



The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies (Classic Reprint)

Marcel Mauss

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Excerpt from The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies

Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), Emile Durkheim's nephew and most distinguished pupil, was a man of unusual ability and learning, and also of integrity and strong convictions. After Durkheim's death he was the leading figure in French sociology. His reputation was closely bound up with the fortunes of the *Année Sociologique* which he helped his uncle to found and make famous; some of the most stimulating and original contributions to its earlier numbers were written by him in collaboration with Durkheim and Hubert and Beuchat: *Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice* (1899), *De quelques formes primitives de classification: contribution à l'étude des représentations collectives* (1903), *Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie* (1904), and *Essai sur les variations saisonnières des sociétés eskimos: essai de morphologie sociale* (1906).

The war of 1914-18, during which Mauss was on operational service, almost wiped out the team of brilliant younger scholars whom Durkheim had taught, inspired, and gathered around him his son Andre Durkheim, Robert Hertz, Antoine Bianconi, Georges Gelly, Maxime David, Jean Reynier. The Master did not survive them (d. 1917). Had it not been for these disasters Mauss might have given us in ampler measure the fruits of his erudition, untiring industry, and mastery of method. But he not only wrote about social solidarity and collective sentiments. He expressed them in his own life. For him the group of Durkheim and his pupils and colleagues had a kind of collective mind, the material representation of which was its product the *Année*.

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