younger generation who were turning to the economic life of primitive peoples, as Bücher hoped would happen in *The Origin of National*

*Economies*.[15] By 1901 he was in Berlin, attending the university lectures of Karl von den Steinen, famous for his Amazon and Marquesas research; in the same year Felix von Luschan hired him to work in the African-Oceanian division of the Berlin Ethnological Museum. In 1905 the Ethnological Museum sent Thurnwald on an expedition to southern Bougainville, one of the Solomon Islands and at that time part of German New Guinea. This was the apprentice journey that launched his career in anthropology. His education and research expedition exemplify the transition from his teacher Bücher's outsider interest in developing economic anthropology to the formation of an anthropological discipline.[16]

In their correspondence, Luschan figures as a well-meaning advisor, fretful about one thing after another. He worried that Thurnwald would have a temper tantrum when a fellow German ethnographer-collector, the navy physician Emil Stephan, visited him in the field and reminded him that the well-connected Stephan could be useful to him. He complained in letters to Thurnwald and to the governor of the German colony that he had not yet received a single object, list, or photograph, and kept him on a short financial leash until he received something for his investment in the trip; then as Thurnwald began to send back enormous quantities of objects, including sculptures with penis-breasts and skulls that he especially yearned to add to his collection, Luschan had to calm down the miffed Thurnwald and reassure him of his full confidence and support.[17] Thurnwald was disliked by some of his museum colleagues, but he shipped back dozens of boxes of treasures and was admired for his can-do explorer and ethnographic abilities. By the end of the apprentice journey, he had turned into an extraordinary collector.

In a letter from Bougainville to Luschan in Berlin, Thurnwald explained his success at surviving dangerous missions: "Above all

I protect myself from intrusiveness, am *friendly, pay well, never give gifts*, and am very protective of my 'white exclusiveness.' Every now and then I let them feel my 'lung power' too."[18] This was the tone of broad stretches of ruling-class Germany in the wake of Bismarck, who initiated an authoritarian style of rule that extended downward through Wilhelmine society and beyond to its colonies. The statement also defined a style of fieldwork that relied on psychological distance and therefore excluded the mutual obligations of gift giving – a pattern that Thurnwald later forgot at a critical moment.

By 1909 plans were beginning to unfold for the undertaking that would make Thurnwald's international reputation: the Sepik River Expedition (or Empress Augusta River Expedition) to German New Guinea. An administrator from the New Guinea Company got in touch with Luschan that year and suggested sending an expedition to collect objects, as the Chicago Field Museum had already done with the Company's assistance. The following year Luschan was able to gather support for the expedition from an impressive number of donors: the colonial office, the ministry of education and the arts, the city of Lübeck, and Rudolf Mosse, publisher of the *Berliner Zeitung*, all of whom contributed funding for the first year. The expedition's planning commission, meeting in 1911, decided to include a university-trained mining engineer, Artur Stollé, as its leader as well as a botanist, a physician-zoologist, and a geographer. The expedition took on two ethnographers, Adolf Roesicke working in the upper Sepik and Thurnwald working in the lower part of the river.[19]

Thurnwald was supposed to concentrate primarily on nonmaterial culture, especially linguistic, psychological, and sociological questions, but was also expected to gather artifacts and make photographs and phonograph recordings. As it turned out, the main expedition

with Roesicke arrived in New Guinea in February 1912; Thurnwald did not leave Berlin until December 5 and arrived in the German colony on January 9, 1913. Thurnwald had an opportunity well suited to his talents, for he had all the resources of a well-equipped government expedition, but also latitude to carry out his own investigations without the frictions of working with the rest of the expedition, often one of the hazards of a mission in trying terrain.[20]

Thurnwald wrote up his experiences in letters, diary entries, and feuilleton articles that give a detailed picture of what it was like to go on this kind of expedition in the last days of prewar imperialism. In early December 1913, on the Sepik River in the midst of the rainy season, he, his mechanic, Fiebig, and their fifty-two local servants ("boys") traveled like an army unit with side boats, two large motor boats, two sampans, and six canoes, all heavily laden with oil, gas, rice, tents, and rifles. And with items for trade: axes, hatchets, knives of every size and kind, loin cloths, glass beads, mirrors, tobacco, planing irons, and more. As they slowly made their way forward along the swollen waters, the weather was hot and humid. With a box as a seat and a suitcase as his dining table, Thurnwald sat from early morning to late afternoon, sometimes ten or eleven hours, until they halted and his local crew set up his tent on shore. Now and then sudden gusts of wind blasted away the tents that offered shelter from sun and rain. Day and night the flood waters poured down and dashed his confidence that he could carry out his plans. But after the first week of January the weather seemed to turn for the better, and later in the month he was reading in the Heine and Goethe editions he had taken along, chattily setting down his literary judgments (Heine was surprisingly likeable).[21]

Along with the monotony and discomfort, the excursion had its predictable contacts with villagers and its unpredictable rewards.

Their bodies painted and their arms waving, canoers from the villages came out to trade: yams, sago, artifacts, and human skulls in exchange for knives and hatchets. When the expedition members camped near a village named Angerman, all the inhabitants came out to receive them the next morning. So did two masked dancers with reed capes to their knees, rattles on their wrists and ankles, and wobbling giant combs in their hair. They blew on short pipes, making sounds like stuck pigs. As soon as Thurnwald stepped onto land everyone, men, women, children, and masked men, began to dance (he compared them to mechanical figures in a coin-operated automaton theater), the masked dances squeeking, the other villagers singing. The masked figures moved in a dancing motion to the large spirit house, looking to see if Thurnwald and his men were following until they entered. All the men who had joined them brought along their pipes, "and now began an ear-splitting squeeking concert that sounded like five hundred pigs." There was a prelude to this piece of theater: Thurnwald had picked up five men from the village the preceding October who had followed him for two days into his expedition to the coast. When his boats drifted back without him, they had given him up for dead. So now, reasoned Thurnwald, he seemed to have come from the other side back to the land of the living. It was a singularly dramatic incident in a tedious journey, but it also suggested the larger-than-life quality of Thurnwald's forays to the New Guineans, and perhaps to his European contemporaries: Even though he was not returning from the spirit realm, he had come back more than once from excursions that would have killed a lesser traveler.[22]

The achievements of the expedition were impressive: It was equally successful at mapping the interior of the German colony and at plundering it for natural and man-made objects. In

mid-October 1913 the expedition leader, Dr. Artur Stollé, wrote up an inventory for his superiors in the Colonial Office: objects acquired so far included 80 mammals, 3,116 birds, 370 reptiles, 5 fish, over 6,000 butterflies, 10,000 insects, 6,600 plants, 105 maps, 3,300 photographs – and in the ethnological category 5,800 artifacts including 3 skeletons, 300 skulls, 175 phonograph cylinders, 250 physiometric samples, and vocabularies in 9 languages or dialects. Thurnwald wrote in his separate report dated August 26 that had just returned from a bold journey: starting out from the middle Sepik in August (with five New Guinean police soldiers, seven carriers, and one servant) he had marched straight across the land to the eastern coast, using his compass when he could not find local guides and cutting straight through forests when paths gave out. He asked for another two months in the field, for "only a long stay makes it possible to do thorough studies." His proposal to finance an extended stay in one place: get rid of the white mechanic, pare back the oil and gas budget, and reduce the number of New Guinean police soldiers and carriers. Thurnwald was struggling with his superiors to make the transition from the expedition model to what became known as anthropological fieldwork.[23]

Thurnwald's dream of more time to do fieldwork came nightmarishly true as news of the European war rippled out to the South Pacific and toppled the German colony in New Guinea. The change came within days of the outbreak of hostilities: By mid-August 1914 a dreadnought from Sydney had landed in Rabaul, the capital of the German colony, and installed a British governor. By December, Thurnwald was keeping up his spirits by reading fiction in the German newspapers, but all around him his world was falling apart. The local guides declared that their service with Thurnwald was over (he sympathized with them); he heard that Germans were

being thrown out of Hong Kong, Singapore, and Saigon; and he confided to his diary that he was leading a wretched life. The new year began with a turn for the worse: On January 7, 1915, he went to the settlement where he had left all his collections and notes only to find that it had been destroyed by marauding Australian soldiers. Thanks to the sympathetic aid of local tribesmen and British administrators, he was able to recover most of his materials. After that he was stuck in place, living from the charity of German missionaries and British administrators, glumly waiting week after week and month after month for permission to go home. Finally on September 24, 1915, Lieutenant Ogilvie, the commanding officer of Madang, told him that he had permission to leave.[24]

Instead of getting ready to leave right away, Thurnwald made preparations for one last trip upriver. This journey led to the research that won him international fame. Since June he had been working with two informants from the middle Sepik who had been lent to him by the ever-helpful Lieutenant Ogilvie in Madang.[25] This waiting period was frustrating, but it also permitted an intensive cooperation with informants of a kind that peacetime had never made possible. The New Guinea expedition had been a collecting and surveying venture: It had to show results to its sponsors in the form of sculptures, skulls, phonograph recordings, and maps; its members felt under pressure to produce as much as possible in order to show that they had proved to be a good investment. They knew, and complained, that good work in such a strange place was slow work but could do little to control the pace of their job. The war changed all that, for by ending the expedition it allowed Thurnwald to sit day after day with his informants, three languages and "nations," as he put it, side by side. The last river voyage was partly for their sake: He had some boxes stored along the river that

he wanted to recover, but he had also promised to bring them back to their villages.[26] One of them, Yomba, came from the Banaros, a people with a small cluster of villages on the middle Sepik River; the other, Manape, came from the nearby village of Ramunga. Since Thurnwald's monographs on the Banaros made them a widely admired study in what would come to be called gift exchange, it is worth pausing over his detailed diary description of his visit to their villages, for over his shoulder we can evaluate the evidence for this much-admired model of reciprocity.

Four days after getting the news that he was free to leave, Thurnwald set out from Angorum, where his mechanic Fiebig was staying, taking Fiebig's little motorized two-master for the journey upstream. After two days of smooth and steady traveling, they arrived at Manape's home, Ramunga, where the villagers included Thurnwald in their warm welcome for their returning countryman. They continued their journey on the same day to a point below Yomba's village where Thurnwald was planning to camp. Thurnwald had given Yomba, whom he called intelligent and dependable, a white suit and cap as presents, and he was proudly wearing them as he returned. Villagers who heard the motor boat met them heavily armed with spears, bows and arrows, and clubs, looking for their compatriot and ready, if necessary by force, to reclaim him. Yomba was there, insisted Thurnwald to the menacing villagers – but they could not or would not recognize him at first on account of his European clothes. Or so Thurnwald thought, though looking back one can also imagine motives of fear, jealousy, anger, or an acting out of re-integration that would make the villagers reluctant at first to recognize their returning son. Only after they had rubbed cheeks and foreheads were they ready to acknowledge him as one of their own. Though his father wept and his brothers

laughed, the atmosphere was tense, and his family still approached him cautiously. The villagers were not ready to drop their suspicions toward Thurnwald either. While he tried to do a little genealogical research with Yomba's father and relatives four of his police soldiers (probably native) stood guard and the armed village men glowered at them. Thurnwald then tried to recruit new guides to go with him, which created so much commotion that he gave up; he tried to walk into the village and after a few steps the raised weapons, cries, and calls from the villagers made him turn back to his boat. Up and down the river he encountered the same resistance; he was not able to enter a Banaro village. Thurnwald's biographer, Marion Melk-Koch, doubts that he had ever spent time in a Banaro village on his earlier travels either. In all Thurnwald based his monographs on the Banaros on his months of work with Yambo and a half day of tense standoffs with Banaro villagers.[27]

After stops in Samoa and Hawaii, Thurnwald arrived in San Francisco in December 1915 and quickly established friendly relations with Boas's student Alfred Kroeber and other scholars at the University of California in Berkeley. An English version of his Banaro manuscript, which he discussed with his California friends, appeared in a monograph series of the American Anthropological Association. On his way back to Germany in 1917 he stopped in New York, where he met Robert Lowie, another prominent anthropologist and former Boas student. Thurnwald returned to Germany with remarkable fieldwork, a monograph, and the friendship of leading American anthropologists to his credit. Good conditions for recognition of his achievements seemed to be in place.[28]

Things fell apart after he reached Berlin in mid-June. The drama of the war overshadowed the reports of an anthropologist returning from New Guinea, no matter how novel or strange. Thurnwald

himself was swept up into the violence of the war and its aftermath: He was drafted in 1917, and during the revolution of the following spring he was one of the street fighters quashing the postwar revolution in the streets of Berlin. In 1921 he again got involved in anti-leftist street fighting. Meanwhile reports of a scandal seeped through the educational and cultural bureaucracies of the capital: Thurnwald was engaged to be married to the daughter of a provincial German judge, but an Icelandic woman claiming to be Mrs. Thurnwald had written from Reykjavik asking for news of her husband. Thurnwald had indeed married her in Copenhagen and mired himself in worse difficulties by perjuring himself, leading to his imprisonment in 1923. Later in the same year his Icelandic wife died, freeing him to marry his fiancée, but it was not a story to enhance his reputation, and Thurnwald received an appointment without the permanent status of a professor at the University of Berlin in 1925. He taught at Yale in the early 1930s, met Boas, and became friendly with Boas's famous student, the linguistic anthropologist Edward Sapir. It might have been the beginning of an academic career in the United States, but Thurnwald instead chose to return to Nazi Germany in 1936, where he found work drawing up plans for *Lebensraum* for Aryans in Africa. After the war he finally received a professorial appointment at the Free University of Berlin. But his international reputation of the interwar years did not survive into the post-1945 era.[29]

Amid all this turmoil – which included his geographic movement across three parts of the world, his personal crisis, and his plunges into the street violence of postwar Berlin as well as his work for the Nazi regime – Thurnwald turned out an impressive quantity and quality of scholarly writings. They included two versions of his monograph on the Banaros. In a clinical language oddly removed from

the personal emotions and war atmosphere of its time, Thurnwald's English-language monograph offered a detailed, logically cohesive analysis of Banaro society, which seemed to run with the balance and precision of a clock. A German version of the monograph was published in a journal of comparative law in 1921. It was a fuller, richer account of Banaro society, and, as we shall see, its analysis was reshaped by the shocks of war, defeat, and civil war. Although subsequent research has corrected and refined Thurnwald's monographs, they remain an impressive body of work.[30]

It is not hard to understand the impact Thurnwald's Banaro research had on his contemporaries, for the principle of reciprocity defined with logical precision the spatial organization of the Banaros' sacred structures and the cohesion of their society. Thurnwald explained that the Banaro people, whom he referred to collectively as a tribe, inhabited four separate villages, each made up of "hamlets" of three to six houses. Each hamlet had a community structure or goblin hall, the residence of mischievous supernatural beings. Thurnwald defined the clan (gens) as the inhabitants of one hamlet or families represented in one goblin hall. The goblin hall was divided into two halves, representing in Thurnwald's terminology the clan's two halves or sibs, blood relations who were additionally united by rituals of friendship. "The symmetry in the arrangement of the goblin-hall," he commented, "is the expression in space-terms of the principle of social reciprocity or the 'retaliation of like for like'"; the principle of reciprocity was not local or particular to the Banaros but "pervades the thought of primitive peoples, and often finds its expression in their social organization." For Thurnwald, reciprocity was not just a principle of "primitive" social organization; rather it was a human universal clearly etched in the social arrangements of Banaro society. The

anthropologist's fieldwork among what he considered to be their simple forms of social organization brought back sociological principles that continued in the more complex forms of civilized life.[31] Thurnwald's other work from the prewar era to the 1930s was shot through with racial theorizing and evolutionary views that placed Melanesians far down on the human scale – but somehow in the Banaro monographs he bracketed his biological beliefs and stressed the general human origins and implications of Banaro social organization, so clearly outlined in its spatial arrangements.

Thurnwald's most spectacular example of reciprocity, and the main subject of his monograph, was the Banaro sexual system. Girls consulted with their mothers to find a boy who suited them; Thurnwald emphasized this as part of his larger argument that women in Banaro society had considerable autonomy, contrary to the European stereotype of women as always dependent on the brute strength of men in indigenous societies. Women's lives then proceeded through well-defined sexual partnerships which united them with one's husband but also with other members of the husband's sib: Over the course of a lifetime, a woman would have sexual relations with her father-in-law's *mundu* or sib-friend, her husband, and her husband's sib-friend, and a man would have analogous relations with his wife, his sib-friend's wife, and his son's wife.[32] Since marriage within the clan was not permitted, these multiple sexual relations were so many ways of strengthening ties across the divisions of Banaro society. The point of these sexual exchanges was to create social stability: "The exchange system maintains a great socializing influence, for by its means all members of the tribe are connected with, and dependent on, each other. This appears in the different ceremonials where persons are assigned special functions, as well as in the marriage system, which has spread a network

of all kinds of relationships, not only over the gens, but over the tribe itself." It was a self-contained system that created social harmony: "The marriage regulations exist as a means of insurance against the disturbing influence of the emotions upon social life; for social life depends upon a certain established harmony between emotion and intellect." Thurnwald validated these generalizations with detailed charts outlining the complexities of the Banaro kinship system. The entire monograph articulated a spare symmetry that made it seem like a perpetual motion machine, self-contained and undisturbed by outside interference.[33]

Thurnwald's description of the Banaro was an early, brilliant realization of the functionalism that many social theorists were thinking their way toward in the early years of the twentieth century. This functionalism seems to have originated in Europeans' (and North Americans') experience of their own societies as democratic, bureaucratized totalities in which the individual human units were integrated into increasingly comprehensive and machine-like social totalities. "Primitive" societies seemed to offer a field for the same kind of analysis, with the advantage that these were highly simplified societies in which the mechanisms of the functional order would emerge all the more clearly. In particular the principle of reciprocity seemed to work with startling predictability to integrate the individual parts of society into a social whole. In Thurnwald's analysis, moral criticism of Banaro sexual practices was supposed to give way to an understanding of the effectiveness of regularized, religiously and ceremonially circumscribed sexual exchanges to overcome clan differences and sustain the unity of Banaro society.[34]

Thurnwald's functionalist system was logically precise, but he was careful to avoid a utilitarian interpretation of Banaro behavior. "Civilized man," he wrote, " as well as the savage, is never an

economic being alone, but in his desires and aims is 'disturbed' by a great many other factors that have nothing to do with economics proper." Thurnwald continued his equation of civilized and savage societies by observing that Europeans were inclined to call noneconomic factors "prejudice" when it came to other peoples but to use "high-sounding names" for themselves. He did not want to leave out economic motives altogether, for he thought the husband's interest in his wife's labor had led to the individualization of marriage in primitive social systems.[35] But a shift had clearly taken place from the time of Morgan and Engels (and before them, Adam Smith) to his time: He conceived of social organization in a new way as shaped by local and contingent values, and he disputed any difference between non-European and European societies when it came to this contingency. Any distinction like Morgan's categories of descriptive versus classificatory kinships systems had fallen away. Functionalism was not just a bloodless abstraction (as it easily may appear in retrospect), but a way of cutting through European/non-European contrasts and replacing them with a shared human need for meaning and order.

The politics of Banaro society surfaced only lightly in the English version. Thurnwald remarked that the Banaro system was a gerontocracy: The old men determined war and peace and governed internal tribal arrangements; their power came from their knowledge of the supernatural, in particular their mastery of secret ceremonies to make goblins appear. For the German translation of 1921, Thurnwald kept the kinship analysis unchanged, but – in an atmosphere of war and revolution – added a concluding section on Banaro society as a political structure.

It argued that previous theorists identified politics too closely with the modern state and therefore failed to register the different

forms of political domination that were visible in societies without a modern state. Gerontocracy, his name for the Banaro political system, had no exact equivalent in modern nation-states (or at least, the power of senior males was crisscrossed there by other legal and social codes) but manifested itself as the dominant power in Banaro religion and sex as well as internal and external decision making. Thurnwald urged his readers not to think of tribal societies as apolitical, but rather to expand their notion of the state and imagine a continuum from tribal to modern centers of power.[36]

Sometimes Thurnwald trumpeted European cultural superiority, sometimes he challenged his readers to get beyond their prejudices. Primitive social systems, he wrote, were as complex as those of Europeans, Papuan languages were "very intricate," their history was rich in events, and their mental logic was no different from that of "civilized" societies, although based on a more limited stock of experience. Despite his violent antidemocratic politics, Thurnwald emphasized that Banaro society was a democracy that functioned virtually without the use of force; the senior men dominated the society even though they had no means at their disposal but the power of persuasion. If an individual decided not to go along with the group, he or she was free to do so, although persuasion was powerfully reinforced by the senior men's knowledge of magic and the individual's psychological and material dependence on the village and clan. Writing about Banaro women, Thurnwald insisted that they had different work from men but were not inferior in social status and were in no way their servants or slaves.[37] Despite the severe limitations of his contact with the Banaros, Thurnwald had used his time with his informants intensively and developed a nuanced account of their distribution of power.

Thurnwald spelled out the implications of his research for political theory more clearly in an article that appeared in 1919 between the publication of his English and German monographs on the Banaros. Against the background of the collapse of the German monarchy and an abortive revolution fought out in the streets of Berlin, Thurnwald raised the question of whether Papuan political organization represented a form of communism. The theoretical assumptions of his essay made this a logical point for discussion: He presented Papuan society to his readers as a model of the simplest form of society – not, he wrote, necessarily as a historical predecessor to more advanced societies, but as an example of the most basic set of human relations that could cohere into a stable whole.[38] This simplest society, however, turned out not to be a site of primitive communism, but a place with intricate forms of mutual obligations that went beyond the observing ability of most outsiders. Wherever there was the appearance of communism – where hunting grounds or fields were shared, for example – the collective egoism of a group of relatives (*Sippe*) was at work, not selflessness; The group expressed its *political* will when it made collective claims on resources.[39]

Going beyond either a utilitarian analysis of atomized individual rationality or a presumption of original altruism, Thurnwald showed that the more complicated arrangements in Banaro society, which expressed interest yet drew society together, took the form of gifts. Thurnwald developed his analysis of gift giving bit by bit from the individual examples of exchange that he had observed throughout his New Guinea fieldwork. To be sure one could speak of a closed economy, and most production and consumption took place within the clan. But, he continued, even the most primitive tribes traded with outsiders: pottery and also goods like decorative

shells from the coast in exchange for flint axes and razors from the upper river area, and luxury items like almonds and smoked fish from the coast in exchange for tobacco, yams, sago, and pigs from the interior. Trade went on too within the clan and from clan to clan within the village. He took notice of the inseparability of trade and gift giving:

> Trade has to take place as soon as individuals or a group return from a trip. If one person is asked to give something away then, from the standpoint of morality, it absolutely calls for something in return. In general this is the original form of trade. Presents are given back and forth, for the most part without exact calculation. For larger quantities you may pile up the individual items, say of yams, in fives as a counter-offering to each pile [on the other side, HL]. If the quality or amount is not right, you let it sit there. You haggle less with words than with deeds.

Thurnwald takes us into the pragmatic push and pull of village life here: One can imagine the return of the travelers with their adventures and their abundance of fruits and sweets and shell jewelry, and the clamor from the villagers who demand their fair share – but who in turn, in the short or long run, will have to come up with something to match it.[40]

The gift exchange in material objects overlapped with the gift exchange in women. Clans within a village typically developed friendly relations as they cleared land and created a settlement together. They cemented their friendly relations through the exchange of women in marriage. The elaborate rules regulating marriage were at first baffling, wrote Thurnwald, but fell into place as soon as one understood their regulating idea of marriage as a reciprocal process: ideally an initial marriage triggered the bride's maternal uncle or cousin to take a wife from the other clan. Among the Banaros, it was not unusual for an exchange of presents to be part of the abundant wedding festivities. Sometimes the presents

came at the same time as a simultaneous exchange of women in a double wedding. Reciprocity could also be drawn out over time, for the clans were small in size and might therefore have to wait in order for an exchange pair to be ready for marriage; or one could marry children in order to satisfy the demand for an exchange marriage right away. If the girl bride did not live to maturity then one could replace her by giving presents to the other side. At this point presents and brides became completely indistinguishable in the Banaros' rules of social exchange.[41] Yams, axes, pigs, shells, and women circulated from person to person and clan to clan. The categories of persons and objects that would be kept apart in modern society here merged into one another through the rhythm of exchange; the pulsing movement was sometimes frustrating and sometimes satisfying for the exchange partners, but in either case unified the most disparate things into a social whole.

The tension between power and social cohesion in Thurnwald's interpretation of tribal societies is best understood against the larger landscape of world war, defeat, and the creation of the Weimar Republic. At a time when contemporaries had lived through the chaos of defeat, the collapse of the German monarchy, and bloody street fighting between socialists and nationalists, questions of public power were pervasive and traumatic. Most famously, Max Weber exposed the violence underlying state authority in his famous essay on "Politics as a Vocation" while belittling the hope that revolution could lead to a society free of force.[42] Thurnwald in analogous fashion rejected the belief that tribal societies lived in a state of primitive communism – that is, a politics-free, utopian harmony of the kind imagined by Morgan and Engels; instead he showed how a society like the Banaros had a power elite and conflicts of interest. At the same time the Banaros had developed institutions

of reciprocity that contained conflict, maintained social cohesion, and could be instructive for the German and European societies of his own time that were unable to maintain the most elementary civic order. Thurnwald deepened the investigation of politics by turning to tribal societies beyond the horizon of most political theorists. His appreciation of the checks and balances of Banaro society fit in well with his contemporary Malinowski's conception of the intertwining of force and freedom in gift giving.

### Bronislaw Malinowski and the Kula Ring

Boas and Thurnwald converged on a modern method of studying tribal societies, one that became institutionalized in the discipline of anthropology: firsthand study of a traditional community, limitation to one locality as a site for in-depth living and learning, survey and analysis of its institutions, and understanding of it on its own terms before the elaboration of wider comparisons. Feeling their way to these principles, they developed highly distinctive, local portraits of Kwakiutl and Banaro communities. These peoples fascinated strangers thousands of miles away with the sensational peculiarities of their cultures that nonetheless addressed central issues in the lives of North Americans and Europeans.

A third founder of modern anthropology, even more celebrated for promoting modern fieldwork methods, was Bronislaw Malinowski. Born and raised in Poland, Malinowski made his reputation as an anthropologist in England. Like Boas and Thurnwald, he immersed himself in the society of a remote people: the Massim Islanders who lived on an archipelago off the southeast tip of New Guinea, and in particular the communities of the Trobriand Islands where he did much of his fieldwork. Like his contemporaries, Malinowski uncovered structures of power maintained through acts of gift exchange.

Malinowski once wrote in a letter to his future wife that he was "a Western Slav with Teutonic culture."[43] Even though he was born and educated in Poland and made his career in England, Malinowski was, as his remark suggests, indebted to the same Imperial German learning that formed Boas and Thurnwald. This was not, of course, the only national influence on Malinowski's thinking; he was also deeply shaped by his years in Poland, and the immediate disciplinary context for his research was the anthropology of his British colleagues. Yet Malinowski's own testimony about the hold of German culture suggests a certain affinity with contemporaries like Boas and Thurnwald. Each of them, in his own way, had an outsider relationship to this culture. If Malinowski was a Polish Catholic who passed through the German university on his way to England, Boas was a Jew who migrated to the United States, while Thurnwald, the only one of the three to make his career in Germany, was by birth an Austrian Catholic who converted to Protestantism and migrated to Berlin. At first sight, Malinowski might seem to have had the weakest relationship to German culture, yet his field notes suggest that the affinity ran deep; while following the rhythms of native life he hummed tunes from Strauss's opera *Der Rosenkavalier* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. German music, philosophy, and science were his intellectual conversation partners even as he longed for the companionship of his mother and closest friends in his native Cracow. Perhaps the pervasive concern with questions of power and authority in the Imperial German educated elite left its mark on all three of these founding anthropologists when they turned their attention to traditional communities.

At the University of Cracow, Malinowski wrote an essay on Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) that concentrated on the idea of myth in Nietzsche's widely influential first book. The essay reveals his struggle, during his student years, to understand how

human beings could not be satisfied with a purely intellectual understanding of their world and needed an irrational cosmos of story and feeling in order to cope with it. While there is not necessarily a direct line from an unpublished student essay to mature scientific achievement, Malinowski's youthful reflections suggest a general orientation in keeping with his later positions. He was able with unusual seriousness for his time to enter the mental world of indigenous men and women as a mythic world in which they related their everyday activities to the stories of founding figures from a remote past. An activity like canoe making, which to European eyes might look like the same craft one employed at home, was for the Trobriands of his later anthropology invested with wondrous meaning through its constant reference to myth. Malinowski's heroic Trobriand chiefs had their predecessors in Nietzsche's archaic Hellenes.[44]

After receiving his doctorate in physics at the University of Cracow in 1908, Malinowski attended the University of Leipzig, where he heard the lectures of Wilhelm Wundt and Karl Bücher. Leipzig, along with Munich and Berlin, was one of the three most prestigious universities in Imperial Germany, and while there Malinowski was exposed to its newly intensive specialization and disciplinary rigor. Even though, as his biographer Michael Young has emphasized, Malinowski may have been distracted by music and his love life during his stay there, he nonetheless got to know the kind of large-scale institution that was the international model for the twentieth-century research university.[45]

Bücher's scholarship in the long run, if not immediately, influenced Malinowski's path to the economic anthropology that became his specialty. He later took Bücher's stage theory of primitive economics as a polemical target, but in less obvious ways Bücher offered methodological orientation for his own work. Bücher's disciplined and

imaginative preoccupation with processes of work was a fertile starting point for anyone who wished to think beyond narrowly modern conceptions of productivity. His relentless gathering of evidence in his economic histories corresponded to Malinowski's drive for detailed documentation. In particular, Bücher's book *Arbeit und Rhythmus* (Work and Rhythm, 1896) thought outside the iron box of clock-bound modern work and recovered the order of work according to other measures: the rhythms of the human body, agriculture, and the seasons; the sense of play that marked shared effort and was never reducible to just a struggle for subsistence. Despite the limitations of Bücher's stage theory of economic development, his writings included a cultural understanding of work and its underlying values that set it apart, in a lastingly valuable way, from utilitarian analysis.[46]

Malinowski made his declaration of independence from Bücher in his article on "The Primitive Economics of the Trobriand Islanders," which appeared in 1921. The article criticized the work done in economic anthropology so far from both the theoretical and the empirical side: "Small results have been achieved, because the amount of serious consideration given by theoretical writers to economic problems is in no way proportional to their complexity and importance, and the field observations extant are scanty." Writing in an economic journal, Malinowski approached the problem from the perspective of economic theory. He asked whether contemporary economics could be applied to "a type of society entirely different from our own." This was where Bücher and the English translation of *The Origin of National Economies* (with a different translation title) came in:

> The question has been set forth and an attempt at its solution made by C. Buecher in his *Industrial Evolution*. His conclusions are, in my opinion,

> a failure, not owing to imperfect reasoning or method, but rather to the defective material on which they are formed. Buecher comes to the conclusion that the savages – he includes among them races as highly developed as the Polynesians – have no economic organization, and that they are in a pre-economic stage – the lowest in that of the individual search for food, the higher ones in the stage of self-sufficient household economy.

Bücher's search for a historicization of economic behavior was his point of departure, even if it was one that he criticized for its ignorance of the real state of "savages" and their economic organization.[47]

As this passage suggests, Malinowski had certainly not given up on an evolutionary view of indigenous communities or on the use of the term "savage" to describe them. Whatever his disagreements with Bücher, this was not among them. The Trobriands "certainly are not at the lower end of savagery" – but overall they might "be taken as representative of the majority of the savage races now in existence." This was low enough to rank them as "less developed culturally than the Polynesians, the bulk of North American Indians, of Africans, and of Indonesians." Hence they exemplified the complexity of even low-end "savages": "[I]f we find, therefore, distinct forms of economic organization among them, we are safe in assuming that even among the lowest savages we might expect to find more facts of economic interest than have been hitherto recorded." As with Thurnwald, there was a tension between Malinowski's evolutionary generalizations and his anthropological research. If this had been all that Malinowski had to say, his writings would hardly have been an improvement on the racial theorizing of his nineteenth-century predecessors. As with Thurnwald's observations on the Banaro, however, once he turned to his fieldwork, clichéd constructions of evolutionary stages gave

way to something different, a portrayal of the originality and complexity of Trobriand economic arrangements and the initial ignorance of the outsider who tried to find out about them. Malinowski described, for example, how he started out by asking who owned the land and kept getting different answers. Slowly he came to the realization that he was trying to tease out an ownership system different from the one he knew from back home. The garden magician or *Towosi* had rights over the individual plots: No stage of gardening could take place without his ritual assistance and help in planning. He himself had special gardens called *Leywota* that set the standards for all the others. The laborers who cultivated the gardens were hard workers, but much of the wealth that they produced went to supporting their sisters' families, which was a more general obligation of brothers in Trobriand society. The chiefs, too, had claims on the gardens: they took tribute and displayed their wealth of produce, taking part of it for the acquisition of valuables or *vaygu'a*. The answer to the seemingly simple question of who "owns" the gardens turned into a lesson about the different meaning of ownership in the Trobriands.[48]

Malinowski's first full-length work of anthropology from the field (he had written a study of Australian aborigines from secondary sources while still in England) was *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. British scholars interested in ethnology recognized Malinowski's unusual talent and supported him at home and abroad, where he benefited from the generosity of colonial administrators in Australia and New Guinea. Malinowski richly bore out their confidence in him. Despite his hypochondria, his arrogance, and his complicated love life, he came back with material for books that portrayed "natives" in a new way. His skilful

blend of scientific survey and personal empathy led readers into the magical, mythical, yet plausible world of the Trobriand Islanders.

Published in 1922, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* made Malinowski instantly famous and became a classic of modern anthropology. Its appeal had to do partly with his skill at presenting the methodological principles for his emerging discipline: At the beginning of the book, Malinowski walked his readers through hard-won principles for fieldwork anthropology. The title and the narrative form helped, too. As more than one reader has observed, Malinowski had a great gift for taking the reader into Massim society as a participant-observer in a vividly imagined way of life. Not only did he observe well: Malinowski also told a winning *story*. His islanders were Argonauts, and so, in an imaginary way, were the readers who thanks to their anthropologist guide could follow them on their heroic voyages. He broke with the static categories such as geography, language, myths, ceremonies, and religion that characterized much of the ethnographic writing of the late nineteenth century (including Boas's early work) and replaced them with a travel account that was simultaneously a space for conceptualizing social institutions.[49]

A posthumous publication added an extra dimension of drama to Malinowski's voyage to the Trobriands. The private diary that he kept in Polish during his Trobriand fieldwork, published in 1967, revealed the inner life of a self-absorbed careerist, lonely for Poland, his fiancée, other women, and European culture. The diary covers two separate periods: Malinowski's pre-Trobriand fieldwork on Mailu Island from September 1914 to August 1915 and his stay on the Trobriand Islands from October 1917 to July 1918. It became notorious for its foul-mouthed language toward the islanders ("*exterminate the brutes*," he wrote at one point, consciously or

unconsciously echoing Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*). This is only one aspect of a book that was no less ruthless toward the rest of the colonial society: "I don't care for life with the missionary, particularly because I know I'll have to pay for everything. This man disgusts me with his [white] 'superiority,' etc. But I must grant that English missionary work has certain favorable aspects. If this man were a German, he would doubtless be downright loathsome." Malinowski was just as hard on himself. The diary was the accounting-book of a daily struggle for self-discipline against the weaknesses of libido and physique, the attempt to brush away comfortable truths and reach a deeper level of insight about himself and the surrounding society of traders, missionaries, administrators, and natives. It resembles the autobiographical reflections of Rousseau and Nietzsche in containing both repulsive qualities and a relentless habit of self-examination.[50]

At the same time Malinowski was venting his private rage, he was also tracking the great inter-island system of gift exchange in the Massim Islands that he was to make famous (and that was to make him famous), the kula ring. "The Kula," explained Malinowski, "is a form of exchange, of extensive, inter-tribal character; it is carried on by communities inhabiting a wide ring of islands, which form a closed circuit."[51] Long necklaces of red shell, called *soulava*, traveled from owner to owner clockwise around the islands, while bracelets of white shell called *mwali*, went counter-clockwise. Hence, the exchanges formed a ring, as Malinowski's definition emphasized, a closed totality. In 512 pages, Malinowski led the reader on the journey around the kula circuit, sometimes stepping aside for long digressions on subjects like canoe building and magic, but returning to the rhythm of the journey. The kula was many things: in a depth rarely attempted before, Malinowski showed how a single

institution in a supposedly primitive society turned out to have an inexhaustible richness. This alone was enough to be a reproof to the deprecating literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whether from the field or the theorist's armchair, that imagined tribal peoples to have simple or "primitive" societies. Like Boas and Thurnwald, Malinowski traced the concatenation of *power* relations that animated his subjects' gift exchanges. There were other dimensions of Massim society that Malinowski could have written about, and did write about in subsequent books, but he structured his grand entrance into ethnology around an institution that dramatized the status of a ruling class and its skill at manifesting its social splendor.

The kula was "a trading system" and "an economic phenomenon," as Malinowski characterized it near the beginning of his book. But in his revaluation of economic values, Malinowski also stated his intention to grasp this trading system as part of the "mental life" of the islanders. Here one thinks of the same kind of synthesis of economic and noneconomic motives in Boas and Thurnwald. Again in Malinowski, with this shift in point of view, the value of the kula objects looked significantly different from utilitarian commodities. When the islanders embarked on their voyages, they did more than fulfill material needs: "We shall see there the savage striving to satisfy certain aspirations, to attain his type of value, to follow his line of social ambition. We shall see him led on to perilous and difficult enterprises by a tradition of magical and heroical exploits, shall see him following the lure of his own romance." When Malinowski wrote that the islander aspired to attain "his type of value" and linked value and ambition to "the lure of his own romance," he annulled the utilitarian definition of value as determined by purposes of subsistence or pleasure; instead,

something entirely different was on the mind of the kula actors. Magic and more inhabited the *vaygu'a*, and to get them the islanders risked their lives on their epic voyages. There was romance in the islanders' motives – and yet that romance was inseparable from the "social ambition" they could realize through these material objects. It was not the pursuit of wealth alone that drove islanders on long and dangerous voyages, but a blend of economic interest, social ambition, and imagination.[52]

Malinowski's guided tour of the Massim islands started out, as if in a slow farewell to the safety of colonial outposts, in the mail boat from Port Moresby, the capital of colonial New Guinea (and now of independent Papua New Guinea). "At about the middle of Orangerie Bay" the Massim country began and ran northwest from this point to Cape Nelson. His adopted perspective was Trobriand: He spent most of his time on Kiriwana and the surrounding islands, the main "province" of the Trobriands whose language was the region's "standard speech." This district was originally a place of story-book terror for Malinowski: During his previous stay on nearby Toulon Island he had heard about it as a home of sorcery and cannibalism though also of fine culture, including carvings, song, and dances. He gave an affectionate if sober description of the locals on the southern coast culminating in this comic statement which contrasted with the title's image of archaic heroes: "On the whole, they give at first approach not so much the impression of wild savages as of smug and self-satisfied bourgeois." Male village elders dominated Kiriwana society, yet their families were matrilinear, the women were independent, and sexual life was "extremely lax"; artisans and traders, the Kiriwanans enjoyed "big feasts, called *So'i*." Kiriwana in Malinowski's description turned into a place of vibrant public life.[53]

Kiriwana starts to feel like a comfortable home by the time we leave it in Malinowski's description and head out to the human and natural hazards of kula voyaging. Next he took his readers north to Dobu, a densely populated island with the reputation of being the home of former cannibals and head-hunters. The Dobuans in Malinowski's telling – a recent monograph disputes his description, which has entered into the lore of anthropology – were dour, but their culture was a force to be reckoned with, their language the lingua franca throughout much of the Massim, their land "studded with spots of special, mythological interest," their women formidable gardeners and magicians. To leave Dobu you had to sail past dangerous stretch of coral and sand into open sea, which took the kula voyager on to the eastern shore of Ferguson Island. This was the site of an important beach, Sarubwoyna, where at the right season fleets of forty to a hundred canoes gathered to prepare for the kula trade. After this, Malinowski and his fellow voyagers made a stop on the island of Sanaroa; to the east of this island, there was a lagoon "where year after year the Trobrianders, returning from Dobu, look for the valuable spondylus shell, which, after their arrival home, is worked into the red discs, which form one of the main objects of native wealth." After more stops at small islands with mythic meaning for the voyagers, they reached the Amphlett Islands, "the link, both geographically and culturally, between the coastal tribes of the volcanic region of Dobu and the inhabitants of the flat coral archipelago of the Trobriands." Married and chaste like the Dobuans, these islanders profited from their middleman status as traders between Dobu and the Trobriands and were disliked by the inhabitants of both places. Even though he checked readers' travel fantasies with skeptical asides making clear that he was a hard-headed scientist, Malinowski told tales of power and

terror, of rivalries and poisons, as well as tropical beauty and friendship, that made the mythic world come alive.[54]

The kula was a ceremonial exchange uniting two partners in a deep emotional bond of friendship. The movement of arm shells and necklaces was a noble trade that never stopped. The person who received a *vaygu'a* was obligated to trade it to another kula partner on its one-way circuit, clockwise or counter-clockwise, around the archipelago; it took two to ten years, wrote Malinowski, for an object to complete the ring. Ethnographers had noticed the kula trade before Malinowski, traders had better opportunities to observe it, and Malinowski himself only slowly became aware of it, but only he recognized that it challenged conventional European beliefs about exchange – or rather, that it brought Europeans to a fuller awareness of values and exchanges that, in different forms, they knew from their own society. The kula was all about status, prestige, and the way useless objects embody those social values and therefore become objects of admiration.[55]

Despite his racialized language, Malinowski used the kula to break down reigning conceptions of both the savage and the civilized. He took issue with the prevailing European notion of indigenous trade as a form of barter, carried out for objects of use and without much ceremony – that is, that it amounted to an immature form of modern market exchange. "We have to realise clearly," he wrote, "that the Kula contradicts in almost every point the above definition of 'savage trade'." Instead, it was firmly regulated by myth, law, and magic and took place in public according to clearly known ceremonies. The kula was a social institution that created an enormous web of relationships stretching through the Massim islands: "Sociologically, though transacted between tribes differing in language, culture and probably even in race, it is based on a fixed and permanent status,

on a partnership which binds into couples some thousands of individuals." It was a series of transactions that were not trade at all in the normal commercial sense, but were instead about the contest for social status that stretched across the diverse island societies of the Massim. Participation in the kula ring was a many-sided quest that united economics, politics, society, and religion. Not that the islanders were ignorant of trade: Alongside exalted, rule-bound kula exchange between chiefs or other individuals of high rank, *gimwali* went on – ordinary bartering, viewed by the islanders with disdain. Islanders, like Europeans, were complicated beings capable of more than one way of relating to each other.[56]

Malinowski pressed his readers to consider a European comparison with the kula. Europeans, too, had their *vaygu'a*, even though their temporal relation to them differed. Kula owners sooner or later were supposed to give up their precious objects, whereas Europeans could retain them over generations. Hence crown jewels were supposed to remain in permanent possession of their royal owners, in contrast to the ever-circulating valuables of the kula ring.[57] Of course, even this difference was not as absolute as Malinowski suggested. While crown jewels are an extreme example of valuables removed from circulation and identified with the singular status of a dynasty, even they occasionally move over time, belying the illusion of permanence that their removal from circulation is supposed to suggest. When they do, they retain the prestige of having belonged to their former princely owners. The same was true for kula objects: part of their desirability came not just from their beauty, but also from the names of the high and mighty who had formerly held them.

The comparison with European society went further. The participants in the kula loved to possess as much as Europeans do. But they linked possession to generosity: "The important point is that

with them to possess is to give – and here the natives differ from us notably." Giving was not just giving an exact equivalent in the matter-of-fact, private way of *gimwali* or a commercial transaction, but a demonstration of personal qualities:

> A man who owns a thing is naturally expected to share it, to distribute it, to be its trustee and dispenser. And the higher the rank the greater the obligation.
>
> … Meanness, indeed, is the most despised vice, and the only thing about which the natives have strong moral views, while generosity is the essence of goodness. … The fundamental principle of the natives' moral code in this matter makes a man do his fair share in Kula transaction and the more important he is, the more will he desire to shine by his generosity. *Noblesse oblige* is in reality the social norm regulating their conduct. [58]

At this point Malinowski dissolved the utilitarian model as a norm governing individual behavior and replaced it with a different norm from the European past: seemingly generous and selfless behavior as the sign of social rank. Indeed, the entire moral order of Trobriand life depended on one's willingness to put this kind of personal nobility on display and having the means to give. There were no formal sanctions against keeping a kula valuable, but the social sanctions were considerable: loss of reputation and the wrath of the kula partner. There could be a supernatural punishment, too: The jilted partner might turn to a sorcerer to bring ruin on the person who failed to give in style. Taking part in the kula ring, like hunting or polo in Europe, was an expensive and nonutilitarian activity, but not a pointless one: In both cases grand and conspicuous consumption reinforced the impression of the nobility and the power and prestige of the giver – and for powerful reasons one had to live up to social expectation.

Throughout his entire description – not only of the kula ring, but also of other forms of native exchange – Malinowski had his eyes on gift-giving. A beautiful example of the bonds created by gifts is

his description of the master of the outbound kula voyage and his dependents or, as Malinowski called them, his vassals. Malinowski gave a rich description of the distribution of gifts to vassals as the voyagers were on their way out: pigs were roasted live and cut into parts; the master or *tovi-uvalaku* provided heaps of yams, taro, coconuts, sugar cane, ripe bananas and betel nuts, presents to him that he now offered up to his fellow voyagers. Malinowski noted the intricacy of the webs of gift-giving: "In fact, if we try to draw out all the strands of gifts and contributions connected with such a distribution, we would find that it is spun round into such an intricate web, that even the lengthy account of the foregoing chapter does not quite do it justice." In *The Argonauts* the give-and-take of multiply invested things, which Morgan in his field notebooks could describe but not understand, blossomed forth in manifold shades of meaning.[59]

In an early chapter and in his conclusion, Malinowski turned his study of the kula ring into a general critique of modern views of tribal societies by situating it between liberal and communist theories. In his survey of native forms of economic exchange, he combated what he called the two reigning points of view. One was that natives were strictly utilitarian, event to the point of not bothering with exchange when they produced everything within the autarkic household. This was the position of Bücher, whom Malinowski singled out by name. The other point of view was that they were complete selfless and lived in a communist economy. This was the position of Morgan and Engels, whom he did not name, but as was the case when Thurnwald discussed primitive communism, the topic had contemporary relevance in the years following Bolshevik Revolution. Both positions were completely false, argued Malinowski, who did his best to demolish them not just through

counter-argument but by discussing actual native forms of exchange. The Massim Islanders performed virtually all economic acts because they attached some non-utilitarian meaning to them, magical or ritual or mythic. And they were not selfless communists, but expected some kind of return for what they give. Their types of exchange were multitudinous and thoroughly interwoven with social relationships of different kinds. There were the relationships within the family, notably between father and children: Fathers were outsiders to their children in this matrilinear society but cultivated their children's love with presents. There were relationships with kin, notably between a husband and his female relatives and his sisters' male in-laws. There were the relationships between clans and villages. There were the friendships governed by kula norms. And there was *gimwali* or commercial exchange. In other words Massim islanders enjoyed a complex and multitudinous variety of exchange partners and the kinds of solidarity they built, far beyond anything imagined by nineteenth-century recorders of indigenous life. After 500 pages Malinowski's conclusion came back to his general critique of existing notions of "the economic nature of primitive man," which were divided " between the liberal-utilitarian and the socialist-materialist conceptions of economics driven by human interest." *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, then, culminated in a reckoning with the century of economic anthropology leading up to his own time. The peculiarities of Massim society and its kula ring, a strange ritual in a remote corner of the earth, were the starting-point for new methods and conclusions that changed the way Europeans thought about both distant peoples and themselves.[60]

Malinowski shared with Boas and Thurnwald a differentiated appreciation of the politics of traditional communities, outlining how they used a system of mutual obligations to weave their individual

members into a collective whole. The Trobriands were, as he noted, an unusually hierarchical Melanesian society, and he lingered over the different gradations of the hierarchy in order to show how it enforced the power of the chiefs, whether through their sumptuously displayed foodstuffs or through the *vaygu'a* that they received from their kula partners. As he wrote a few years later, Trobriands were individualists who would not mind escaping social bonds, but their society effectively channeled their energies into reciprocal relations, whether in the shared ownership of a boat or in the exchange of vegetables for fish between an inland and a coastal community. Power was manifest above all in the gift: "In the giving of gifts, in the distribution of their surplus, they feel a manifestation of power, and an enhancement of personality."[61] Malinowski's early masterpiece and his ongoing reflections on the Massim islanders contained a deeply humane teaching: that the society of the Trobriands was familiar as well as strange, that its myths and magic, its gardens and its kula voyages, served ambitions for power and recognition that Europeans could recognize from their own past and present.

Boas, Thurnwald, and Malinowski worked to define a pattern of tribal exchange that defied Western utilitarian conceptions of both self-interest and selfless community. Their paradigms of gift giving pointed instead toward conceptions that were sometimes offensive to European morality but could also surpass it in nobility and generosity. All three analyzed the power relations within societies that made gift giving not just an expression of personal emotion, but a means of creating and enforcing social solidarities. Their intellectual achievements, embedded in dense studies that stayed close to the ground of three distinct societies, converged in the clear and wide-ranging synthesis of Mauss's essay on the gift.

# 5. Marcel Mauss and the Globalized Gift

The discoverers of gift exchange had no special talent for gift giving. In their fieldwork, the founding anthropologists preferred cash or its local equivalents to extract information and artifacts. Boas paid cash for Northwest Indian artifacts and for the services of George Hunt. Thurnwald made a point of avoiding gifts and keeping his relationships with his local aides business-like, making a mess of things when he made a present of a suit to his Banaro informant, Yomba. Malinowski bargained with islanders and worried like any tourist that he was being cheated. As in many commercial transactions, impersonal calculation may have been intertwined with friendship or other motives of gift exchange. Nonetheless, the anthropologists were unreflective about their methods of doing business and whether they might have learned more by entering into gift networks.

They were far less sensitive to the place of gift exchange in their own lives than Hastings in India a century before. Unlike their eighteenth-century predecessors, they did not inhabit a Europe of gift relationships that were as necessary as the air for their survival; in their modern societies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, business dealings seemed natural and sufficient. They

encountered systems of gift exchange as foreign; hence, when Malinowski wanted to bring home the kula ring to his readers, he had to reach for the fusty example of royal heirlooms – a particularly nostalgic choice in the wake of the world war that turned the Russian, Austrian, and German monarchies into living memories.[1] Precisely because reciprocal gift giving seemed so alien to their own society, they confronted it as a puzzle that required theorization.

Marcel Mauss was in significant ways their opposite. He did not travel outside Western societies before the publication of his essay on the gift in 1925; immersion in an alien culture was not the source of his insights. Instead he belonged to an intellectual milieu combining family, friendship, and work in a spirit of gift exchange. His personal experience of reciprocity reinforced his postwar political ideal of a social democratic middle course between the extremes of capitalism and communism, self-interest and selflessness, that we have learned to recognize as the path to the gift. Under the impact of World War I, Mauss poured his personal ethos and political beliefs into his famous essay, which recovered the arts of human solidarity from the traditional communities of Europe and the Pacific.

## The Community of the Gift: Mauss and the Durkheim School

Marcel Mauss belonged to a gift network in republican France at the turn of the twentieth century that was as elaborate as any circuit of shells or exchange of blankets described by Malinowski or Boas. It started as a family habit of mutual support ("our family communism," he later called it) and later turned into the defining style of one of the most important scientific enterprises of the twentieth century, the circle of collaborators organized around Émile

Durkheim.[2] Mauss's essay on the gift was not just the outcome of inspiration, or the political challenges of the postwar period, or the ethnographic evidence of gifting practices that he amassed; it also grew out of personal and professional experiences going back to his parents' household and student years.

The initiator of this contemporary gift network was his uncle, Émile Durkheim, one of the central shapers of modern sociology. Mauss was the son of Durkheim's older sister, Rosine. In the tight-knit Jewish community of their hometown, Épinal, in Lorraine, the two siblings' families were close. When Mauss enrolled at the University of Bordeaux in 1890, Durkheim, already a professor there, watched carefully over his nephew's education and introduced him to two of his colleagues. When Mauss went to Paris five years later to work toward his doctorate, he became Durkheim's research assistant for the monograph *Suicide*, by his own count helping to classifying 26,000 suicides. And in 1897 he became Durkheim's lieutenant in the launching of *L'Année Sociologique*, which began to appear in the following year, seeking out the bright young men who would be able collaborators and taking over the labor of writing some of the reviews that made the journal a center for scholarship in the social sciences.[3]

Durkheim was an overbearing mentor. At a certain point the affectionate letters turned sour, and Durkheim began to write brutally, abusively to Mauss. This reached one of its low points in June 1902, when Durkheim accused him of misusing the money inherited from his father (the conflict had to do with Mauss's financial backing of a cooperative baking venture). In September 1906 he wrote a letter accusing Mauss of deceiving him about a trip to Russia that he undertook at the urging of Jean Jaurès, the great socialist politician with whom Durkheim was also friendly. The letter is

hair-raising. "Your new letter is here. It is the epitome of confusion and incoherence," wrote Durkheim. He went on to complain that Mauss had promised to withdraw from politics but took on one new project after another: "Much of the harm that you do to us, of the torment that you cause me, comes from your *complete lack of modesty*. You don't hold back from any task … you are going to spend fourteen days in Russia, where you don't even know the language, and you want to write an article on Russia! Doesn't your scientific method cry aloud to you how unserious this venture is?" Mauss is sometimes supposed to have been the loyal disciple of the master, but the reality was a more difficult one of conflict between the well-meaning but suffocating Durkheim and the nephew who was determined to preserve his political and intellectual autonomy.[4]

After Durkheim's death in 1917, during the formative years for the writing of *The Gift*, Mauss did not mention this story of paternalism and rebellion and instead avowed an insistent loyalty to Durkheim and his circle. In the autobiographical sketch that he composed in 1930 as part of his successful candidacy for a chair at the Collège de France, Mauss made collaboration the organizing principle of his academic life. "It would be impossible to separate myself from the activities of a school. If there is personality, it is drowned in a voluntary impersonalism. The sense of work in common, as a team, the conviction that collaboration is a counterweight to research with the pretension to originality: perhaps this is what characterizes my entire scientific career, now perhaps more than ever."[5] There was a suggestion here that he might have been less wholly dedicated to this principle of the collective at some point in the past, but he emphasized that this was the lesson learned in the fruitful era from the early 1890s to 1914, when cooperation had characterized a wholly new and successful school of sociology. The personal

was inseparable from the professional in Mauss's motivations. The collective nature of the work on *L'Année Sociologique* corresponded to his upbringing and his socialist politics. But as Mauss outlined in his autobiographical sketch, it had intellectual justifications as well, for it had produced a sociology of unprecedented quality. Mauss's description embraced a tension between individual and community, self-sacrifice and critical scrutiny.

Mauss's essay on the gift was an enactment of this double principle of sacrifice to the group and self-assertion. He wrote it as part of his effort to revive the damaged enterprise of the prewar collective. After the war, with Durkheim dead and a number of the collaborators lost in action, Mauss took upon himself the burdens of leadership. Despite his own years of wartime service – he volunteered for the army in September 1914, at age forty-three, and served until the war's end – and a postwar illness that lasted a year and a half, he postponed the project that he thought of as his major work, a study of nationalism.[6] Instead he began to edit and publish the writings that Durkheim and others had left in varying states of completion on their desks. Even in the best years of the mid-1920s, the burdens did not diminish; instead, he took upon himself the task of reviving the journal of the prewar Durkheim circle, *L'Année Sociologique*. There was too little time, too little money, too little staff, and there were too few survivors to carry on the work in the style of the prewar era.[7] But Mauss pushed on, organizing an editorial committee while keeping the leadership of the journal firmly to himself. The first volume of the new series, dated 1923–24 but published in 1925, was a monument to his intellectual community, planned according to Mauss's design and including as its sole scholarly article *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*.

To imagine *The Gift* in its time, one must see it again as part of *L'Année Sociologique*. Its publication there was not incidental to its meaning. The essay was truly an intertextual work, independent yet constantly communicating with its surrounding chorus of authors and intellectual movements.[8]

The interplay of Mauss, Durkheim, and their collaborators began with the information on the title page. *L'Année Sociologique* was founded by the deceased Durkheim; it had an editorial committee of five, headed by Mauss; there were twenty-nine other collaborators listed; facing the title page was a full-page picture of Durkheim; the journal was under Mauss's general editorial leadership. The rest of the volume continued the association of Mauss and his collaborators, living and dead. Coming after Mauss's introduction to the issue there were only two original contributions – both of them written by Mauss: a eulogy ("In Memoriam") for those who had died since 1914, and the essay on the gift. The prefatory material took up the first 29 pages, the famous essay a little more than 150 pages, ending on page 186. Then came the vast rest of the volume, made up of reviews, anywhere in length from just a title listing to detailed review essays running all the way to page 979; many of them were written by Mauss himself. They amounted to an overview of what Mauss called the important works of sociology to appear from July 1923 to July 1924. The term "sociology" was a more comprehensive category then than now; the reviews covered broad swatches of what one would think of today as anthropology, legal studies, philosophy, political science, economics, criminology, linguistics, religious studies, and history, altogether comprising an overview of the social sciences of Mauss's time. Thus, the text of his essay on the gift was literally situated between two contexts. Before it came the Durkheim school, and after came it the human sciences

of 1923–1924; before it, Mauss's evaluation of his own intellectual community, its achievements and unfinished business, and after it, in his own reviews, his spirited critique of competing schools. The essay on the gift furthered these conversations with collaborators and contemporaries by citing other scholars and serving as a model of sociological inquiry.[9]

Mauss's reviews permit us to view his essay on the gift in the international scholarly setting of his time. He wrote approximately ninety-six of them, some just notices a few lines long, others running to paragraphs or pages of commentary.[10] He wrote on works of ethnology, ethnography, social psychology, evolutionary theories and philosophies of civilization, racial theories, philosophy and sociology of religion, tribal religion, magic, ritual, mythology, law, and tribal art and music; on British, American, French, German, Dutch, and Italian scholarship; on studies of Europe since the Middle Ages, classical antiquity, ancient India, native North America, Australia, Tierra del Fuego, Borneo, Malaysia, Brazil, Central Africa, the Sudan, Nigeria, the Gold Coast, the Caucasus, Bali, Hawaii, and ancient Israel, often with expertise. His command of the relevant social science at the time he wrote *The Gift* was very broad indeed. The essay was written with an awareness of something approaching the full range of empirical and conceptual resources available in European and American social science of the early 1920s.

One insistent theme ran through Mauss's preface and eulogy: the obligations of the living to the dead. There was, first of all, the obligation to remember and publicly state the names of the departed, starting with Durkheim, whom he recalled as the journal's founder in the opening sentence of the preface. However much they had quarreled in life, Mauss revered his uncle, and Durkheim's name and Mauss's scholarly duties toward him recurred in the two opening

contributions. Explaining the refounding of the journal, Mauss continued in the opening lines of the preface: "We believed that it was our strict duty, if we received the necessary support, to return to this modest, anonymous, impersonal work." "In Memoriam," written with the grief and conviction of a funeral oration, spelled out Durkheim's founding principles, his fidelity to them, and the demands that they imposed. The journal, he noted, was always the impersonal work of a group. So Durkheim had always conceived of it, and so Mauss wrote, singling out eleven collaborators who had died since 1914 and summarizing their completed and incomplete work as a bridge across the years of conflict and loss; while Mauss allowed his mourning to show through, his intention was to do justice to his departed colleagues by summarizing their work and in this way guaranteeing continuity from the prewar to the postwar journal. Mauss also tried through these brief portraits to demonstrate the collective nature of their enterprise; their achievements were not isolated works of scholarship, but parts of a division of labor that formed an interconnected whole. Mauss's aim, then, was in one sense scientific and objective as he understood it, a demonstration of the ongoing legitimacy and creativity of a science founded before the war, interrupted, but now taken up again where it had left off. Mauss made clear that the task imposed upon him grew out of the community of the living and those he called the heroic and venerated dead: "In this spirit of faithful remembrance of Durkheim and all our dead; still in communion with them; sharing their belief in the utility of our science; believing as they did that through our science man is perfectible; sharing these feelings with them beyond death, we take up full strength, with all our heart, the task that we have never abandoned." The essay on the gift, then, appeared in an extraordinary issue of the journal; in it Mauss set forth his aims in

answer to the trauma of the war, countering its destruction with an act of remembrance and promise of renaissance.[11]

Mauss's essay on the gift as it appeared in the revived journal was itself an enactment of many gift relationships with his contemporaries. Debts to his French community, described in the preface and eulogy of the journal issue, were generously repaid in the essay itself; so too were scholarly obligations to his British and American friends. He wrote with a potlatch zest for counterdisplay, recognizing the scholarly riches received and reciprocating with an essay that could match and perhaps surpass his predecessors' offerings.

There were the debts to his scholarly community in France. One source for his own work was the scholarship of Maurice Cahen: Mauss opened his essay with an epigraph from the *Havamal*, the early Scandinavian collection of epic poems. The lines that he cited combined a call to generosity toward guests and an injunction to reciprocate, with a stanza linking gift giving to "noble and valiant men" and opposing them to the coward who "fears everything" and the miser who "always fears presents." It was Cahen who translated the passage for Mauss. Cahen was also the author of a monograph closely linked to the gift, a study of the libation in tenth-century Scandinavian society and its role in hallowing the solidarity of the social group. Here one can see one source of Mauss's turn to the gift in the emphasis on rituals of sacrifice that make visible and affirm the unity of the society as a whole. At the same time Cahen turned this Durkheimean insight in a historical direction, extracting forms of behavior from medieval Scandinavia comparable to the principles of the gift that Mauss had discerned in Oceania.[12]

Mauss announced to his readers his collaboration with Georges Davy – he modestly called his essay "part of a series of researches that Davy and myself have been pursuing for a long time" – and his

footnotes acknowledged the influence of Davy's book, *La Foi jurée*, published in 1922, hence in close proximity to Mauss's essay. In fact Davy's book shows a striking amount of overlap with Mauss. In it he analyzed the emergence of the modern judicial contract from earlier forms of social obligation, beginning with the family defined by bloodlines, then moving through the marital relations that create mutual obligations between families and the feudal concentration of power in male leaders. Davy shared a theoretical vocabulary with Mauss: He too treated the potlatch as a generalized type of exchange and referred to it as an "obligatory exchange of favors (*prestations*)." The idea of the total social institution, prominent in Mauss's essay, was there too when his conclusion looked back on the "complex and total network of obligations required by one's status when one becomes a parent or when changes in status call for an exchange of presents (*prestations*) between phratries." So close are the lines of argument that one almost wonders why Mauss's book has become a classic while Davy's has been forgotten; after all Mauss, too, was trying among other things to explain the sociological prehistory of legal forms of obligation. But there was more in Davy that helps explain the difference in their reception. Davy was doctrinaire. He stuck to the mid-nineteenth-century belief in a transition from a maternal to a paternal society, and overall he was writing an evolutionary history rather than, like Mauss, the history of a social institution; his book looked like an outlier of the debates that social anthropologists were trying to leave behind. The evolutionary background was more incidental to Mauss's conception of the gift, and his successors could shed it while discovering in the gift a flexible conception that could be adapted to the empirical evidence of different times and places.[13]

Mauss was a cosmopolitan thinker; he never just burrowed into his own language or society, but read and corresponded widely across borders, national and cultural. His contacts with his British contemporaries were especially cordial: Mauss had numerous friendships that were created and reinforced by visits back and forth beginning with Mauss's student visit to England in 1897 and were vibrant in the years leading up to the publication of *The Gift*. He formed a lasting affection for James Frazer, the famed author of *The Golden Bough*. At the end of 1922, Mauss mailed to Frazer and his wife an essay on the Thracians, which, as he modestly put it in his imperfect English, "is a part of a series of researches which by the [sic] time are successful to some extent." The research in question was Mauss's studies culminating in *The Gift*, to which the essay on the Thracians was an important prelude: It drew on Melanesia and the Pacific Northwest to sketch the logic of the gift, criticized the notion of a natural economy of barter, and pointed to marriage as one of the chief means of exchange by which families or clans formed alliances. Hitherto, he wrote, his attempts to find similar facts in the Indo-European world had been fruitless. But now he had discovered a system of total obligations among the Thracians that had the peculiar character of the potlatch, for Thracian gifts were to be returned with interest. It was to Mauss a demonstration that gift exchange was embedded in archaic practices that were incomprehensible to the sophisticated Athenians of the classical era. With this article on their desks, the Frazers could have an exact idea of what Mauss was up to when they visited him in Paris a half year later in May 1923.[14]

Mauss did not have much occasion to mention Frazer's work in *The Gift*, if only because *The Golden Bough* did not address the subject of gift giving.[15] There were prominent younger British

sociologists, too, whom Mauss befriended but had little or no occasion to recommend to readers of his essay. E. E. Evans-Pritchard did not appear at all, although Malinowski thought highly of his work. C. G. Seligman received only one mention in passing in the text of the essay, despite Mauss's warmly cordial relation with him and his wife; his work simply was not relevant to gift giving in contrast to *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, an ongoing conversation partner for Mauss in the essay despite his dislike of Malinowski. *The Gift* was a work of scholarship, not an awards ceremony, and Mauss followed the logic of his subject.

Sometimes friendship and scholarship overlapped, for example in Mauss's special attention to the work of Arthur Radcliffe-Brown. In December 1924 he wrote to Radcliffe-Brown that he would probably receive the forthcoming *Année Sociologique* in installments between March and May. Mauss apologized for being unable to include a review of Radcliffe-Brown's *The Andaman Islanders*, for only works appearing in 1923–1924 could be included (the book had come out in 1922). However, Mauss promised to include a discussion of it in the section of his essay on the obligation to give (Chapter 1 of *The Gift*). In the end, he worked in Radcliffe-Brown's book in the opening section of Chapter 2, "The Rules of Generosity: The Andaman Islands." Here Mauss could put to good use two quotes from Radcliffe-Brown stating that gifts unlike commercial objects served moral ends of fostering friendly relations and demonstrating generosity. The quotes fell short of Mauss's conceptualization of the gift, for both of them spoke of *individuals* who deepened their social contract through their emotion-laden exchanges, whereas for Mauss it was important to show the extent to which gifts signified exchanges between social groups. Still, the materials from Radcliffe-Brown added to the breadth and persuasiveness of Mauss's

argument as they demonstrated gift-giving practices in yet another part of the world. One sees again, as with Cahen and Davy, how Mauss's conception of the gift was a synthesis of evidence from many of the scholarly works of his historical moment. A larger number of contemporary observers were intrigued by gift giving and had comments to make about it, even if it was Mauss who recognized the general significance of gift giving and unified the bits and pieces into a lasting idea.[16] Mauss turned the give and take of intellectual friendship into part of his scholarly method, drawing on his personal exchanges with other social scientists for a richly acknowledged yet critical appropriation of their work in his essay on the gift.

## The Anthropology of the Gift in Oceania, the American Northwest, and Europe

Mauss and his anthropologist contemporaries were not the only early twentieth-century writers to feel their way toward the gift. Bücher's late essay on gift giving is a reminder that others, too, were seeking the unspoken habits of civility that unite individuals into a society. Another observer of the gift was the philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel, who pointed out the enduring importance of gratitude as a form of reciprocity in modern society. Yet there was a difference between thinkers such as these and Mauss: They regarded the emergence of the asymmetrical gift as progress toward the refined ethical sense of modern European civilization. Mauss's essay instead recommended reciprocal gift giving as the true, full form of the gift with ongoing claims to modern Europeans' attention. There was also a difference between Mauss and the founding anthropologists: They treated gift exchange with novel seriousness and made it understandable through analogies like Malinowski's

comparison of *vaygu'a* and crown jewels, but they kept it rather separate from their own societies. Mauss by contrast emphasized that the gift was at work among his contemporaries and urged a conscious recognition and expansion of its role. Through the topic of the gift, Mauss opened up a conversation that could stretch across disparate times and places.[17]

Mauss made the geographic focus of his book three far-away cultures from around the Pacific. Polynesia, Melanesia, and the Pacific Northwest were the prime showpieces for the obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate. These three cultural regions belonged, he believed, to a shared Pacific culture (although he avoided speculating on the origins of its commonalities). We can follow his course around the Pacific and the theoretical issues they raised for him as he loosely matched the regions to theoretical categories.

He began with the least promising case, Polynesia; for a long time he had looked in vain, he wrote, for evidence of the practices there that had been so richly observed and theorized for other places. Although Mauss did not put it this way, one might say that for Polynesia he had no Malinowski or Boas to provide him with a ready-made map. Instead, he had to piece together his own evidence, most of it from travelers' and missionaries' accounts. It was a triumph of theory that he was able to do so, for on the strength of his hypothesis he documented gift-giving practices in places like Samoa and New Zealand. It was also a triumph of cosmopolitan reading; by far the most sources on Polynesia were written in English, followed by French and a few German. Subsequent scholars have disputed and corrected his remarks, but they have also appreciated the prescience of his insights.[18] He laid out some of the essay's basic ideas in this section of the chapter: that there was a threefold obligation to give, to receive, and to reciprocate; that gifts were magically and

religiously invested; that weddings were exemplary occasions for gift giving; that everything in society could be part of its system of gift giving; and that human beings extended the gift economy to their gods. Even though gift exchange had gone less noticed in Polynesia than in Micronesia or the Pacific Northwest, Mauss worked in this chapter to show that in Polynesia, too, gift giving was pervasive.[19]

Turning to Melanesia, Mauss was on ground well prepared by British and German anthropologists including Thurnwald and Radcliffe-Brown. However his main guide to Melanesia was Malinowski and his description of gift giving in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Mauss found Malinowski personally repugnant and, while maintaining a polite collegial relationship with him, sympathized with his British colleagues' complaints about Malinowski's tyrannical and unreliable behavior; he also thought Malinowski was a rather unsophisticated theorist. Nonetheless, he acknowledged Malinowski's importance, praising his book for showing "the superior observation of a true sociologist."[20]

Malinowski's description of the kula offered ideal materials for Mauss's theory of the gift. Kula trade, emphasized Mauss, described a grand circle. This was an important point taking Mauss beyond the descriptions of gift giving that he extracted from Polynesia. In the inter-island trade of the Massim, gift giving took place across a spatial totality: a large, cohesive, logically closed system described by the metaphor of the circle. It was also an abstract whole, in the sense that it extended beyond what any individual could experience at a given moment in space or time. At any single point in the Massim archipelago, it extended beyond the horizon; it also stretched out in time as kula voyagers ventured empty-handed to their hosts and only received from them during the voyage, turning into givers at a later date after their return home, when they in turn

could play the role of host to visiting expeditions. The kula clearly enacted Mauss's principles of giving, receiving, and reciprocating and of superficial spontaneity allied with underlying expectations of return. It confounded any scholarly attempt to reduce it to commercial trade or to undisciplined, "primitive" behavior.[21]

If Melanesia showed off the gift as extensive system, the American Northwest revealed the power of the gift at its most extreme. The potlatch fascinated Mauss. Despite its rapacious commercial dimension, Mauss readily took it up as one important type of gift.[22] It manifested the overlap between gifts and money, for gifts, wrote Mauss, were inevitably a form of credit in the sense that an enhanced return was expected. At the same time, in the distinctive logic of the gift, objects given away were never *just* about a quantitative remuneration; they always involved the honor of the giver. Indeed, honor operated in the potlatch at its human extreme: "Consumption and destruction of goods really go beyond all bounds. In certain kinds of potlatch one must expend all that one has, keeping nothing back. It is a competition to see who is the richest and also the most madly extravagant." Short of warfare, this was the ultimate kind of competition for status, power, and wealth, which took to an unsurpassable point of destruction the will to show one's own greatness and shame one's rival. Mauss made a remark at this point that reminds us of how great were the prejudices that still faced an analyst of indigenous communities in the 1920s. Conventional wisdom, he wrote, could not believe that tribal groups really had a concept of honor; it must be a cover for something else, like magical beliefs. "The reality," countered Mauss, "is more complex. The notion of honour is no more foreign to these civilizations than is the notion of magic." Honor as a social motive pervaded Polynesian and Melanesian as well as northwest

American societies.[23] It is rather surprising in retrospect that Mauss had to explain this to his readers, given the long republican tradition allying "savages" and honor that we have traced back as far as Adam Ferguson. But over the centuries Western views of indigenous communities have lurched more from side to side than they have progressed, and Mauss's observations were one of the periodic correctives – and one of the most acute – to civilized prejudice.

Mauss called the societies of Polynesia, Melanesia, and the American Northwest "archaic." He could explain the meaning of this when he had defined the gift using the examples of these three societies: Their presentation and circulation of goods must have characterized a large portion of humanity over a long period of time. Before this archaic period came a time of "total services" when collectives – either clans or families – engaged in exchanges of anything and everything. Mauss used the term "archaic" to distinguish this original, "primitive" form of social organization from the clan and tribal societies that were, he thought, an intermediate stage of history; it was in these societies, he wrote, that the gift as a form of exchange between individuals had taken place. One can perhaps discern in this distinction between primitive and archaic epochs a faint echo of Morgan's and other mid-nineteenth-century theories of primitive communism, but there is no hint in Mauss of anything like a belief in an original stage of primitive promiscuity or matriarchy. It was a vestigial moment in Mauss's essay. More important was Mauss's conviction that existing indigenous societies were not "natural" but already the outcome of a long history. These archaic societies included almost all the known tribal societies of the past and the present. The gift as they had developed it sublimated war into a competition for honor and thereby brought about the new era of relative order that Mauss described in his essay.[24]

After the archaic stage came the era of "purely individual contract," defined by the market with its quantification of exchanges and use of money. Here, again, Mauss thought in developmental terms. *The Gift* focused on evidence from legal institutions so that Mauss could portray exactly how specific concepts like property had once had the attributes of gifts, which had only slowly evaporated over time. The archaic idea that a piece of property, or an object traded, carried the spirit of its owner, gave way in a market society to the understanding of objects as natural entities circulating apart from their owners. Mauss was not elegiac in his writing about this transition. Instead, a developmental narrative took over: Crude and inefficient earlier forms gave way to more efficient forms of economic exchange, the ones to be found in modern commerce. The age of commerce was, in its own right, an improvement on and irreversible outcome of the gift-giving economy. Yet this was not where the evaluation of the market economy stopped, for Mauss then treated modern commerce to a dialectical interpretation: The modern terms of commerce, in turn, were inadequate; they violated human beings' sense of justice and had in his time to give way to social democratic, gift-like practices of social justice.[25]

There was a danger for Mauss of exoticizing the gift by writing only about exotic societies. If he had limited himself to Polynesia, Melanesia, and the American Northwest, he would have left the reader imagining it as a curiosity from archaic societies, a practice that had nothing to do with the commerce and individualism of Europe. Yet one of his aims was to shake up just this kind of thoughtless distinction between the West and the rest of the world and to show instead that archaic practices of gift giving were widespread human institutions. The journey to the far side of the world was part of a circuit that led back to Europe's own archaic past.

The scholarship of the preceding hundred years on the early history of Germanic peoples provided Mauss with European examples of the gift.[26] Students of early Germanic societies believed that the act of pouring a drink was the origin of the German cluster of words related to gifts (an etymological link that Bücher had already found intriguing); *schenken*, "to pour," later developed the meaning of "to give a present." Richard M. Meyer, a scholar of German folklore, made the connection between the two meanings of the word in an essay on the history of gift giving greatly admired by Mauss. Meyer's essay was a remarkable study, one of those pre-Maussian works that shimmers with insights that recur in Mauss's essay. It already contained the idea that Germanic societies, like every people "in the same stage of culture," understood gifts to involve some kind of obligation. Meyer in turn drew on an earlier essay by the master of nineteenth-century folklore studies in Germany, Jacob Grimm, who also recognized the hidden importance of reciprocity: "As a rule, to be sure, the receiver of a gift seems to gain, while the giver loses; but in secret, gift calls for counter-gift and even, for those with a more refined sensibility, for a more generous response." Grimm had already pointed out the connection between pouring and giving, and he traced both of these acts back to an underlying conception of religious sacrifice.[27] The research of Grimm and his successors in German literary studies allowed Mauss to return from Malinowski's Trobriands and Boas's Pacific Northwest to medieval Europe.

Mauss came back from his imaginary travels into the European past with a cosmopolitan intent that set him apart from the German literature specialists. They tended to view the gift as part of an epic nationalist history. Their message was that early German literature contained the primitive forms of institutions that would grow and improve over time; they could discover the unity of the German

people, elusive during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in a prehistoric past. Whether in the early nineteenth-century hope of creating a nation-state or the late nineteenth-century hope of overcoming its divisions, these scholars of the Germanic past looked for a primeval set of concepts to define a unified German national character.[28] As he made use of the medievalists' research, Mauss changed its meaning: The purpose of his section on Germanic law and lore was to rescue the gift from its Pacific obscurity and show that the same conception of obligatory gift-giving existed in the heart of Europe. Neither Oceanians, nor Kwakiutls, nor Germans were isolated from other cultures; the outcome of his essay was a portrait of their cross-cultural likeness.[29] Mauss worked and wrote to comprehend local difference within a universal humanity, one of whose defining features – lost to modern Europe but now regained through its encounters with the rest of the world – was the gift.

## The Politics of the Gift and the Crisis of Postwar Europe

The early 1920s, the period of gestation for the essay on the gift, was a moment of intense political engagement for Mauss. Marcel Fournier has described how he wrote articles in support of the cooperative movement that was burgeoning in France and served on an editorial board of a newly formed journal of the movement. At the same time, adds Fournier, Mauss watched with great interest the successes of the cooperative movement in postwar England, where it had a radical edge that made it a model for a new kind of society, not just a form of accommodation to capitalism. The cooperative movement was militant enough to satisfy Mauss's own commitment to transformation of capitalist society, but at the same time it was a realistic movement that involved the creation

of actual organizations within society, not just an empty utopianism that imagined a radically different society without working out the details. It is not hard to see the affinity between cooperatives and gift-giving institutions: both of them relied on the voluntarism and self-interest of the individual, but at the same time inculcated a spirit of sharing within a larger whole. The cooperatives were an experiment in gift-giving networks under the transformed conditions of modern society.[30]

On the other hand Bolshevist governance of Russia appalled him. In articles he contributed to the journal *La Vie Socialiste* during this time, he could hardly find language vehement enough to express his outrage: "We have always found their mysticism and their romanticism intellectually repugnant. Their acts of violence and their arbitrary behavior have always provoked our moral indignation. Their jesuitical habits, their lies, their cynical idea that 'the end justifies the means' leave us with the impression of political mediocrities."[31] Mauss had lived through the battlefields of the war, and he came home with nothing but disgust toward any romanticization of what he had known firsthand; *The Gift* defines civilization as a society's ability to find the mechanisms to direct human beings' destructive impulses into restraining channels of competition. In the case of Russia, he was aware of the great difficulties faced by any post-Tsarist regime and asked in April 1921 whether the regime could have survived at all without the Bolsheviks' leadership. But he feared for the future and asked whether socialism itself could survive the opportunism that Bolshevists so admired. By February 1923 he was completely exasperated with them: they were terrorists, fanatics, who disregarded not just moral considerations, but the most elementary rules of political sense. They destroyed all the "active classes" of society – the intellectuals, the peasants

and the workers; they destroyed all the cooperatives that flourished in the first two years of their rule and all the free associations in Russian society. He was not opposed to the use of force, but it had to be within a legal framework, and this was completely absent in Bolshevist Russia. Violence played such a large role because of the lack of a well-developed sphere of public opinion and civic education, which would instead have served as the foundation for a socialist reconstruction of society.[32]

A further reflection on Bolshevism from 1924 illustrates Mauss's characteristic temperament: his emphasis on realism, on political sobriety, on a well-considered mixture of freedom and social responsibility. This time he published not in a socialist outlet, but in a scholarly journal that permitted more detailed observations, though ones equally hard-bitten in their hostility toward Bolshevism. Mauss spoke of it as the last chapter of a short work he was planning to publish on the subject, and indeed, his observations would have been well worth having in book form, which would have given them greater prominence and have formed a contemporary European complement to his more historical analysis in *The Gift*. Mauss wrote in this essay that Bolshevism was a phase in the history of the Russian Revolution but not properly speaking a socialist regime, for it had not built up a stable social order that Mauss could recognize as socialist according to the principles he had followed all his life. Bolshevism had suppressed the marketplace, whereas socialism worthy of the name should build on, not destroy it. And for good measure he added: "Not just freedom of the market, but also *industrial and commercial freedom are essential to the atmosphere of any modern economy*." Statism, authoritarian direction – these were contrary to the logic of modern societies; socialism as an extension of existing societies could not exist without a certain

amount of individualism and liberalism, especially in economic matters. Socialism as Mauss upheld it required respect for intermediate bodies between the individual and the state and a program for developing those intermediaries. Mauss was cautious in his conclusions as he looked to the future. While once again condemning what he called Bolshevism's criminal use of violence against the whole nation, he saw the new Russian economy as moving toward a mixture of capitalism, statism, and administrative socialism and welcomed the New Economic Policy, which created some room for private economic initiative. Mauss was not yet ready to exclude the possibility that Bolshevism might yield to the development of a free civil society. But he concluded with a skeptical reminder to his fellow intellectuals that their role was to be critics and to teach others to think critically.[33]

At the same postwar moment Mauss was researching and writing his essay on the gift, he was commenting in his political journalism on contemporary ideologies of violence. After his odyssey across time and space he returned in the conclusion of *The Gift* to contemporary Europe. The rich had to learn to think of themselves as philanthropists; society as a whole had to care for the life, education, and families of its members; there had to be limits to speculative profits; there had to be a greater community ethic in the everyday transactions of buying and selling. Self-reliance and defense of one's own interests had to be part of this society too, however. "Over-generosity, or communism," he continued, "would be as harmful to himself and to society as the egoism of our contemporaries and the individualism of our laws."[34] Archaic societies had developed mechanisms of gift exchange that effectively implicated individuals in one another's lives. They were not utopias for moderns to imitate, but a repository of human experience for modern

nation-states feeling their way to a balance between selfishness and selflessness.[35]

In the final lines of *The Gift*, Mauss looked back across the subject of his essay, so vast in the ages and places surveyed, so concentrated in his treatment of it, and reminded his readers that he had led them to a total social institution, a term that he now turned in the direction of his own time. Taken together the different aspects of the gift constituted "our common life, the conscious direction of which is the supreme art, *Politics*, in the Socratic sense of the word."[36] Mauss's placement of politics in the last sentence of the essay indicates how deeply he wished for his study of premodern societies to enter into his contemporaries' understanding of the present. Politics, yes – but of a strange and expanded kind. James Mill, the stern critic of gift giving, had also lived for an ideal of politics schooled on Socrates – one that Mill and his followers sought to realize through unsparing rational debate.[37] Mauss, as critical of himself and others as he was gentlemanly, practiced a similar style of debate, a similar hope for the formation of a democratic political community for the welfare of all. But what strange new worlds had opened up in the space of little more than a century separating the two thinkers: Mauss proposed to link Socratic debate and Athenian politics to the traditions scorned by Mill when he encountered them in India, the accumulated habits of competition and accommodation that Mauss's essay brought together under the name of the gift.

Words alone failed the nations of Europe in World War I. Mauss afterwards hoped that the habits and gestures of mutual recognition encompassed by the gift could give verbal language efficacy where it alone had fallen short; the pattern of giving, accepting and returning that human societies had refined over many centuries and with many variations were to guide war-ridden human beings

in the direction of a peaceful polity. The teachers of the arts of the gift lived outside Athens. Instead one found them in little-known places like Thurnwald's Sepik River, Boas's Vancouver Island, and Malinowski's Kiriwana. Observing their practice of gift exchange could bring interwar Europe closer to a durable life in common. That was the hope; soldier and political citizen that he was, Mauss knew too that there was no gift without risk.[38]

# Conclusion

Marcel Mauss sketched a pattern of gift giving that was deceptively simple and inexhaustibly rich: By breaking gift exchange down into the steps of giving, receiving, and reciprocating, he avoided the errors of less skilled and schooled predecessors and created a new kind of theoretical concept. Instead of developing the gift historically from ancient to modern examples, as German writers from Grimm to Bücher had done, he presented the different dimensions of a unified social institution. This model could be applied to different times and places, accommodating them and explaining them in ways that made fresh sense. Over the course of the essay, the gift looks ever more complicated as one sees it in new settings. Weddings in Polynesia, the kula in the Massim, and the potlatch in the Pacific Northwest formed a fruitful paradigm. From there Mauss moved with confident expertise to Rome and Germanic Europe and beyond to ancient India; leaving the past he returned to the Europe of his own time with his suggestive remarks about mutual obligation and social democracy. His personal experiences, politics, and contemporaries' scholarship came together in his idea of the gift.

However, as we have emphasized from the beginning, Mauss's essay is only part of a broader history of reflections and possibilities for thinking about gift giving. We can re-immerse the gift in this discourse and expand its historical and conceptual dimensions.

In the discursive history of the gift, crises of civility – that is, moments when the most elementary conventions of a life in common give way to the threat of a complete breakdown of civil society – have at a few decisive moments given direction to the discourse of gift giving in modern Europe. Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* was famously a response to the violence of the civil war era in seventeenth-century England, and more generally the age of religious warfare in early modern Europe. While envisioning a society made up of interest-driven individuals and restrained by absolute monarchy, Hobbes turned gift exchange into a subordinate and limited, though not entirely insignificant, form of social action. At the same time, the writings of Hobbes and his successors had little impact on the actual social practices of early modern European societies, which continued until the end of the Enlightenment to rely on patronage and other kinds of gift exchange for their political and cultural solidarities. Mauss was inclined to mistake the theoretical model for the social reality when he identified Mandeville's ego-driven philosophy as the moment of transition from a gift to a market economy.

The moment of crisis for the social practices of gift giving came rather in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with the breakdown across Western Europe of corporate forms of social organization and the creation of emancipated societies made up of individual citizens. As this transformation took place, the gestures of reciprocal gift giving became increasingly incomprehensible to Europeans and were either ignored or regarded as vestiges of the

European past or a primitive way of life. Until 1914, the gift was usually understood – except by a handful of anthropologists and students of ancient texts – to be the "higher" act of giving that neither expected nor received a return beyond a thank you. The crisis of World War I, with its breakdown of elementary civilities within and across state borders – the mass death in battle, dehumanization of enemies, profiteering, and ideological warfare that continued to roil European societies after 1918 –provoked a quest for new forms of solidarity that could hold societies together after appeals to reason and self-interest had been exhausted. This was the critical moment for the discovery of the gift, when Mauss could appreciate its role in other societies and recommend it to his contemporaries.

Despite the widespread practices of reciprocal gift giving that persisted in their own societies, nineteenth-century Europeans thought of this as an ignoble form of exchange, superceded in their own society by the free and voluntary gift. When Europeans had to accommodate gift exchange in other parts of the world, they continued to think of it as a concession to inferior cultures, which approximated a bribe or a childish inability to engage in impersonal commerce. Or Europeans responded to gift-giving as a structural element of traditional European society: But then it was left to the odd intellectual like Burke to appreciate the sociological force of such an archaic institution, while liberal intellectuals viewed it at best as a complement to personal autonomy and the efficiency of the market. To be sure, Europeans after 1815 wrote as inheritors of humanist letters and aristocratic social practices, and had at their disposal the resources to express more complex and varied forms of gift exchange, but amid the commercialization and rationalization of their own societies, the vocabulary still available to them was not one that they knew how to employ.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a reawakened interest in the gift returned it to Europe. When the anthropologists traveled to regions remote from their European homes, they encountered gift practices that just a few generations earlier would not have seemed so strange but now struck them as an exotic system, difficult to recognize for what it was and to explain to their fellow Europeans. In doing so they did not simply re-import a timeless institution; they introduced their contemporaries to local practices that became part of the lore of world culture. The potlatch and the kula went from being peculiar customs to global classics, taken up into Mauss's essay and into the teachings of modern social science; they informed a concept of the gift which was no longer the familiar asymmetrical present of Western society, but a modern anthropological concept. The reciprocal gift as we know it today from Boas, Malinowski, and Mauss emerged from a confluence of European and extra-European practices. It is a concept that took in deep knowledge of European society and thought in concert with the complexities of indigenous social organization. Many concepts wander from place to place within European (or other) cultures; the gift is an unusually well-traveled cosmopolitan whom we today can never summon home without memories of those adventures abroad. Deeply embedded in European letters and social practices, the gift gained in human breadth through its nineteenth- and twentieth-century encounters with the rest of the world.

This rediscovery of the reciprocal gift furthered the work of merging the histories of modern Europe and other times and places. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, gift exchange was an institution that seemed to separate European and non-European histories. Market exchange seemed to belong to modern Europe; gift exchange, to the less than civilized peoples of the earth and

one's own crude ancestors. The work of the founding anthropologists began to break down this distinction. Boas debunked the notion that potlatches involved only exchange of gifts and argued that essential to the potlatch was a loan; Thurnwald argued that reciprocity was a function of all societies from the tribal to the modern; Malinowski pointed out that kula voyages were occasions for *gimwali* or trade alongside the gift exchanges of the kula ring. Amid the shaken certainties and reconstruction of European society after 1918, Mauss worked back and forth between market and gift, calling for a European market economy that would reintroduce features of a gift economy. If his merger of the two kinds of exchange was incomplete, subsequent scholarship has insisted on their coexistence in societies around the world.

Today we use the gift as pervasively and powerfully as any society in the past, although under the changing conditions of modern societies and their different histories. Now as in the past and in other parts of the world, the gift is morally ambivalent. Illicit gifts – the traffic in sexual favors, jobs, and bribes, for example – flourish in business and politics and feed the modern public's appetite for scandal; the gifts that corrupt are very much with us. At the same time, other gifts elevate and animate our public and private lives.[1] There is the charitable giving that enhances everything from musical life to medical relief, sometimes donated by public figures who ask for acknowledgment of their generosity, sometimes by the modest and anonymous who get nothing but a private sense of satisfaction in return. There is the ongoing language of diplomacy between nations, a symbolic exchange of objects, parties, phone calls, and anything else that can signal pleasure or displeasure, serve as an opening for friendship or a cover for deceit. There is the spirit of duty and obligation between citizen and welfare state, so important

to Mauss, and as difficult to make reciprocal as he feared it might be. There are the countless reciprocities in family life, romance, and workplace, the stuff of everyday drama as they bind, enrich, please, fail, or flourish. Now as ever our public and private lives are deeply interwoven with gift exchange. The return of the gift to our conversation about our society cannot guarantee a better outcome to our dealings with one another. But it permits us to be a little less provincial, and perhaps even to better our chances of giving and receiving wisely.

# NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

1. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls, fwd. Mary Douglas (New York: Norton, 1990).
2. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Gifts" (1844), in *The Essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Alfred R. Ferguson and Jean Ferguson Carr, introd. Alfred Kazin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 311–314; Georg Simmel, "Dankbarkeit. Ein soziologischer Versuch" (1907), in Heinz-Jürgen Dahme and Otthein Rammstedt, eds., *Georg Simmel. Schriften zur Soziologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), 210–218. Simmel has remarkably little to say about gifts in *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (1907; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), but see 82, 370–373. See also the comments comparing Simmel to Mauss below, 151.
3. It would go beyond the bounds of a note to give a full bibliography of the responses to Mauss and his essay. For a sampling of anthropologists', sociologists', and philosophers' responses, see Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, vol. 1: *Consumption* (New York: Zone Books, 1988); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, ed. Rodney Needham, trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham (1949; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969); Lévi-Strauss, "Introduction à l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss," in Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie*, ed. Georges Gurvitch (Paris: Quadrige/PUF, 1950), ix–lii; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Wendy James and N. J. Allen, eds., *Marcel Mauss: A Centenary Tribute* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998).

A selection of historians' uses of Mauss's theory of the gift may be found in J. Gould, *Give and Take in Herodotus* (Oxford: Leopard's Head Press, 1991); M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, newly rev. ed. (New York: Viking, 1978); Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Century*, trans. Howard B. Clarke, fwd. Charles Wilson (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974); Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000); Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Jürgen Kocka, "Vorbemerkung," and Stephen Pielhoff, "Stifter und Anstifter. Vermittler zwischen 'Zivilgesellschaft,' Kommune und Staat im Kaiserreich," in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 33/1 (2007): 5–9, 10–45.

4. For a sampling of recent theoretical contributions, see James G. Carrier, *Gifts and Commodities: Exchange and Western Capitalism since 1700* (London: Routledge, 1995); T. M. S. Evens, "Bourdieu and the Logic of Practice; Is All Giving Indian-Giving or Is 'Generalized Materialism' Not Enough?," *Sociological Theory* 17/1 (1999): 1–30; Jacques T. Godbout in collaboration with Alain Caillé, *The World of the Gift*, trans. Donald Winkler (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998); Maurice Godelier, *The Enigma of the Gift*, trans. Nora Scott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); David Graeber, *Toward An Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Karen Sykes, *Arguing with Anthropology: An Introduction to Critical Theories of the Gift* (London: Routledge, 2005); Anatoon Vandevelde, ed., *Gifts and Interests* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000); and Scott C. Shershow, *The Work and the Gift* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

A valuable critique of the postwar history of repeated attempts to appropriate Mauss's theory of the gift to structuralism and Marxism is Lygia Sigaud, "The Vicissitudes of the Gift," *Social Anthropology* 10/3 (Oct. 2002): 335–358. Several other recent studies have synthesized historical and theoretical approaches to distinguish Mauss's theory of the gift from Marxist and structuralist appropriations of it. See Marcel Hénaff, *Le prix de la vérité: le don, l'argent, la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002); Bruno Karsenti, *L'homme total: Sociologie, anthropologie et philosophie chez Marcel Mauss* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997); Camille Tarot, *Sociologie et anthropologie de Mauss* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003); Tarot, *De Durkheim à Marcel Mauss: l'invention du symbolique. Sociologie et Science des Religions*, pref. Alain Caillé (Paris: La Découverte, 1999); and Laurent Muchielli, Review of Mauss, *Écrits politiques*; Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*; Karsenti, *Marcel Mauss*; and Karsenti, *L'homme total, Revue française de sociologie* 40/1 (1999): 171–176. See also Muchielli, *La découverte du social: naissance de la sociologie en France (1870–1914)* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998).

On the gift in contemporary societies, see Theodore Caplow, "Rule Enforcement Without Visible Means: Christmas Gift Giving in Middletown," *American Journal of Sociology* 89/6 (1984): 1306–1323; David Cheal, *The Gift Economy* (London: Routledge, 1988); Aafke E. Komter, *Social Solidarity and the Gift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994); and an especially insightful essay by Avner Offer, "Between the Gift and the Market: The Economy of Regard," *Economic History Review* 50/3 (1997), 450–476.

5. On gender see Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). On aesthetics, see Louis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Random House, 1983); Jean Starobinski, *Largesse*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); and Mark Osteen, ed., *The Question of the Gift: Essays Across Disciplines* (London: Routledge, 2002). On religion, see Jonathan Parry, "*The Gift*, The Indian Gift and the 'Indian Gift'," in *Man*, new series, 21/3 (1986): 453–473; Sergei Kan, *Symbolic Immortality: The Tlingit Potlatch of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989); Susanne Kuehling, *Dobu: Ethics of Exchange on a Massim Island, Papua New Guinea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005); and Katherine Rupp, *Gift-Giving in Japan: Cash, Connections, Cosmologies* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2003).
6. Marcel Fournier, *Marcel Mauss: A Biography* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006). See also Marcel Mauss, *Écrits Politiques*, ed. Marcel Fournier (Paris: Fayard, 1997); Émile Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, ed. Philippe Besnard and Marcel Fournier, with the assistance of Christine Delangle, Marie-France Essyad and Annie Morelle (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998); and Gérald Berthoud, "Un précurseur de Mauss. Felix Somlò et la question du don," *Social Anthropology* 7/2 (1999): 189–202. The notion of a third position between "liberal-utilitarian and the socialist-materialist" theories of tribal societies was previously developed in Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, pref. James G. Fraser (1922; Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1984), 167, 516; cf. below, 136–137.

   Mauss's precursors are surveyed in Eliana Magnani, "Les médiévistes et le don, avant et après la théorie maussienne," in *Revue du M.A.U.S.S. permanente*, 15 décembre 2007, http://www.journaldumauss.net/spip.php?article229, accessed July 8, 2010; and Beate Wagner-Hasel, "Egoistic Exchange and Altruistic Gift: On the Roots of Marcel Mauss' Theory of the Gift," in *Negotiating the*

*Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange*, ed. Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner, and Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2003), 141–171.

7. A global perspective on European intellectual history is an old aspiration as well as a recent one. Even though it is not best known for extending its reach beyond the bounds of European history, the discipline in the United States was remarkably cosmopolitan in one of its early incarnations, the history of ideas as practiced by Arthur Lovejoy. He showed a keen interest in how European thinkers of the Enlightenment and Romantic eras perceived so-called "primitive" peoples; it is a question that informs his famous monograph, *The Great Chain of Being* (1936), as well as his volume of essays in the history of ideas and the collection of documents that he co-edited on ideas of the primitive in antiquity. Intellectual historians forgot his example for many decades after 1945, but recently practitioners from different countries have joined the general revival of interest in how to conceive of European history as part of global history. I have tried in this book to contribute to a newly cosmopolitan intellectual history by concentrating on the gift as an idea that takes us deep into European society and thought, but also beyond it to extra-European sites. Cf. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948); Lovejoy, *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1948); Arthur O. Lovejoy, Gilbert Chinard, George Boas, and Ronald S. Crane, eds., *A Documentary History of Primitivism and Related Ideas* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1935). For samples of intellectual history in cosmopolitan perspective see Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens. Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrundert* (Munich: Beck, 1998); John Gascoigne, *Science in the Service of Empire: Joseph Banks, the British State and the Uses of Science in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Noteworthy, too, is the attention paid to the global genesis of ideas and culture in two surveys of the nineteenth century: C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Beck, 2009).
8. The triad of wealth, class, and power – which I first heard from the late Lawrence Stone in the early 1970s – is a rough approximation of the categories "class, status, party" in Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 180–195. A well-known attempt to delineate the transformation from a society held together by reciprocities to a society with a utilitarian ethic

is Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, fwd. Robert M. MacIver (1944; Boston: Beacon Press, 1957). Polanyi depicts a divide between market and gift economies, but more recent literature, including this book, dispute this notion of a radical divide and argue instead for their simultaneity. See for example Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving*; Linda Zionkowski and Cynthia Klekar, eds., *The Culture of the Gift in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); and Offer, "Between the Gift and the Market." More generally, Polanyi lacks Max Weber's understanding that ideal types like "community" and "society" or in this case gift and market economies are not mutually exclusive and do not inhabit separate historical eras, but may coexist in different combinations within specific societies. This is the general sociological perspective that Weber opens up in *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2 vols., ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (1922; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

9. Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991).
10. For a study of the dangers of gift giving within a society – in this case the reign of Tiberius in Imperial Rome – see Luca Giuliani, *Ein Geschenk für den Kaiser. Das Geheimnis des Grossen Kameo* (Munich: Beck, 2010). Giuliani emphasizes that Roman society in this period lacked an adequate language to comprehend empire as a form of political rule; as in the case of relations between cultures, moments of crisis, leading to the absence of a common verbal language within a society, promote both a gift economy and dangerous misunderstandings. My thanks to Professor Giuliani for discussing these issues with me. Valentin Groebner argues the general case for the "dangerous" potential of gift giving in *Liquid Assets, Dangerous Gifts: Presents and Politics at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Pamela E. Selwyn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 6–13.

## 1. THE CRISIS OF THE GIFT

1. C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). On the "dual revolution" see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848* (New York: Vintage, 1996). On the multiple transitions from old regime to modern world, see Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1972–1997).
2. For an outline of the trial, see the editor's introduction by P. J. Marshall in Edmund Burke, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford, vol. 6: *India: The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment, 1786–1788*, ed. P. J. Marshall, textual editor William B. Todd (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 6, 12; and the editor's introduction by Marshall in Edmund Burke, *The*

*Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford, vol. 7: *India: The Hastings Trial 1789–1794*, ed. P. J. Marshall, textual editor William B. Todd (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 1. I draw throughout the following discussion on P. J. Marshall's extensive researches into Hastings and the impeachment. For a rich account of the life of one Company servant, see Pamela Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity: A Study of Moral Attitudes in the Indian Diary of George Paterson, 1769–1774* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985). Marshall's and Nightingale's sympathetic views of Hastings and Paterson should be balanced by the critical account of Britain's impact on India in Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

3. [Warren Hastings,] *The history of the trial of Warren Hastings, Esq. … from Feb. 7, 1786, until his acquittal, April 23, 1795…* (London: Debrett, 1796), preface (n.p.), 1–3, plan of the high court of parliament. The passage about the "fiery trial" is also quoted in Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 57.
4. P. J. Marshall, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 130–131; Warren Hastings, *The Answer of Warren Hastings Esquire, to the Articles Exhibited by the Knights, Citizens, and Burgesess [sic] in Parliament … Wednesday, November 28th, 1787* (London: John Murray, 1788); Hastings, History of the trial of Warren Hastings, 1–2. On the impeachment as theater, cf. Michael Edwardes, *Warren Hastings: King of the Nabobs* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1976), 11–12.
5. Dirks, *Scandal of Empire*, 37–85; H. V. Bowen, "Clive, Robert, first Baron Clive of Plassey (1725–1774)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, online edition, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5697, accessed 8 Feb 2008]. For an account of the crisis precipitated by Clive's conquest of Bengal, see Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History* (London: Longman, 1993), chap. 6; for an overview of present giving before and after Plassey, see P. J. Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), chap. 7.
6. On the complex history of the company norms before Plassey and how they were upset by Clive and his successors, see Lucy S. Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 51–57; Frederick G. Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India: Political Morality and Empire* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 35–37; and Marshall, *Impeachment*, xvi–xviii, 131.
7. P. J. Marshall, "Hastings, Warren (1732–1818)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, online edition, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12587, accessed 7 Nov 2006].

8. Warren Hastings to Court of Directors of the East India Company, 11 November 1773, in G. R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon. Warren Hastings, First Governor-General of Bengal*, 3 vols. (London: Bentley, 1841), 1:368.
9. On Hastings's policy goals, see Marshall, "Hastings, Warren." On the neo-absolutist style of the British Empire in this period, see C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (Harlow, England: Longman, 1989), 8–11; cf. the outlines of a distinct era of imperial rule in Vincent T. Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire, 1763–1793*, vol. 1: *Discovery and Revolution* (London: Longmans, Green, 1952). There is a fascinating discussion of conflicting proposals to preserve the property of the zamindars but turn them into a modernizing landholding class on the English model in Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of Permanent Settlement*, fwd. Daniel Thorner (Paris: Mouton, 1963), 97, 109–110, 171.
10. P. J. Marshall, "Warren Hastings as Scholar and Patron," in *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants: Essays in Eighteenth-Century History Presented to Dame Lucy Sutherland*, ed. Anne Whiteman, J. S. Bromley, and P. G. M. Dickson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 242–262. As Marshall notes, Hastings in this respect belongs to the same generation as Joseph Banks, the famous naturalist-entrepreneur who accompanied Captain Cook's first world voyage and later served as president of the Royal Society.

    On eighteenth-century curiosity about foreign cultures, see Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens: Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrundert* (Munich: Beck, 1998). On the mixture of utility and humanism in the Enlightenment, cf. Harry Liebersohn, *The Travelers' World: Europe to the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006). On Hastings's blend of authoritarian rule and insight into Indian cultures, see Richard B. Barnett, *North India Between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British, 1720–1801* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 87–88.
11. Marshall, *Impeachment*, 147–152, 159, 162.
12. Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India*, 72–83; Edmund Burke, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford, vol. 5: *India: Madras and Bengal, 1774–1785*, ed. P. J. Marshall, textual editor William B. Todd (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), editor's introduction by P. J. Marshall, 1. My interpretation of Burke is greatly indebted to Whelan's analysis, which carefully lays out the historical context and the political principles at stake in Burke's campaign against Hastings.
13. See Marshall, *Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, 132–137, 141.
14. Edmund Burke, "The Revenue Settlement of 1772," fragment included in "Speech on Sixth Article: Presents," in *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*,

7: 64. The peculiar spelling, punctuation and grammar are Burke's, including his use of the variant spelling of zamindar with an "e."

15. John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969). On the continuity between James Mill's British and Indian targets as well as the relationship between father and son, see Bruce Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill: Father and Son in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1975).
16. In general on James Mill and India, see the searching interpretation in Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), with pertinent comments on Mill and Bentham on 125 and 133–134. Cf. the valuable monograph extending the story to John Stuart Mill: Lynn Zastoupil, *John Stuart Mill and India* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1994), esp. 11–12. See also Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 48; and James Mill, *The History of British India*, abridged and introd. William Thomas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), editor's introduction, xii.
17. Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India*, 61–62.
18. James Mill, *The History of British India*, 3 vols. (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1972), 2: 519. This edition is a reprint of the second edition, published in 1820.
19. Mill, *History of British India*, 2: 560.
20. Mill, *History of British India*, 2: 301, 483–484, 520, 560–564.
21. Bernard S. Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 165–209, esp. 166–173. See also the discussions of gift giving in Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 28–29, 37–38, 47–48, 128–138.

    To understand an institution like the durbar required an act of sympathetic imagination, a rearranging of familiar and common-sense categories into the patterns of a foreign culture. As Cohn shows, in the long run British administrators could not rule without the imaginative effort; as Majeed argues in *Ungoverned Imaginings*, it was precisely the exercise of the imagination that Mill stridently opposed, especially in accounts of India that he thought were politically suspect (probably inventions of conservatives) and factually wrong (the romantic legend of a wealthy, civilized subcontinent).
22. Seid Gholam [Ghulam] Hossein [Hussain] Khan, *A Translation of the Sëir Mutaqharin; Or, View of Modern Times, Being an History of India, From the Year 1118 to the Year 1195*, trans. Hadjee Mustapha, 3 vols. (Calcutta: James White, 1789 [1790]), 2: 573–574, 580. On Ghulam Hussain, see the biographical

details and interpretation in Dirks, *Scandal of Empire*, 291–296; I am indebted to Dirks's book for alerting me to the existence of this work.

23. Gholam [Ghulam] Hossein [Hussain] Khan, *View of Modern Times*, 2: 577.

## 2. LIBERALISM, SELF-INTEREST, AND THE GIFT

1. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls, fwd. Mary Douglas (1925; New York: Norton, 1990), 75–76.
2. James E. Crimmins argues that even though Hobbes and Bentham are not linked by direct influence, they share the fundamental problem that Hobbes proposed for later thinkers: how to create order in a society made up of rationally opposed, self-interested actors. See Crimmins, "Bentham and Hobbes: An Issue of Influence," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 63/4 (2002): 677–696. According to Richard Tuck, while Bentham had little appreciation of Hobbes, James Mill was an admirer of his work. See Tuck, *Hobbes: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 110.
3. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (1651; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 94.
4. See Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
5. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 95–96, 105–106. Natalie Z. Davis discusses gifts and the French monarchy in *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), chap. 6; see esp. the discussion of Jean Bodin, like Hobbes an advocate of royal sovereignty, 96–98.
6. On the political context of Mandeville's thought, see E. G. Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). On Mandeville and early eighteenth-century capitalism, see M. M. Goldsmith, "Mandeville and the Spirit of Capitalism," *The Journal of British Studies*, 17/1 (1977): 63–81; cf. M. M. Goldsmith, "Mandeville, Bernard (*bap.* 1670, *d.* 1733)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17926, accessed 9 Nov 2006]. See also Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 111–124, esp. 122.
7. Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, ed. F. B. Kay, 2 vols. (1714, 1723; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 1: 39–42. On the impact of the 1723 edition, see Hundert, *Enlightenment's Fable*, 7.
8. Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, 34–35.
9. Ibid., Remark V, 239.

10. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan, introd. Max Lerner (New York: Modern Library, 1937), 107.
11. Ibid., 144, 298.
12. Ibid., 859–860. Maureen Harkin analyzes the tension in Smith's thought between admiration for commercial society and appreciation of what has been lost in "Adam Smith's Missing History: Primitives, Progress, and Problems of Genre," *ELH* (*English Literary History*), 72/2 (2005), 429–451. She specifically mentions Smith's account of "the prodigious hospitality and intense local loyalties of the feudal estate in *The Wealth of Nations*. (435)."
13. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 632–633.
14. See Avner Offer, "Between the Gift and the Market: The Economy of Regard," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 50/3 (August 1997): 450–476, esp. 452.

    Smith analyzed and repudiated Mandeville's philosophy of selfishness in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 308–313. On the compatibility of Smith's two books, see the editors' introduction to *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 20.
15. For an English-language overview of the beginnings of the German historical school of economics see Keith Tribe, *Governing Economy: The Reformation of German Economic Discourse, 1750–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). One should point here not just to reactive economic nationalism as a cause of the historicist turn, but also the Romantic imagination so pervasive and fruitful in German scholarship during the first half of the nineteenth century. On historicism as a characteristic and transforming moment in early nineteenth-century thought, cf. John Stuart Mill's observations in his famous essay, "Coleridge" (1840), in John Stuart Mill, *Collected Works*, vol. 10: *Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*, ed. J. M. Robson, introd. F. E. L. Priestley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 138–141.
16. On enlightened bureaucracy and modernization, see Reinhart Koselleck, *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution. Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1975).
17. See Walter Braeuer, "List, Friedrich, in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953–), 14: 694–697. On the Württemberg civil service, see Ian F. McNeely, "Hegel's Württemberg Commentary: Intellectuals and the Construction of Civil Society in Revolutionary-Napoleonic Germany," *Central European History* 37/3 (2004): 345–364. McNeely discusses List in *The Emancipation of Writing: German Civil Society in the Making, 1790s-1820s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 159–164.
18. Friedrich List, *Werke*, 10 vols., ed. Erwin von Beckerath, Karl Goeser, Friedrich Lenz, William Notz, Edgar Salin, and Artur Sommer, vol. 6: *Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie*, ed. Artur Sommer (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1930), 13–14.

19. Ibid., 140–150. On German observers of the United States, see Harry Liebersohn, *Aristocratic Encounters: European Travelers and North American Indians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chap. 5.
20. Compare, for example, Smith's account of medieval liberality with List's description of the oppressive economic role of the German nobility in *Das nationale System*, 124.
21. From the large literature on the Verein für Sozialpolitik, the best single work remains Dieter Lindenlaub, *Richtungskämpfe im Verein für Sozialpolitik. Wissenschaft und Sozialpolitik im Kaiserreich, vornehmlich vom Beginn des 'Neuen Kurses' bis zum Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges (1890–1914)*, 2 vols., Beihefte 52–53, *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1967). I have also benefited from the interpretations in Bertram Schefold, "Karl Bücher und der Historismus in der deutschen Nationalökonomie," in Notker Hammerstein, ed., *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft um 1900* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1988), 239–267; and Krüger, "Max Weber and the Younger Generation in the Verein für Sozialpolitik," in *Max Weber and His Contemporaries*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 71–87.
22. On Bücher's biography and role in the Verein für Sozialpolitik, see Walter Goetz, "Nachruf auf Karl Bücher," *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologisch-historische Klasse*, Band 83/5 (1931): 1–12; Karl Bücher, *Lebenserinnerungen* (Tübingen: Laupp'sche Buchhandlung, 1919); Walter Braeuer, "Bücher, Karl Wilhelm," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 2: 718–719; Schefold, "Karl Bücher"; Lindenlaub, *Richtungskämpfe*, 1: 129–131, 168–170; and Krüger, "Max Weber and the Younger Generation in the Verein für Sozialpolitik."
23. Karl Bücher, *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft* (Tübingen: Laupp'sche Buchhandlung, 1893), 3–11.
24. Karl Bücher, *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft. Vorträge und Versuche*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Laupp'sche Buchhandlung, 1898), 3–4.
25. Ibid., 4–5.
26. Ibid., 5–7. On the eighteenth-century search for natural man, see Harry Liebersohn, *The Travelers' World: Europe to the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); on evolutionary anthropology, see George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987). Cf. the early modern Spanish debates recounted in Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
27. Karl Bücher, *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft*, 2nd. ed., 8–32, esp. 15–17.
28. From the large literature one may begin with Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerstolz und Weltmachtstreben: Deutschland unter Wilhelm II. 1890 bis 1918* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1995), 281–300.

29. Karl Bücher, *Die Wirtschaft der Naturvölker* (Vortrag, gehalten in der Gehe Stiftung zu Dresden am 13. November 1897) (Dresden: Zahn und Jaensch, 1898), 5–7.
30. On German anthropology and colonialism, see H. Glenn Penny and Matti Bunzl, eds., *Worldly Provincialism: German Anthropology in the Age of Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003). See also the essays on Felix von Luschan, a key organizer of anthropological research in Prussia before 1914, in Peter Ruggendorfer and Hubert D. Szemethy, eds., *Felix von Luschan (1854–1924). Leben und Wirken eines Universalgelehrten* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2009).
31. Bücher, *Wirtschaft der Naturvölker*, 20–26.
32. Karl Bücher, *Die Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft*, 2. Sammlung (Tübingen: Laupp'sche Buchhandlung, 1918), chap. 1, esp. 23.
33. Wilhelm Karl Ludwig Gaul, "Das Geschenk nach Form und Inhalt im besonderen untersucht an afrikanischen Völkern," in *Archiv für Anthropologie*, Neue Folge, 13/3 (1914): 223–279. Gaul cites Franz Boas, *The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians*, based on personal observations and on notes made by Mr. George Hunt, in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution*, Showing the Operating Expenditures, and Condition of the Institution for the Year Ending June 30, 1895: *Report of the U. S. National Museum* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1897); and Edward Westermack, *Ursprung und Entwicklung der Moralbegriffe*, trans. Leopold Katscher, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Werner Klinkhardt, 1907–1909), originally published in English as *The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1906–1908). Chapter 20 of Westermack's work, on hospitality, overlaps with the topic of gift giving. On the timing of the emergence of the new anthropology, see the essays in Henrika Kuklick, ed., *A New History of Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).
34. Gaul, "Das Geschenk," 223–224. Italics Gaul's.
35. Ibid., 275–276.
36. Bücher, *Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft*, 2. Sammlung, 4.
37. Ibid., 4–7, 12, 23; Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
38. Bücher, *Entstehung der Volkswirtschaft*, 2. Sammlung, 24.

## 3. THE SELFLESS "SAVAGE"

1. On Indians as idealized warriors, see Harry Liebersohn, *Aristocratic Encounters: European Travelers and North American Indians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
2. Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Edinburgh: Kincaid and Bell, 1767), 58–59. There are several excellent recent works contextualizing

Ferguson and linking him to the European tradition of civic humanism. See above all Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). See also Oz-Salzberger's introduction to Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), xv–xviii; and the editors' introduction to Adam Ferguson, *Versuch über die Geschichte der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, ed. and introd. Zwi Batscha and Hans Medick, trans. Hans Medick (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986). J. G. A. Pocock links Ferguson's notion of republicanism to "barbaric vigor" in *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 2: *Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 330–331, 347. For Ferguson's biography, see Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'Ferguson, Adam (1723–1816)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9315, accessed 6 Nov 2006].

3. Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, 132–133.
4. Ibid., 126.
5. On Tacitus and the humanists, see Donald R. Kelley, "*Tacitus Noster*: The *Germania* in the Renaissance and Reformation," in T. J. Luce and A. J. Woodman, eds., *Tacitus and the Tacitean Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 152–167, which I cite with reference to North American Indians in *Aristocratic Encounters*, 101.
6. The title of Engels's book in the German original is *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats. Im Anschluss an Lewis H. Morgans Forschungen*. It first appeared in 1884; Engels published a revised fourth edition of the book, which came out in November 1891 with the imprint date 1892. On the history of *Origins of the Family* see the editors' commentaries in the two German versions of Marx's and Engels's complete works: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx-Engels-Werke*, vol. 21 (Berlin: Dietz, 1979), 552–553 n. 27, hereinafter cited as Engels, *Ursprung der Familie*; and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, 1. Abt.: *Werke, Artikel, Entwürfe*, vol. 29, ed. Joachim Herrmann, Hansulrich Labuske, et al. (Berlin: Dietz, 1990) 9–43. For background in English see the editor's introduction in Friedrich Engels, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, introd. Michèle Barrett (London: Penguin, 1986).
7. Morgan's life has been well researched. A good starting point for his biography is Thomas R. Trautmann, "Morgan, Lewis Henry," in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, vol. 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 848–851. See also Trautmann's full-length biography: *Lewis Henry Morgan and the Invention of Kinship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). See also the revealing catalogue enriched by Trautmann's insightful introduction, Thomas R. Trautmann and Karl S. Kabelac, *The Library of*

*Lewis Henry Morgan and Mary Elizabeth Morgan*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, new series, vol. 84, parts 6 and 7 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1994). For an intellectual history that discusses Morgan's political worries about industrializing America and his advocacy of the Tonawanda Reservation Senecas' land rights, see Carl Resek, *Lewis Henry Morgan: American Scholar* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). See also the valuable studies by Elisabeth Tooker, "The Structure of the Iroquois League: Lewis H. Morgan's Research and Observations," *Ethnohistory*, 30/3 (1983), 141–154; Tooker, "Lewis Henry Morgan: the Myth and the Man," *University of Rochester Library Bulletin* 37 (1984) [http://www.lib.rochester.edu/index.cfm?PAGE=4040, accessed 5 August 2008]; and Tooker, "Lewis H. Morgan and his Contemporaries," *American Anthropologist*, new series, vol. 94/2 (1992): 357–375. Tooker concludes in the latter article "that Morgan's intellectual journey originated not in any attempt to answer the burning questions of his day, but in an attempt to understand the society and culture of a few thousand Indians then remaining in New York State. (371)." These two goals were complementary, however, as Morgan makes clear in his books.

8. Resek, *Morgan*, 58–59, 106–109.
9. Ibid., 110–120.
10. Ibid., 30–33. On Parker's family see Elisabeth Tooker, "Lewis H. Morgan and the Senecas," in *Strangers to Relatives: The Adoption and Naming of Anthropologists in Native North America*, ed. Sergei Kan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 32–33. An important source for understanding Parker and his family is Arthur C. Parker, *The Life of General Ely S. Parker: Last Grand Sachem of the Iroquois and General Grant's Military Secretary*, pref. Frank G. H. Severance (Buffalo, N.Y.: Buffalo Historical Society, 1919).
11. Resek, *Morgan*, 29–35.
12. Ibid., 35–39. See also the account of Morgan's adoption in Tooker, "Lewis H. Morgan and the Senecas," 38–47. On the widespread view that North American Indians and other tribal peoples were doomed to extinction, see Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800–1930* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003).
13. Ely S. Parker to Lewis H. Morgan, 13 Feb. 1847, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester Library. Parker was commenting on Skenandoah [Lewis H. Morgan], "Letters on the Iroquois," in *The American Review* 5/2 (1847): 177–190. On the evolution of the "Letters" from speech to print see Tooker, "Lewis Henry Morgan: The Myth and the Man." Parker's intellectual independence from Morgan is emphasized in Scott Michaelson, "Ely S. Parker and Amerindian Voices in Ethnography," in *American Literary History* 8/4 (1996): 615–638.

14. Lewis H. Morgan, *League of the Ho-dé-no-sau-nee or Iroquois*, new edition, ed. Herbert M. Lloyd, 2 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1904). On Morgan's reading for *League of the Iroquois*, see Trautmann and Kabelac, *Library of Lewis Henry Morgan*, 42–44.
15. Morgan, *League of the Iroquois* 1: 3, 58–70
16. Ibid., 1: 51–55. On Iroquois economics and wampum, see Sara Henry Stites, *Economics of the Iroquois* (Lancaster, Pa.: New Era Printing Co., 1905; AMS reprint, 1978). Ronald L. Meek discusses the place of North American Indians in eighteenth-century developmental theories in *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
17. Lewis H. Morgan, *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* [Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, vol. 17] (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1871) [Reprint: Oosterhout, Netherlands: Anthropological Publications, 1970], 3–5.
18. On Morgan and nineteenth-century scholarship, cf. Trautman, *Lewis Henry Morgan and the Invention of Kinship*; on early nineteenth-century ethnology and the search for common human origins, see George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987), chap. 2
19. Morgan, *Systems of Consanguinity*, 7–8, 10, 12–13
20. Ibid., 10–11, 13.
21. Ibid., 457. Italics Morgan's.
22. Ibid., 492–493.
23. Ibid., 5.
24. Lewis Henry Morgan, *The Indian Journals, 1859–62*, ed. and introd. Leslie A. White, illustrations ed. Clyde Walton (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 39, 89–90. On Morgan's development of a self-conscious research program, cf. the comments in Trautmann and Kabelac, *Library of Lewis Henry Morgan*, 47.
25. Cf. Morgan, *Indian Journals*, 142, 145, 221 n. 36–37.
26. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*; on Bachofen, see Lionel Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
27. Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society: Or, Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*, ed. and introd. Eleanor Burke Leacock (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1963), 62–72, 85.
28. Ibid., 250, 253–256.
29. Ibid., 349, 351.
30. Ibid., 561–562.
31. Cf. Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880–1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 17–21.

32. Tristram Hunt, *Marx's General: The Revolutionary Life of Friedrich Engels* (New York: Henry Holt, 2009) is a vivid, biographical defense of Engels with an extensive discussion of *Origins of the Family*, 303–312. It does not, however, pay much attention to Engels's anthropology of indigenous peoples, but instead concentrates on his critique of patriarchy and arguments for the emancipation of women.
33. Editor's introduction, Karl Marx, *Karl Marx über Formen vorkapitalistischer Produktion. Vergleichende Studien zur Geschichte des Grundeigentums 1879–80*, ed. Hans-Peter Harstick (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1977), xvi.
34. Cited in the editor's introduction, ibid., xvii–xix.
35. Although Marx may have left most of his thoughts on the subject unpublished, there was nothing obscure about his views. He takes as a proven fact the widespread historical existence of communal property ("spontaneous, primitive communal property," as he calls it in a footnote) in the famous section on "the fetishism of the commodity and its secret" in *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes, introd. Ernst Mandel (New York: Vintage, 1977), 171.
36. Engels, *Ursprung der Familie*, 43.
37. See the explanation of *punalua* relationships and critique of Morgan in E. S. Craighill Handy and Mary Kawena Pukui, *The Polynesian Family System in Ka-'u, Hawai'i* (Wellington, N.Z.: The Polynesian Society, 1958), 56–65.
38. Engels, *Ursprung der Familie*, 60.
39. Ibid., 68, 110–112.
40. Ibid., 95–97.
41. See Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

## 4. ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND THE POWER OF THE GIFT

1. For general orientation on the loosely interrelated topics of modernism, social science, and expressionism in the arts, see Carl E. Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980); H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890–1930* (New York: Knopf, 1958); and Peter Paret, *The Berlin Secession: Modernism and Its Enemies in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980). On primitivism, see Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellects, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Marc Manganaro, *Modernist Anthropology: From Fieldwork to Text* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990); and Mary Gluck, "Interpreting Primitivism, Mass Culture and Modernism: The Making of Wilhelm Worringer's Abstraction and Empathy," *New German Critique* 80 (2000): 149–169.
2. Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (1912; New York: Free Press, 1995). One cannot point to a comparable

monograph by Weber, but see the hints and comments scattered throughout *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischer et al. (1922; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). Weber displayed his receptiveness to the newest ethnography of his time in Max Weber, *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Horst Baier, M. Rainer Lepsius, Wolfgang J. Mommsen, Wolfgang Schluchter, and Johannes Winckelmann, part 1, vol. 14: *Zur Musiksoziologie*, ed. Christoph Braun and Ludwig Finscher (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 2004). My thanks to Philippe Despoix for drawing my attention to the ethnographic contents of this work.

3. Karen Ordahl Kupperman documents the high quality of early ethnography in *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 1–2, 13–14. As she observes, the early English settlers were too dependent for their survival on their American neighbors not to watch them closely. The same may be said of the famous French traveler, Jean de Léry; see his *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*, trans. and ed. Janet Whatley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For a survey of premodern ethnography, see Harry Liebersohn, "Anthropology before Anthropology," in *A New History of Anthropology*, ed. Henrika Kuklick (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 17–31. James A. Boon criticizes the historical shortsightedness of dating anthropology from the modern professional discipline in *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions, and Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
4. Franz Boas, *The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians*, based on personal observations and on notes made by Mr. George Hunt, in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, Showing the Operating Expenditures, and Condition of the Institution for the Year Ending June 30, 1895: Report of the U. S. National Museum* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1897), 564–565.

   I have retained the name "Kwakiutl" in the historical context of the Boasian tradition. On the name, see Joseph Masco, "It Is a Strict Law That Bids Us Dance: Cosmologies, Colonialism, Death, and Ritual Authority in the Kwakw*aka*'wakw Potlatch, 1849 to 1922," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37/1 (1995): 41 n. 1.
5. For biographical information I rely throughout this chapter on Douglas Cole, *Franz Boas: The Early Years (1858–1906)* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999). Two works that define the humanist tradition influencing Boas are Roger Langham Brown, *Wilhelm von Humboldt's Conception of Linguistic Relativity* (The Hague: Mouton 1967); and Matti Bunzl, "Franz Boas and the Humboldtian Tradition: From *Volksgeist* and *Nationalcharakter* to an Anthropological Concept of Culture," in *History of Anthropology, vol. 8: Volksgeist as Method and*

*Ethic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 17–78.

6. Franz Boas, "The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology" (1896) and "The Study of Geography" (1887) in *Race, Language, and Culture* (1940; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 270–280, 639–647. On the socio-cultural evolutionary paradigm that Boas was attacking, see George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987).
7. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls, fwd. Mary Douglas (1925; New York: Norton, 1990), 6; Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (1934; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), chap. 6. For historicization of the potlatch, see Aldona Jonaitis, "Chiefly Feasts: The Creation of an Exhibition," Wayne Suttles, "Streams of Property, Armor of Wealth: The Traditional Kwakiutl Potlatch," and Douglas Cole, "The History of the Kwakiutl Potlatch," in *Chiefly Feasts: The Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch*, ed. Aldona Jonaitis (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 39, 71–134, and 135–176; and Masco, "It Is a Strict Law That Bids Us Dance."
8. Suttles, "Streams of Property, Armor of Wealth," 119, 128, Cole, "The History of the Kwakiutl Potlatch," 152, 156, and Ira Jacknis, "George Hunt, Collector of Indian Specimens," in Jonaitis, *Chiefly Feasts*, 177–224. There is an interesting discussion of how Boas received a Kwakiutl name with Hunt's aid, giving him greater access to Kwakiutl rituals, in Michael E. Harkin, "Ethnographic Deep Play: Boas, McIlwraith, and Fictive Adoption on the Northwest Coast," in *Strangers to Relatives: The Adoption and Naming of Anthropologists in Native North America*, ed. Sergei Kan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 67–68.
9. For Boas's critical remarks correcting simplified views of tribal organization and animal totems, see *Social Organization and Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl*, 323–334.
10. Suttles, "Streams of Property, Armor of Wealth," 110–133. Cf. Boas's criticisms of romantic or racial theories of Northwest Indian ritual in *Social Organization and Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl*, 660–663.
11. Boas, *Social Organization and Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl*, 341–343. Wayne Suttles has disputed Boas's picture of potlatch loans, describing them as one limited category of potlatch; for others repayment came in the form of status and glory. Suttles, "Streams of Property, Armor of Wealth," 117.
12. Boas, *Social Organization and Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl*, 358–366.
13. Dawson's paper on the "Kwakiool" tribes, published in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, vol. 5, section 2, 1887, is summarized by "H. H." in W. J. H., H. W. H., Lucien M. Turner, J. N. B. Hewitt and O. T. M., "Notes and News," *American Anthropologist*, 1/2 (1888): 184–186. Edward B. Tylor

mentioned Boas in "Anniversary Address," *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 21 (1892): 406. Anonymous, Review of Franz Boas, *The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians*, *The American Naturalist* 32 (no. 377) (1898): 352–353, stated that the potlatch was well known but that Boas had cleared up its meaning by revealing that it was a loan. This reading of Boas is a sample of the difficulty Western observers had in grasping that different categories like commerce, status competition, and cosmological ritual were intertwined. Cf. Sergei Kan, *Symbolic Immortality: The Tlingit Potlatch of the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 7.

Among Boas's important later writings on the potlatch and Northwest Indian social organization are "Ethnology of the Kwakiutl," in Smithsonian Institution. Bureau of American Ethnology. *Annual Report* 35 (1913–1914), 2 parts (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921: 43–1481; "The Social Organization of the Kwakiutl," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 22/2 (1920): 111–126; and "The Social Organization of the Tribes of the North Pacific Coast," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 26/3 (1924): 323–332. Franz Boas, *Kwakiutl Ethnography*, ed. Helen Codere (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) is a disappointing posthumous attempt to patch together Boas's scattered writings on the Kwakiutls into a monograph.

Sergei Kan's recent monograph on the Tlingits points out that their potlatching historically lacked the agonistic extremes of violent language and property destruction that Boas recorded among the Kwakiutls. The Kwakiutl model, so dramatic and appealing to the anthropological imagination, cannot be taken as synonymous with potlatching in general among the nineteenth-century peoples of the Northwest Coast. Cf. Kan, *Symbolic Immortality*, 234.

14. Richard Thurnwald, *Bánaro Society: Social Organization and Kinship System of a Tribe in the Interior of New Guinea, Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association* 3/4 (1916); Richard Thurnwald, *Die Gemeinde der Bánaro. Ehe, Verwandtschaft und Gesellschaftsbau eines Stammes im Innern von Neu-Guinea. Aus den Ergebnissen einer Forschungsreise 1913–15. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Familie und Staat* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1921); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949; Boston: Beacon, 1969), 481, 496.
15. Richard Thurnwald to Karl Bücher, 21 January 1889, Nachlass 181, Karl Bücher, Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Sondersammlungen.
16. For the description of Thurnwald's life here and below, I am indebted to the detailed, archivally researched biography by Marion Melk-Koch, *Auf der Suche nach der menschlichen Gesellschaft. Richard Thurnwald* (Berlin: Reimer, 1989). On Luschan, see Peter Ruggendorfer and Hubert D. Szemethy, eds.,

*Felix von Luschan (1854–1924). Leben und Wirken eines Universalgelehrten* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2009).

17. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum [hereinafter cited as SMB-PK, EM], Pars I B 21[a], 760/07, Felix von Luschan to Richard Thurnwald, 18 April 1907; 1042/07, Luschan to Thurnwald, 31 May 1907; 1045/07, Luschan to Thurnwald, 7 June 1907; 1625/07, Luschan to Albert Hahl, governor of German New Guinea, 27 August 1907; 1625/07, Luschan to Thurnwald, 27 August 1907; 1662/07, Luschan to Thurnwald, 7 October 1907. On Luschan and the Berlin Ethnological Museum, with an emphasis on Thurnwald's turn to ethnography, see Rainer F. Buschmann, *Anthropology's Global Histories: The Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea, 1870–1935* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), esp. 113–117. On collecting and ethnological museums, see H. Glenn Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
18. Letter of 10 August 1908 (italics Thurnwald's), in Melk-Koch, *Auf der Suche nach der menschlichen Gesellschaft*, 111.
19. Melk-Koch, *Auf der Suche nach der menschlichen Gesellschaft*, 161–163. I have corrected her lists for donors and participants from SMB-PK, EM, Pars I B 19[a], 996/14, Artur Stollé, Überblick über den verlauf der Expedition des Reichs-Kolonialamts, der Königlichen Museen und der Deutschen Kolonial-Gesellschaft zur Erforschung des Kaiserin-Augusta-Flusses in Kaiser Wilhelmsland.
20. SMB-PK, EM, Pars I B. 19[a], Zu 311/12: Sonder-Anweisung für den an der Augustafluß-Expedition beteiligten Ethnographen Dr. Thurnwald. See also Melk-Koch, *Auf der Suche nach der menschlichen Gesellschaft*, 164–165.
21. SMB-PK, EM, Sammlung Südsee und Australien, Richard Thurnwald, Tagebuch von der 2. Expedition im Auftrag des ehem. Reichs-Kolonialamtes und des Berlin Museums für Völkerkunde, 1913–1915: 1, 30, 36–37, 84, hereinafter cited as Tagebuch 2; Thurnwald, "Aus den Schutzgebieten der Südsee. Entdeckungen im Becken des oberen Sepik," *Mitteilungen a.d.D. Schutzgebieten* 27 (1914): 339, hereinafter cited as "Aus den Schutzgebieten der Südsee." Gustav Jahoda makes use of the Tagebuch in "Anthropologist and 'Native' in Early Twentieth Century New Guinea: Malinowski and Thurnwald," *History and Anthropology* 18/1 (2007): 11–24.
22. Thurnwald, "Aus den Schutzgebieten der Südsee," 338–339.
23. SMB-PK, EM, Pars I B, 19[a], Zu 1859/13, Stollé to the State Secretary of the Imperial Colonial Office, 14 October 1913, report by Thurnwald, 26 August 1913.
24. Thurnwald, Tagebuch 2, entries of 11 October 1914–7 January 1915, pp. 217–274; 15 August 1915, p. 305; 11 October 1915, pp. 308–309. See also

the copy of a letter written from San Francisco summarizing the events of the preceding months, SMB-PK, EM, Pars I B. 19[a], Zu 278/16, Richard Thurnwald to Albrecht Penck, 14 February 1916. Penck was professor of geography at the University of Berlin. For an account of the Australian occupation, see Hermann Hiery, *The Neglected War: The German South Pacific and the Influence of World War I* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), which discusses W. M. B. Ogilvie in passing on pp. 88, 100, and 285 n. 39 and mentions the destruction of Thurnwald's possessions on p. 47.

25. Tagebuch 2, 11 October 1915: 310–311.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 11 October 1915: 311–319. Cf. Melk-Koch, *Auf der Suche nach der menschlichen Gesellschaft*, 235–236.
28. Melk-Koch, *Auf der Suche nach der menschlichen Gesellschaft*, 237, 247.
29. Ibid., 245–285.
30. A recent monograph revisits the site of Thurnwald's research and criticizes his assumption that the Banaros were a stable, longstanding unit when in fact the middle Sepik was a region of movement and new settlements: They and their neighbors were not frozen in time but had a history. See Bernard Juillerat, *La révocation des Tambaran: Les Banaro et Richard Thurnwald revisité* (Paris: CNRS, 1993), 81.
31. Thurnwald, *Bánaro Society*, 258.
32. Ibid., 307.
33. Ibid., 259, 275–276, 307.
34. On the early history of functionalism in Britain, see the essays in George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *History of Anthropology*, vol. 2: *Functionalism Historicized: Essays on British Social Anthropology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984). For a case study from Germany, see Harry Liebersohn, "Leopold von Wiese and the Ambivalence of Functionalist Sociology," *Archives européenes de sociologie* 23 (1982): 123–149.
35. Thurnwald, *Bánaro Society*, 279.
36. Richard Thurnwald, *Gemeinde der Bánaro*, 233, 240–241. For an important predecessor to his later comments on the political organization of the Banaros, see Richard Thurnwald, "Stufen der Staatsbildung bei den Urzeitvölkern," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft* 25 (1912): 417–432. See especially the final paragraph calling contemporary Naturvölker "dead ends of human development. (432)." Cf. Richard Thurnwald, *Economics in Primitive Communities* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), which insists that the "natural constitution" of primitives makes them unfit for "complicated manual dexterity (213)."
37. Thurnwald, *Bánaro Society*, 285, 388; Thurnwald, *Die Gemeinde der Bánaro*, 57–58.

38. Richard Thurnwald, "Politische Gebilde bei Naturvölkern. (Ein systematischer Versuch über die Anfänge des Staats)," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft* 37 (1919): 382–384.
39. Ibid., 382.
40. Ibid., 383–384.
41. Ibid., 385.
42. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 77–128.
43. Helena Wayne, fwd., in *Malinowski Between Two Worlds: The Polish Roots of an Anthropological Tradition*, ed. Roy Ellen, Ernest Gellner, Grażyna Kubica, and Janusz Mucha (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), xiii.
44. On Malinowski's intellectual formation see the essays, including the Nietzsche study, and the editors' valuable introduction to Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Early Writings of Bronislaw Malinowski*, ed. Robert J. Thornton and Peter Skalník, trans. Ludwik Krzyżanowski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
45. Michael W. Young, *Malinowski: Odyssey of an Anthropologist, 1884–1920* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), 128–130, 135, 137–139, 143–147.
46. Raymond Firth comments on the importance of *Arbeit und Rhythmus* for Malinowski (as well as his dislike of Bücher's evolutionary ideas) in "The Place of Malinowski in the History of Economic Anthropology," in *Man and Culture: An Evaluation of the Work of Bronislaw Malinowski*, ed. Raymond Firth (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957): 210.
47. Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Primitive Economics of the Trobriand Islanders," *The Economic Journal*, 31/121 (1921): 1–2.
48. Ibid., 2, 4–5, 7–10.
49. On Malinowski's gift for bring his subject to life, see Robert J. Thornton, "'Imagine yourself set down …': Mach, Frazer, Conrad, Malinowski and the Role of Imagination in Ethnography," *Anthropology Today*, 1/5 (1985): 7–14.
50. Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, pref. Valetta Malinowska, introd. Raymond Firth, trans. Norbert Guterman (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), 16, 69 (italics Malinowski's); for the dates see Firth's introduction, xi. On the diary as an instrument of an ascetic discipline, see Young, *Malinowski*, 511. Young points out that despite Malinowski's unflattering self-portrayal in the diary, the villagers of Oburaku, where he spent three months, remembered him affectionately, according to the 1995 fieldwork of Linus Digim'Rina. Young, *Malinowski*, 527 and 652.
51. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, pref.

James G. Fraser (1922; Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1984), 81, hereinafter cited as *Argonauts*.

52. *Argonauts*, 2, 23, 25.
53. *Argonauts*, 33–36. Michael W. Young has published a vivid supplement to the account in *Argonauts*: Young, *Malinowski's Kiriwana: Fieldwork Photography, 1915–1918* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998). Annette Weiner brilliantly illuminates a missing dimension of Malinowski's picture of Trobriand society, the role of women's wealth in gift exchange and social status. See Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), xi, 136–137.
54. *Argonauts*, 40–47. Susanne Kuehling, *Dobu: Ethics of Exchange on a Massim Island, Papua New Guinea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005) gives a close-up view of Dobuan society, which takes the edge of cliché (or Kiriwanian prejudice) off Malinowski's image of the frowning Dobuans. According to Kuehling ethics, expressed through exchange, pervades Dobuan social relationships, as does an emphasis on systematic self-control that is reminiscent of Weberian Calvinists.
55. *Argonauts*, 94.
56. Ibid., 85.
57. Ibid., 89, 95.
58. Ibid., 97.
59. Ibid., 212–213.
60. Ibid., 167–168, 516.
61. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1926), 19, 23–27, 29.

## 5. MARCEL MAUSS AND THE GLOBALIZED GIFT

1. On Boas, Hunt, and collecting Northwest artifacts, see Ira Jacknis, "George Hunt, Collector of Indian Specimens," in *Chiefly Feasts: The Enduring Kwakiutl Potlatch*, ed. Aldona Jonaitis (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 181, 183, 197, 200.
2. "Notre communisme familial (5)." The quote appears in the editors' introduction, Émile Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, ed. Philippe Besnard and Marcel Fournier, with the assistance of Christine Delangle, Marie-France Essyad, and Annie Morelle (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 5. For Mauss's biography, I am greatly indebted in this chapter to Marcel Fournier, *Marcel Mauss: A Biography*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).
3. On Mauss's early years, see Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, chaps. 1–3; for his comment on his research for *Suicide*, see Mauss, "L'oeuvre de Mauss par lui-même"

(1930), in Philippe Besnard, ed., "Les durkheimiens,' *Revue française de sociologie* 20/1 (1979), 210.

4. Durkheim, *Lettres à Marcel Mauss*, 5, 7, 329–332, 378–379.
5. Mauss, "L'oeuvre de Mauss par lui-même," 209.
6. On Mauss's wartime service, see Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 168–184.
7. See Mauss's mention that he is looking for financial assistance for the journal, *Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine*, hereinafter cited as *IMEC*, Fonds Marcel Mauss, cote: MAS 120, Mauss to C. G. Seligman, May 1923. At a later period he wrote to a correspondent from Chicago who asked him for a complete list of French ethnologists and sociologists: "Nous Professeurs Français nous n'avons pas l'armée de Secrétaires et d'Assistants dont vos Départements sont pourvus" ("We French professors don't have the army of secretaries and assistants with which your departments are provided") – a remark that surely applied to the mid-1920s, just as it continues to apply to French versus American academic departments today; Mauss to Miss – Rosenfels, 2 January 1935.
8. On intertextuality, see Eric Griffiths, "Stay Alert," *Times Literary Supplement* no. 5484 (7 May 2008), 7–9; and Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 37.
9. *L'Année Sociologique*, nouvelle série, 1 (1923–1924) (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1925). Mauss mentions the dates qualifying books for review consideration on p. 2.
10. The works under review include journal articles as well as monographs. The exact number of reviews depends on how one wishes to count them, since some reviews include several works and, at the other extreme, Mauss lists some titles without comment. I have included all the listings for which Mauss provides some commentary and have counted commentary on more than one item as a single review.
11. *L'Année Sociologique*, n.s. 1 (1923–1924): 1, 27, 29. On the postwar atmosphere of mourning and attempts to build monuments suited to a republic, see Antoine Prost, "Monuments to the Dead," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, vol. 2: *Traditions*, ed. Pierre Nora, English-language edition ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 307–330.
12. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls, fwd. Mary Douglas (New York: Norton, 1990), 1–2; Maurice Cahen, *Études sur le vocabulaire religieux du vieux-scandinave: La libation* (Paris: Champion, 1921).
13. Mauss, *The Gift*, 5, 85 n. 6, 109 n. 123; Georges Davy, *La Foi jurée: Étude sociologique du problème du contrat – La formation du lien contractual* (Paris: Alcan,

1922), 39, 371. "Prestation," a synonym for gift used here by Davy and a key term in Mauss's vocabulary, is difficult to translate into English and requires more than one word to capture its full range of connotations. It can signify anything from state entitlements to sexual favors. It is an especially attractive term, when one reads *The Gift*, precisely because it pertains to the discussion of the welfare state that so concerned Mauss, but retains affective connotations.

14. *IMEC*, Fonds Marcel Mauss, cote: MAS 118, Marcel Mauss to Sir James and Lady Frazer, Paris, 5 December 1922; on the Frazers' visit to Paris, see *IMEC*, Fonds Marcel Mauss, cote: MAS 120, Marcel Mauss to Seligman, Paris, May 1923. Marcel Mauss, "Une forme ancienne de contrat chez les Thraces," *Revue des Études Grecques*, 34 (1921): 388–397, esp. 390.
15. See James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1911). Mauss's essay refers to it once, *The Gift*, 94, n. 57; otherwise, it only makes two references in passing to Frazer's introduction to Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Mauss, *The Gift*, 155 n. 16 and n. 20.
16. Mauss, *The Gift*, 19–20. In the first of two quotes on p. 19 Radcliffe-Brown writes that the goal of the gift is "to foster friendly feelings between the two persons in question." In the second one he writes: "Everyone, men and women, tries to do outdo one another in generosity." While Mauss did not review Radcliffe-Brown's book, he did work in a review – which included criticism as well as praise – of one of his articles. Mauss, Review of A. R. Brown, "The Methods of Ethnology and Social Anthropology" [*South African Journal of Science*, 20 (1923)], *L'Année Sociologique*, n.s. 1 (1923–1924): 286–287.
17. Reciprocity was a fundamental category in Simmel's writings, for it was synonymous with the formation of social structures. But he was always concerned with social structure as the condition for the possibility of individual freedom. When Simmel used ethnographic evidence, it was to underline the primitiveness of primitives and the superiority of modern society. Ingenious and original though he was as an analyst of modernity, he did not differ from evolutionary social theorists in his evaluation of indigenous communities. See Georg Simmel, "Dankbarkeit. Ein soziologischer Versuch" (1907), in *Georg Simmel. Schriften zur Soziologie*, ed. Heinz-Jürgen Dahme and Otthein Rammstedt (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), 210–218; and Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (1907; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 82, 370–371.
18. There has been ongoing controversy almost since the publication of *The Gift* of Mauss's interpretation of the Maori concept of the *hau*. As Lygia Sigaud has recently pointed out, this controversy has greatly exaggerated the importance of the concept in Mauss's essay. For the debate and the critique, see Sigaud, "The Vicissitudes of The Gift," *Social Anthropology* 10/3 (2002): 335–358.

Mauss's sketch of Polynesia elicits admiration from Marilyn Weiner, who notes his attention to Samoan fine mats, a key to her gender analysis of the gift in *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 49.

19. Mauss, *The Gift*, 8–14.
20. Ibid., 105 n. 63. For Mauss's private opinion of Malinowski, see *IMEC*, Fonds Marcel Mauss, cote: MAS 120, Mauss to C. G. Seligman, 22 February 1937, 6 December 1937, 16 April 1940, ("Malinowski est décidément un malin, pourvu d'un piètre courage"); *IMEC*, Fonds Marcel Mauss, cote: MAS 120, Mauss to Arthur Radcliffe-Brown, 2 January 1935.
21. Mauss, *The Gift*, 20–31, esp. 22.
22. Mauss, *The Gift*, 33–43. Cf. Mauss, "L'oeuvre de Mauss par lui-même," 216.
23. Mauss, *The Gift*, 35–38.
24. Ibid., 46. Mauss's administrative report for his class, "De l'emploi de la notion de primitif en Sociologie et en Histoire Générale de la Civilisation" from 1931–1932, indicates that he taught that the Australians were the only people who really deserved to be called primitive. "Tout le reste de l'humanité, dite primitive, qui vit encore, mérite plutôt le nom d'archaïque." *IMEC*, Fonds Marcel Mauss, cote: MAS 34.10, Rapport sur les Cours de M. Mauss, 1931–32.
25. Mauss, *The Gift*, 47, 78–83.
26. For a survey of Mauss's forerunners among legal historians and students of German language and literature, see Eliana Magnani, "Les médiévistes et le don, Avant et après la théorie maussienne," in *Revue du M.A.U.S.S. permanente*, 15 décembre 2007 [http://www.journaldumauss.net/spip.php?article229, accessed 8 July 2010]; and Beate Wagner-Hasel, "Egoistic Exchange and Altruistic Gift: On the Roots of Marcel Mauss' Theory of the Gift, " in Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jussen, eds., *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2003), 141–171.
27. Richard M. Meyer, "Zur Geschichte des Schenkens," *Zeitschrift für Kulturgeschichte* 5 (1898): 18–29; Jacob Grimm, "Über Schenken und Geben. Gelesen in der Akademie der Wissenschaften am 26. October 1848," in Grimm, *Kleinere Schriften*, vol. 2*: Abhandlungen zur Mythologie und Sittenkunde*, ed. Karl Müllenhof and Eduard Ippel (Berlin: Dümmler, 1865–1890), 174, 210. Mauss praised Richard Meyer's essay as "one of the most appealing works of folklore that we know" in *The Gift*, 60; he recommended Grimm's essay on 151 n. 109.
28. See, for example, a folklore textbook cited by Mauss: Elard Hugo Meyer, *Deutsche Volkskunde* (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1898), gave a populist twist to the search for national origins. *Volkskunde* (folklore) taught about the *Volk* – a subject, wrote the author, newly of interest to many educated people, who were

trying to get in touch with the common man in a democratic age (iii). Cf. Mauss, *The Gift*, 61 and 151 n. 111.

29. In a report on his teaching activities from 1927, Mauss indicated that he was teaching a series of classes on the early formation of Germanic peoples and civilizations that emphasized their extremely late and mixed character. He was completely opposed to the romantic, and later racial, assumption that one could find a biologically or culturally unified people and trace its expansion from such a unified core. *IMEC*, Fonds Marcel Mauss, cote: MAS 34.9: activity report by Marcel Mauss, dated 12 July 1927.
30. Editor's introduction, Marcel Mauss, *Écrits Politiques*, ed. Marcel Fournier (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 35–36; Fournier, *Marcel Mauss*, 204–209. The following section is greatly indebted to Fournier's edition of Mauss's political writings.
31. Mauss, "Pour les bolchevistes (1921)," in Mauss, *Écrits Politiques*, 405.
32. Mauss, "Observations sur la violence. III. La violence bolchevik. Bilan de la terreur. Son échec (1923)," in Mauss, *Écrits Politiques*, 520–521; "Observations sur la violence. IV. La violence bolchevik. La lutte contre les classes actives (1923)," in Mauss, *Écrits Politiques*, 522, 525; Mauss, "Observations sur la violence. Contre la violence. Pour la force (1923)," in Mauss, *Écrits Politiques*, 527–531.
33. Mauss, "Appréciation sociologique du bolchevisme," 537–566, (1924), in Mauss, *Écrits Politiques*, 537–566, quote from 543; cf. Mauss, "Socialisme et bolchevisme (1925)" 699–721, in *Écrits Politiques*, esp. 721.
34. Mauss, *The Gift*, 69.
35. Ibid., 81.
36. Mauss, *The Gift*, 83. The final typed draft of the essay also documents how emphatically he wished to direct attention to the word "politics," which he underlined and capitalized by hand. Cf. *IMEC*, Fonds Marcel Mauss, cote: MAS 25.11, Essai sur le don. Formes et raisons de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques. [IV. Conclusion].
37. See the description of Socrates as model for Mill and his circle in John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), 14–15, 29, 30, 69.
38. Mauss, *The Gift*, 82–83.

## CONCLUSION

1. For samples of recent research on the gift in contemporary society, see above, pp. 172–173, n. 4. American popular culture captures the ongoing power of the gift in a mythic moment like the opening scene of *The Godfather*, Part I, when an undertaker approaches Don Corleone, the Godfather, for a favor that – the humble suppliant is warned – he may someday have to return (as before long he does). For those curious about the hold of the gift on high

society today, see Robin Pogrebin, "Trustees Find Cultural Board Seats Are Still Highly Coveted Luxury Items," *The New York Times*, April 3, 2010. The author succeeds remarkably well in capturing the nuances of the exchanges between institutions and board members, such as the insistence of some philanthropists – amid donations soaring into the millions – that one doesn't do it for the status, and the comparison between wooing board members and the dating game.

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The following bibliography has two parts. The first lists all unpublished library and archival sources referred to in the text. The second is a selection of books and articles, including primary and secondary materials; it attempts to provide a first orientation for general readers, students, and scholars interested in further research on the topics discussed in this book. Fuller documentation is contained in the notes.

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