the system define and maintain a ceiling on the intensification of domestic production by political means and for public purposes.

Malo, Kamakau and the other custodians of Hawaiian tradition refer habitually to the paramount chiefs as "kings". But the trouble was precisely that they were not kings. They had not broken structurally with the people at large, so they might dishonor the kinship morality only on pain of a mass disaffection. And without a monopoly of force, the probability was that the general discontent would come down on their particular heads. In a comparative perspective, the great disadvantage of the Hawaiian organization was its primitiveness: it was not a state. Its further advance could only have been secured by an evolution in that direction. If Hawaiian society discovered limits to its ability to augment production and polity, this threshold which it had reached but could not cross was the boundary of primitive society itself.

4

The Spirit of the Gift

Marcel Mauss's famous *Essay on the Gift* becomes his own gift to the ages. Apparently completely lucid, with no secrets even for the novice, it remains a source of an unending ponderation for the anthropologist *du métier,* compelled as if by the *hau* of the thing to come back to it again and again, perhaps to discover some new and unsuspected value, perhaps to enter into a dialogue which seems to impute some meaning of the reader's but in fact only renders the due of the original. This chapter is an idiosyncratic venture of the latter kind, unjustified moreover by any special study of the Maori or of the philosophers (Hobbes and Rousseau especially) invoked along the way. Yet in thinking the particular thesis of the Maori *hau* and the general theme of social contract reiterated throughout the *Essay,* one appreciates in another light certain fundamental qualities of primitive economy and polity, mention of which may forgive the following overextended commentary.

"Explication de Texte"

The master concept of the *Essai sur le don* is the indigenous Maori idea *hau,* introduced by Mauss as "the spirit of things and in particular of the forest and the game it contains . . ." (1966, p. 158).[1] The

1. An English translation of *L'Essai sur le don* has been prepared by Ian Cunnison, and published as *The Gift* (London: Cohen and West, 1954).

Maori before any other archaic society, and the idea of *hau* above all similar notions, responded to the central question of the *Essay,* the only one Mauss proposed to examine "à fond": "*What is the principle of right and interest which, in societies of primitive or archaic type, requires that the gift received must be repaid? What force is there in the thing given which compels the recipient to make a return?*" (p. 148).

The *hau* is that force. Not only is it the spirit of the *foyer,* but of the donor of the gift; so that even as it seeks to return to its origin unless replaced, it gives the donor a mystic and dangerous hold over the recipient.

Logically, the *hau* explains only why gifts are repaid. It does not of itself address the other imperatives into which Mauss decomposed the process of reciprocity: the obligation to give in the first place, and the obligation to receive. Yet by comparison with the obligation to reciprocate, these aspects Mauss treated only summarily, and even then in ways not always detached from the *hau:* "This rigorous combination of symmetrical and opposed rights and duties ceases to appear contradictory if one realizes that it consists above all of a melange of spiritual bonds between things which are in some degree souls, and individuals and groups which interact in some degree as things" (p. 163).

Meanwhile, the Maori *hau* is raised to the status of a general explanation: the prototypical principle of reciprocity in Melanesia, Polynesia, and the American northwest coast, the binding quality of the Roman *traditio,* the key to gifts of cattle in Hindu India—"What you are, I am; become on this day of your essence, in giving you I give myself" (p. 248).

Everything depends then on the "texte capitale" collected by Elsdon Best (1909) from the Maori sage, Tamati Ranapiri of the Ngati-Raukawa tribe. The great role played by the *hau* in the *Essay on the Gift*—and the repute it has enjoyed since in anthropological economics—stems almost entirely from this passage. Here Ranapiri explained the *hau* of *taonga,* that is, goods of the higher spheres of exchange, valuables. I append Best's translation of the Maori text (which he also published in the original), as well as Mauss's rendering in French.

Best, 1909, p. 439

I will now speak of the *hau,* and the ceremony of *whangai hau.* That *hau* is not the *hau* (wind) that blows—not at all. I will carefully explain to you. Suppose that you possess a certain article, and you give that article to me, without price. We make no bargain over it. Now, I give that article to a third person, who, after some time has elapsed, decides to make some return for it, and so he makes me a present of some article. Now, that article that he gives me is the *hau* of the article I first received from you and then gave to him. The goods that I received for that item I must hand over to you. It would not be right for me to keep such goods for myself, whether they be desirable items or otherwise. I must hand them over to you, because they are a *hau* of the article you gave me. Were I to keep such an equivalent for myself, then some serious evil would befall me, even death. Such is the *hau,* the *hau* of personal property, or the forest *hau.* Enough on these points.

Mauss, 1966, pp. 158–159

Je vais vous parler du *hau.* . . . Le *hau* n'est pas le vent qui souffle. Pas du tout. Supposez que vous possédez un article détermine *(taonga)* et que vous me donnez cet article; vous me le donnez sans prix fixe. Nous ne faisons pas de marché à ce propos. Or, je donne cet article à une troisième personne qui, après qu'un certain temps s'est écoulé, décide de rendre quelque chose en paiement *(utu),* il me fait présent de quelque chose *(taonga).* Or, ce *taonga* qui'il me donne est l'esprit *(hau)* du *taonga* que j'ai recu de vous et que je lui ai donnés à lui. Les *taonga* que j'ai recus pour ces *taonga* (venus de vous) il faut que je vous les rende. Il ne serait pas juste *(tika)* de ma part de garder ces *taonga* pour moi, qu'ils soient désirables *(rawe),* ou désagreables *(kino).* Je dois vous les donner car ils sont un *hau* du *taonga* que vous m'avez donné. Si je conservais ce deuxième *taonga* pour moi, il pourrait m'en venir du mal, sérieusement, même la mort. Tel est le *hau,* le *hau* de la propriété personnelle, le *hau* des *taonga,* le *hau* de la forêt. *Kati ena.* (Assez sur ce sujet.)

Mauss complained about Best's abbreviation of a certain portion of the original Maori. To make sure that we would miss nothing of this critical document, and in the hope further meanings might be gleaned from it, I asked Professor Bruce Biggs, distinguished student of the Maori, to prepare a new interlinear translation, leaving the term "*hau,*" however, in the original. To this request he responded most

kindly and promptly with the following version, undertaken without consulting Best's translation:[2]

Na, mo te hau o te ngaaherehere. Taua mea te hau, ehara i te mea
Now, concerning the *hau* of the forest. This *hau* is not the *hau*
ko te hau e pupuhi nei. Kaaore. Maaku e aata whaka maarama ki a koe.
that blows (the wind). No. I will explain it carefully to you.
Na, he taonga toou ka hoomai e koe mooku. Kaaore aa taaua whakaritenga
Now, you have something valuable which you give to me. We have no
uto mo too taonga. Na, ka hoatu hoki e ahau mo teetehi atu tangata, aa,
agreement about payment. Now, I give it to someone else, and,
ka roa peaa te waa, aa, ka mahara taua tangata kei a ia raa taug taonga
a long time passes, and that man thinks he has the valuable,
kia hoomai he utu ki a au, aa, ka hoomai e ia. Na, ko taua taonga
he should give some repayment to me, and so he does so. Now, that
i hoomai nei ki a au, ko te hau teenaa o te taonga i hoomai ra ki a au
valuable which was given to me, that is the *hau* of the valuable which was
i mua. Ko taua taonga me hoatu e ahau ki a koe. E kore
given to me before. I must give it to you. It would not
rawa e tika kia kaiponutia e ahau mooku; ahakoa taonga pai rawa, taonga
be correct for me to keep it for myself, whether it be something very good,
kino raanei, me tae rawa taua taonga i a au ki a koe. No te mea he hau
or bad, that valuable must be given to you from me. Because that valuable
no te taonga teenaa taonga na. Ki te mea kai kaiponutia e ahau taua taonga
is a *hau* of the other valuable. If I should hang onto that valuable
mooku, ka mate ahau. Koina te hau, hau taonga
for myself, I will become *mate*. So that is the *hau*—*hau* of valuables,
hau ngaaherehere. Kaata eenaa.
hau of the forest. So much for that.

Concerning the text as Best recorded it, Mauss commented that—despite marks of that "esprit théologique et juridique encore imprécis" characteristic of Maori—"it offers but one obscurity: the intervention of a third person." But even this difficulty he forthwith clarified with a light gloss:

2. Hereinafter, I will use the Biggs version except where the argument about Mauss's interpretation requires that one cite only the documents available to him. I take this opportunity to thank Professor Biggs for his generous help.

> But in order to rightly understand this Maori jurist, it suffices to say: "*Taonga* and all strictly personal property have a *hau*, a spiritual power. You give me a *taonga*, I give it to a third party, the latter gives me another in return, because he is forced to do so by the *hau* of my present; and I am obliged to give you this thing, for I must give back to you what is in reality the product of the *hau* of your *taonga* (1966, p. 159).

Embodying the person of its giver and the *hau* of its forest, the gift itself, on Mauss's reading, obliges repayment. The receiver is beholden by the spirit of the donor; the *hau* of a *taonga* seeks always to return to its homeland, inexorably, even after being transferred hand to hand through a series of transactions. Upon repaying, the original recipient assumes power in turn over the first donor; hence, "la circulation obligatoire des richesses, tributs et dons" in Samoa and New Zealand. In sum:

> . . . it is clear that in Maori custom, the bond of law, bond by way of things, is a bond of souls, because the thing itself has a soul, is soul. From this it follows that to present something to someone is to present something of oneself. . . . It is clear that in this system of ideas it is necessary to return unto another what is in reality part of his nature and substance; for, to accept something from someone is to accept something of his spiritual essence, of his soul; the retention of this thing would be dangerous and mortal, not simply because it would be illicit, but also because this thing which comes from a person, not only morally but physically and spiritually—this essence, this food, these goods, movable or immovable, these women or these offspring, these rites or these communions—give a magical and religious hold over you. Finally, this thing given is not inert. Animate, often personified, it seeks to return to what Hertz called its *"foyer d'origine"* or to produce for the clan and the earth from which it came some equivalent to take its place (*op. cit.*, p. 161).

The Commentaries of Lévi-Strauss, Firth and Johansen

Mauss's interpretation of the *hau* has been attacked by three scholars of authority, two of them experts on the Maori and one an expert on Mauss. Their critiques are surely learned, but none I think arrives at the true meaning of the Ranapiri text or of the *hau*.

Lévi-Strauss debates principles. He does not presume to criticize Mauss on Maori ethnography. He does, however, question the reliance on an indigenous rationalization: "Are we not faced here with

one of those instances (not altogether rare) in which the ethnologist allows himself to be mystified by the native?" (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 38.) The *hau* is not the reason for exchange, only what one people happen to believe is the reason, the way they represent to themselves an unconscious necessity whose reason lies elsewhere. And behind Mauss's fixation on the *hau,* Lévi-Strauss perceived a general conceptual error that regretably arrested his illustrious predecessor short of the full structuralist comprehension of exchange that the *Essay on the Gift* had itself so brilliantly prefigured: "like Moses leading his people to a promised land of which he would never contemplate the splendor" (p. 37). For Mauss had been the first in the history of ethnology to go beyond the empirical to a deeper reality, to abandon the sensible and discrete for the system of relations; in a unique manner he had perceived the operation of reciprocity across its diverse and multiple modalities. But, alas, Mauss could not completely escape from positivism. He continued to understand exchange in the way it is presented to experience—fragmented, that is to say, into the separate acts of giving, receiving, and repaying. Considering it thus in pieces, instead of as a unified and integral principle, he could do nothing better than to try to glue it back again with this "mystic cement," the *hau.*

Firth likewise has his own views on reciprocity, and in making them he scores Mauss repeatedly on points of Maori ethnography (1959a, pp. 418-421). Mauss, according to Firth, simply misunderstood the *hau,* which is a difficult and amorphous concept, but in any event a more passive spiritual principle than Mauss believed. The Ranapiri text in fact gives no evidence that the *hau* passionately strives to return to its source. Nor did the Maori generally rely on the *hau* acting by itself to punish economic delinquency. Normally in the event of a failure to reciprocate, and invariably for theft, the established procedure of retribution or restitution was witchcraft *(maku-tu):* witchcraft initiated by the person who had been bilked, usually involving the services of a "priest" *(tohunga),* if operating through the vehicle of the goods detained.[3] Furthermore, adds Firth, Mauss con-

3. It seems from Firth's account that the same procedure was used both against thieves and ingrates. I appeal here to Maori authorities for clarification. From my own very limited and entirely textual experience, it seems that the goods of a victimized party were used particularly in sorcery against thieves. Here, where the culprit usually is not known, some portion of the goods remaining—or something from the place they were kept—is the vehicle for identifying or punishing the thief (for example, Best, 1924, vol. 1, p. 311). But sorcery against a known person is typically practiced by means of something associated with *him;* thus, in a case of failure to repay, the goods of the deceiver would be more likely to serve as vehicle than the gift of the owner. For further interest and confusion, such a vehicle associated with the victim of witchcraft is known to the Maori as *hau.* One of the entries under *"hau"* in W. Williams's dictionary is: "something connected with a person on whom it is intended to practice enchantment; such as a portion of his hair, a drop of his spittle, or anything which has touched his person, etc., which when taken to the *tohunga* [ritual expert] might serve as a connecting link between his incantations and their object" (Williams, 1892).

fused types of *hau* that in the Maori view are quite distinct—the *hau* of persons, that of lands and forests, and that of *taonga*—and on the strength of this confusion he formulated a serious error. Mauss simply had no warrant to gloss the *hau* of the *taonga* as the *hau* of the person who gives it. The whole idea that the exchange of gifts is an exchange of persons is *sequitur* to a basic misinterpretation. Ranapiri had merely said that the good given by the third person to the second was the *hau* of the *thing* received by the second from the first.[4] The *hau* of persons was not at issue. In supposing it was, Mauss put his own intellectual refinements on Maori mysticism.[5] In other words, and Lévi-Strauss notwithstanding, it was not a native rationalization after all; it was a kind of French one. But as the Maori proverb says, "the troubles of other lands are their own" (Best, 1922, p. 30).

Firth for his part prefers secular to spiritual explanations of reciprocity. He would emphasize certain other sanctions of repayment, sanctions noted by Mauss in the course of the *Essay:*

> The fear of punishment sent through the *hau* of goods is indeed a supernatural sanction, and a valuable one, for enforcing repayment of a gift. But to attribute the scrupulousness in settling one's obligations to a belief in an active, detached fragment of personality of the donor, charged with nostalgia and vengeful impulses, is an entirely different matter. It is an abstraction which receives no support from native evidence. The main emphasis of the fulfillment of obligation lies, as the work of Mauss himself has suggested, in the social sanctions—the desire to continue useful economic relations, the maintenance of prestige and power—which do not require any hypothesis of recondite beliefs to explain (1959a, p. 421).[6]

4. The intervention of a third party thus offers no obscurity to Firth. The exchange between second and third parties was necessary to introduce a second good that could stand for the first, or for the *hau* of the first (cf. Firth, 1959a, p. 420 n.).

5. "When Mauss sees in the gift exchange an interchange of personalities, 'a bond of souls,' he is following, not native belief, but his own intellectualized interpretation of it" (Firth, 1959a, p. 420).

6. In his latest word on the subject, Firth continues to deny the ethnographic validity of Mauss's views on the Maori *hau,* adding also that no such spiritual belief

The latest to apply for entrance to the Maori "house of learning," J. Prytz Johansen (1954), makes certain clear advances over his predecessors in the reading of the Ranapiri text. He at least is the first to doubt that the old Maori had anything particularly spiritual in mind when he spoke of the *hau* of a gift. Unfortunately, Johansen's discussion is even more labyrinthal than Tamati Ranapiri's, and once having reached the point he seems to let go, searches a mythical rather than a logical explanation of the famous exchange *à trois,* and ends finally on a note of scholarly despair.

After rendering due tribute and support to Firth's critique of Mauss, Johansen observes that the word *hau* has a very wide semantic field. Probably several homonyms are involved. For the series of meanings usually understood as "life principle" or something of the sort, Johansen prefers as a general definition, "a part of life (for example, an object) which is used ritually in order to influence the whole," the thing serving as *hau* varying according to the ritual context. He then makes a point that hitherto had escaped everyone's notice—including, I think, Best's. Tamati Ranapiri's discourse on gifts was by way of introduction to and explanation of a certain ceremony, a sacrificial repayment to the forest for the game birds taken by Maori fowlers.[7] Thus the informant's purpose in this expositing passage was merely to establish the principle of reciprocity, and "*hau*" there merely signified "countergift"—"the Maori in question undoubtedly thought that *hau* means countergift, simply what is otherwise called *utu*" (Johansen, 1954, p. 118).

We shall see momentarily that the notion of "equivalent return" *(utu)* is inadequate for the *hau* in question; moreover, the issues posed by Ranapiri transcend reciprocity as such. In any event, Johansen, upon taking up again the three-party transaction, dissipated the advance he had made. Unaccountably, he credited the received understanding that the original donor performs magic on the second party through the goods the latter received from the third, goods that

is involved in Tikopian gift exchange (1967). Too, he now has certain critical reservations on Mauss's discussion of the obligations to give, receive, and reciprocate. Yet at one level he would agree with Mauss. Not in the sense of an actual spiritual entity, but in the more generalized social and psychological sense of an extension of the self, the gift does partake of its donor *(ibid.,* pp. 10–11, 15–16).

7. In the original Maori as published by Best, the passage on gifts was actually intercalculated as an explanatory aside between two descriptions of the ceremony. The continuous English translation, however, deletes the main part of the first description, this Best having cited a page earlier (1909, p. 438). Besides, both English and Maori

become *hau* in this context. But since the explication is "not obvious," Johansen found himself compelled to invoke a special unknown tradition, "to the effect that when three persons exchanged gifts and the intermediary party failed, the counter-gift which had stopped with him might be *hau,* i.e., might be used to bewitch him." He then finished gloomily: "However a certain uncertainty is involved in all these considerations and it seems doubtful whether we shall ever attain to actual certainty as regards the meaning of the *hau*" (*ibid.,* p. 118).

THE TRUE MEANING OF THE HAU OF VALUABLES

I am not a linguist, a student of primitive religions, an expert on the Maori, or even a Talmudic scholar. The "certainty" I see in the disputed text of Tamati Ranapiri is therefore suggested with due reservations. Still, to adopt the current structuralist incantation, "everything happens as if" the Maori was trying to explain a religious concept by an economic principle, which Mauss promptly understood the other way around and thereupon proceeded to develop the economic principle by the religious concept. The *hau* in question really means something on the order of "return on" or "product of," and the principle expressed in the text on *taonga* is that any such yield on a gift ought to be handed over to the original donor.

The disputed text absolutely should be restored to its position as an explanatory gloss to the description of a sacrifical rite.[8] Tamata Ranapiri was trying to make Best understand by this example of gift exchange—example so ordinary that anybody (or any Maori) ought to be able to grasp it immediately—why certain game birds are ceremoniously returned to the *hau* of the forest, to the source of their

texts begin with a discussion of witchcraft spells, not apparently related to the ceremonial or the gift exchange, but about which more later.

8. There is a very curious difference between the several versions of Best, Mauss, and Tamati Ranapiri. Mauss appears to deliberately delete Best's reference to the ceremony in the opening phrase. Best had cited "'I will now speak of the *hau,* and the ceremony of *whangai hau*'"; whereas Mauss has it merely, "'Je vais vous [*sic*] parler du *hau*. . .'" (ellipsis is Mauss's). The interesting point is raised by Biggs's undoubtedly authentic translation, much closer to that of Mauss, as it likewise does not mention *whangai hau* at this point: "'Now, concerning the *hau* of the forest.'" However, even in this form the original text linked the message on *taonga* with the ceremony of *whangai hau,* "fostering" or "nourishing *hau,*" since the *hau* of the forest was not the subject of the immediately succeeding passage on gifts but of the consequent and ultimate description of the ceremony.

abundance. In other words, he adduced a transaction among men parallel to the ritual transaction he was about to relate, such that the former would serve as paradigm for the latter. As a matter of fact, the secular transaction does not prove directly comprehensible to us, and the best way to understand it is to work backwards from the exchange logic of the ceremony.

This logic, as presented by Tamati Ranapiri, is perfectly straightforward. It is necessary only to observe the sage's use of *"mauri"* as the physical embodiment of the forest *hau,* the power of increase—a mode of conceiving the *mauri* that is not at all idiosyncratic, to judge from other writings of Best. The *mauri,* housing the *hau,* is placed in the forest by the priests *(tohunga)* to make game birds abound. Here then is the passage that followed that on the gift exchange—in the intention of the informant, as night follows day:[9]

> I will explain something to you about the forest *hau.* The *mauri* was placed or implanted in the forest by the *tohunga* [priests]. It is the *mauri* that causes birds to be abundant in the forest, that they may be slain and taken by man. These birds are the property of, or belong to, the *mauri,* the *tohunga,* and the forest: that is to say, they are an equivalent for that important item, the *mauri.* Hence it is said that offerings should be made to the *hau* of the forest. The *tohunga* (priests, adepts) eat the offering because the *mauri* is theirs: it was they who located it in the forest, who caused it to be. That is why some of the birds cooked at the sacred fire are set apart to be eaten by the priests only, in order that the *hau* of the forest-products, and the *mauri,* may return again to the forest—that is, to the *mauri.* Enough of these matters (Best, 1909, p. 439).

In other words, and essentially: the *mauri* that holds the increase-power *(hau)* is placed in the forest by the priests *(tohunga);* the *mauri* causes game birds to abound; accordingly, some of the captured birds should be ceremoniously returned to the priests who placed the *mauri;* the consumption of these birds by the priests in effect restores the fertility *(hau)* of the forest (hence the name of the ceremony, *whangai hau,* "nourishing *hau*").[10] Immediately then, the ceremonial transaction presents a familiar appearance: a three-party game, with the

9. I use Best's translation, the one available to Mauss. I also have in hand Biggs's interlinear version; it does not differ significantly from Best's.

10. The earlier discussion of this ritual, preceeding the passage on *taonga* in the full Maori text, in fact comments on two related ceremonies: the one just described and another, performed before, by those sent into the forest in advance of the fowling season to observe the state of the game. I cite the main part of this earlier descriptic Biggs's

priests in the position of an initiating donor to whom should be rendered the returns on an original gift. The cycle of exchange is shown in Figure 4.1.

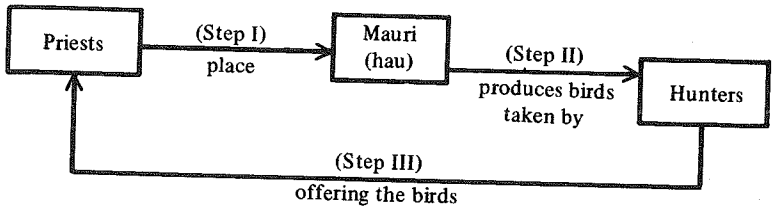

Figure 4.1

Now, in the light of this transaction, reconsider the text, just preceding, on gifts among men. Everything becomes transparent. The secular exchange of *taonga* is only slightly different in form from the ceremonial offering of birds, while in principle it is exactly the same—thus the didactic value of its position in Ranapiri's discourse. *A* gives a gift to *B* who transforms it into something else in an exchange with *C,* but since the *taonga* given by *C* to *B* is the product *(hau)* of *A*'s original gift, this benefit ought to be surrendered to *A.* The cycle is shown in Figure 4.2.

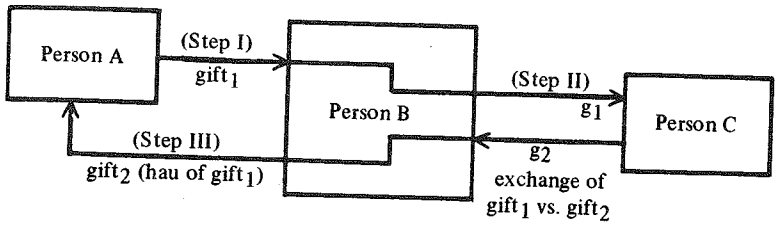

Figure 4.2

version: "The *hau* of the forest has two 'likenesses.' 1. When the forest is inspected by the observers, and if birds are observed to be there, and if birds are killed by them that day, the first bird killed by them is offered to the *mauri.* It is simply thrown away into the bush, and is said, 'that's for the *mauri.*' The reason, lest they get nothing in the future. 2. When the hunting is finished (they) go out of the bush and begin to cook the birds for preserving in fat. Some are set aside first to feed the *hau* of the forest; this is the forest *hau.* Those birds which were set aside are cooked on the second fire. Only the priests eat the birds of the second fire, Other birds are set aside for the *tapairu* from which only the women eat. Most of the birds are set aside and cooked on the *puuraakau* fire. The birds of the *puuraakau* fire are for all to eat. . . ." (cf. Best, 1909, pp. 438, 440–41, 449f; and for other details of the ceremonies, 1942, pp. 13, 184f, 316–17).

The meaning of *hau* one disengages from the exchange of *taonga* is as secular as the exchange itself. If the second gift is the *hau* of the first, then the *hau* of a good is its yield, just as the *hau* of a forest is its productiveness. Actually, to suppose Tamati Ranapiri meant to say the gift has a spirit which forces repayment seems to slight the old gentleman's obvious intelligence. To illustrate such a spirit needs only a game of two persons: you give something to me; your spirit *(hau)* in that thing obliges me to reciprocate. Simple enough. The introduction of a third party could only unduly complicate and obscure the point. But if the point is neither spiritual nor reciprocity as such, if it is rather that one man's gift should not be another man's capital, and therefore the fruits of a gift ought to be passed back to the original holder, then the introduction of a third party is necessary. It is necessary precisely to show a *turnover:* the gift has had issue; the recipient has used it to advantage. Ranapiri was careful to prepare this notion of advantage beforehand by stipulating[11] the absence of equivalence in the first instance, as if *A* had given *B* a free gift. He implies the same, moreover, in stressing the delay between the reception of the gift by the third person and the repayment—"a long time passes, and that man thinks that he has the valuable, he should give some repayment to me." As Firth observes, delayed repayments among Maori are customarily larger than the initial gift (1959a, p. 422); indeed, it is a general rule of Maori gift exchange that, "the payment must if possible be somewhat in excess of what the principle of equivalence demanded" (ibid., p. 423). Finally, observe just where the term *hau* enters into the discussion. Not with the initial transfer from the first to the second party, as well it could if it were the spirit in the gift, but upon the exchange between the second and third parties, as logically it would if it were the yield on the gift.[12] The term "profit" is economically and historically inappropriate to the Maori, but it would have been a better translation than "spirit" for the *hau* in question.

11. And in Best's translation, even reiterating: "'Suppose that you possess a certain article, and you give that article to me, without price. We make no bargain over it.'"

12. Firth cites the following discussion to this point from Gudgeon: "'If a man received a present and passed it on to some third person then there is no impropriety in such an act; but if a return present is made by the third party then it must be passed on to the original grantor or it is a *hau ngaro* (consumed *hau*)'" (Firth, 1959a, p. 418). The lack of consequence in the first of these conditions is again evidence against Mauss's nostalgic *hau,* ever striving to return to its *foyer.*

Best provides one other example of exchange in which *hau* figures. Significantly, the little scene is again a transaction *à trois:*

> I was having a flax shoulder-cape made by a native woman at Rua-tahuna. One of the troopers wished to buy it from the weaver, but she firmly refused, lest the horrors of *hau whitia* descend upon her. The term *hau whitia* means "averted hau" (1900–1901, p. 198).

Only slightly different from the model elaborated by Tamati Ranapiri, this anecdote offers no particular difficulty. Having commissioned the cape, Best had the prior claim on it. Had the weaver accepted the trooper's offer, she would have turned this thing to her own advantage, leaving Best with nothing. She appropriates the product of Best's cape; she becomes subject to the evils of a gain unrightfully turned aside, "the horrors of *hau whitia.*"[13] Otherwise said, she is guilty of eating *hau—kai hau*—for in the introduction to this incident Best had explained,

> Should I dispose of some article belonging to another person and not hand over to him any return or payment I may have received for that article, that is a *hau whitia* and my act is a *kai hau,* and death awaits, for the dread terrors of *makutu* [witchcraft] will be turned upon me (1900–1901, pp. 197–98).[14]

So as Firth observed, the *hau* (even if it were a spirit) does not cause harm on its own initiative; the distinct procedure of witchcraft *(makutu)* has to be set in motion. It is not even implied by this incident that such witchcraft would work through the passive medium of *hau,* since Best, who was potentially the deceived party, had apparently put nothing tangible into circulation. Taken together, the different texts on the *hau* of gifts suggest something else entirely: not

13. *Whitia* is the past participle of *whiti. Whiti,* according to H. Williams's dictionary, means: (1) *v.i.,* cross over, reach the opposite side; (2) change, turn, to be inverted, to be contrary; (3) *v.t.,* pass through; (4) turn over, prise (as with a lever); (5) change (Williams, 1921, p. 584).

14. Best's further interpretation lent itself to Mauss's views: "For it seems that that article of yours is impregnated with a certain amount of your *hau,* which presumably passes into the article received in exchange therefore, because if I pass that second article on to other hands it is a *hau whitia*" (1900–1901, p. 198). Thus "it seems." One has a feeling of participating in a game of ethnographic folk-etymology, which we now find, from Best's explanation, is a quite probable game *a quatre.*

that the goods withheld are dangerous, but that withholding goods is *immoral*—and therefore dangerous in the sense the deceiver is open to justifiable attack. " 'It would not be *correct* to keep it for myself,' said Ranapiri, " 'I will become *mate* (ill, or die).' "

We have to deal with a society in which freedom to gain at others' expense is not envisioned by the relations and forms of exchange. Therein lies the moral of the old Maori's economic fable. The issue he posed went beyond reciprocity: not merely that gifts must be suitably returned, but that returns rightfully should be given back. This interpretation it is possible to sustain by a judicious selection among the many meanings of *hau* entered in H. Williams's (1921) Maori dictionary. *Hau* is a verb meaning to "exceed, be in excess," as exemplified in the phrase *kei te hau te wharika nei* ("this mat is longer than necessary"); likewise, *hau* is the substantive, "excess, parts, fraction over any complete measurement." *Hau* is also "property, spoils." Then there is *haumi,* a derivative meaning to "join," to "lengthen by addition," to "receive or lay aside"; it is also, as a noun, "the piece of wood by which the body of a canoe is lengthened."

The following is the true meaning of Tamati Ranapiri's famous and enigmatic discourse on the *hau* of *taonga:*

> I will explain it carefully to you. Now, you have something valuable which you give to me. We have no agreement about payment. Now, I give it to someone else, and, a long time passes, and that man thinks he has the valuable, he should give some repayment to me, and so he does so. Now, that valuable which was given to me, that is the product of [hau] the valuable which was given to me[by you] before. I must give it to you. It would not be right for me to keep it for myself, whether it be something good, or bad, that valuable must be given to you from me. Because that valuable is a return on [hau] the other valuable. If I should hang onto that valuable for myself, I will become ill [or die]."

ASIDE ON THE MAORI SORCERER'S APPRENTICE

But this understanding of the *hau* of things still risks criticism on its own grounds—of omission, of failure to consider the total context. Both passages, on gifts and on sacrifice, are parts of a yet larger whole, preceeded by still another disquisition on *mauri* as taken by Best from the lips of Ranapiri (1909, pp. 440-441). True, there may be good

reason for leaving this particular prelude aside. Highly obscure, esoteric, concerned mainly with the nature and teaching of death-dealing spells, it seems to have no great bearing on exchange:

> The *mauri* is a spell which is recited over a certain object, of stone, or of wood, or something else approved of by the *tohunga* [priest] as a "clinging place," a "holding-fast-place," a "dwelling-place" for the *mauri.* Such an object is subjected to the "cause-to-be-split" ritual, and left in a hidden part of the forest to lie there. The *mauri* is not *tapu*-less. Also it is not the case that all of the forest is as *tapu* as the part where the *mauri* lies. Concerning the causing-to-be-split, it is a shattering. If a man is taught by a priest certain spells, say witchcraft spells, or spells for placing *mauri,* and the other Maori spells, and he learns them, then the priest says to that man, "Now, there, 'cause-to-be-split' your spells!" That is, be-spell the stone so that it is shattered, the man so that he dies, or whatever. If the stone is smashed, or the man dies, the spells of that pupil have become very *mana.* If the stone does not burst (shatter), or the man die, which has been "caused-to-be-split," his spells are not *mana.* They will return and kill him, the pupil. If the priest is very old and near to death, that priest will say, to his pupil to "cause-to-be-split" his spells against him, that is, the priest. The priest dies, so his spells are "split" (shattered) which he taught, and are *mana.* Then the pupil lives, and, in due time, he will want to place a *mauri.* Now, he is able to place (it) in the forest, or in the water, or on the post of the eel-weir which is called *pou-reinga.* It would not be good for the spells of that pupil to remain within him, to be not split, that is shattered forth, and, it is the shattering forth, which is the same as shatter the stone. If the stone shatters completely, that is good. That is the "causing-to-split" (Bigg's translation).

No question that the previous examination of gift and ceremonial exchange leaves us merely unprepared to understand the *profondeurs* of this section. Yet the text again speaks of an exchange, which even superficial study will recognize as formally analogous to the transactions of *taonga* and "nourishing *hau.*" The spell passed by priest to student returns to the former enhanced in value and by way of a third party. It may very well be that the three sections of the Ranapiri text are variations on the same theme, unified not only in content but by a triple replication of the same transactional structure.[15]

15. There is also, of course, a narrative bridge between the section on transmission.

The case is strengthened by a precious datum, again explicated by Firth (1959a, pp. 272-273), apparently from materials supplied by Best (1925a, pp. 1101-1104). Comparing Maori custom with common Melanesian practice in regard to the transmission of magic, Firth was struck by the virtual absence among Maori of any obligation to repay the teacher. In the Maori view, such recompense would degrade the spell, even defile and render it null—with a single exception. The Maori teacher of the most *tapu* black magic *was* repaid—*by a victim!* The apprentice would have to kill a near relative, an act of sacrifice to the gods that empowered the spell even as it restored the gift (Best, 1925a, p. 1063). Or perhaps, as the *tohunga* grew old the death-dealing knowledge would be directed back upon him—proving, incidentally, that scholarly cults are the same all over. Best's description of these customs has exactly the transactional cadence of the passage on gifts, beginning on the same note of nonreturn:

> The old men of Tuhoe and Awa explain it this way: The priest teacher was not paid for his services. If he were, then the arts of magic, etc., acquired by the pupil would not be effectual. He would not be able to slay a person by means of magical spells. But, if you are taught by me, then I will tell you what to do in order to reveal your powers. I will tell you the price that you must pay for your initiation, as—"The equivalent for your knowledge acquired, the disclosing of your powers, must be your own father," or your mother, or some other near relative. Then such powers will be effective. The teacher mentions the price the pupil must pay. He selects a near relative of the pupil as the greatest sacrifice he can pay for his acquirements. A near relative, possibly his own mother, is brought before him, that he may slay her by means of his magical powers. In some cases the teacher would direct his pupil to so slay him, the teacher. Ere long he would be dead. . . . "The payment made by the pupil was the loss of a near relative. As to a payment in goods—what would be the good of that. *Hai aha!*" (Best, 1925a, p. 1103).

This detail in hand, the morphological resemblance between all three parts of the Ranapiri text becomes unmistakable. In the transmission of *tapu* magic, as in the exchange of valuables or the sacrifice of birds, a direct return on the initial gift is excluded. In each instance,

of magic and the ceremony, as the former ends with the placing of the *mauri* which is the key element of the latter.

reciprocation passes by way of a third party. This mediation in every case brings issue to the original gift: by the transfer from the second party to the third, some value or effect is added to the thing given by the first party to the second. And one way or another, the first recipient (middle term) is menaced by destruction *(mate)* if the cycle is not completed. Concretely in the text on magic: the *tohunga* gives the spell to the apprentice; the apprentice turns it upon the victim, so enhancing it if he is successful—"the spells of that pupil have become very *mana*"—or dying himself if he fails; the victim belongs to the *tohunga* as compensation for his teaching; alternatively, the apprentice returns his now powerful spell to the aged *tohunga,* that is, he kills him. The cycle is shown in Figure 4.3.

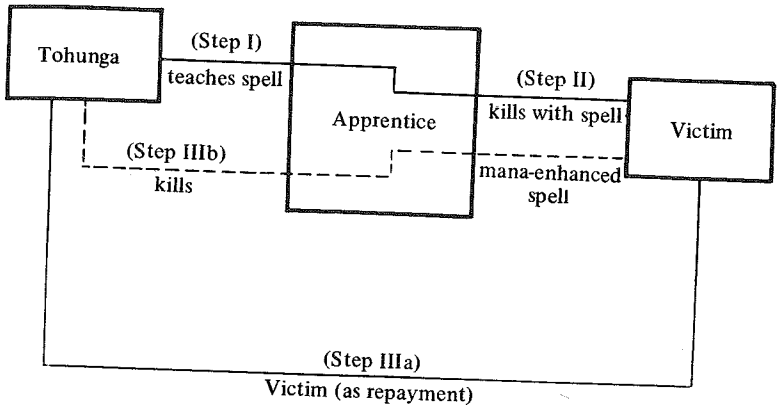

Figure 4.3

THE LARGER SIGNIFICANCE OF *HAU*

Returning now to the *hau,* it is clear we cannot leave the term merely with secular connotations. If the *hau* of valuables in circulation means the yeild thereby accrued, a concrete product of a concrete good, still there is a *hau* of the forest, and of man, and these do have spiritual

quality. What kind of spiritual quality? Many of Best's remarks on the subject suggest that the *hau*-as-spirit is not unrelated to the *hau*-as-material-returns. Taking the two together, one is able to reach a larger understanding of that mysterious *hau.*

Immediately it is clear that *hau* is not a spirit in the common animistic sense. Best is explicit about this. The *hau* of a man is a quite different thing from his *wairua,* or sentient spirit—the "soul" of ordinary anthropological usage. I cite from one of Best's most comprehensive discussions of *wairua:*

> In the term *wairua* (soul) we have the Maori term for what anthropologists style the soul, that is the spirit that quits the body at death, and proceeds to the spirit world, or hovers about its former home here on earth. The word *wairua* denotes a shadow, any unsubstantial image; occasionally it is applied to a reflection, thus it was adopted as a name for the animating spirit of man. . . . The *wairua* can leave the sheltering body during life; it does so when a person dreams of seeing distant places or people. . . . The *wairua* is held to be a sentient spirit; it leaves the body during sleep, and warns its physical basis of impending dangers, of ominous signs, by means of the visions we term dreams. It was taught by high-grade native priests that all things possess a *wairua,* even what we term inanimate objects, as trees and stones (Best, 1924, vol. 1, pp. 299-301).[16]

Hau, on the other hand, belongs more to the realm of animatism than animism. As such it is bound up with *mauri,* in fact, in the writings of the ethnographic experts, it is virtually impossible to distinguish one from the other. Firth despairs of definitively separating the two on the basis of Best's overlapping and often corresponding definitions—"the blurred outline of the distinction drawn between *hau* and *mauri* by our most eminent ethnographic authority allows one to conclude that these concepts in their immaterial sense are almost synonymous" (Firth, 1959a, p. 281). As Firth notices, certain

16. Thus Mauss's simple translation of *hau* as spirit and his view of exchange as a *lien d'âmes* is at least imprecise. Beyond that, Best repeatedly would like to distinguish *hau* (and *mauri*) from *wairua* on the grounds that the former, which ceases to exist with death, cannot leave a person's body on pain of death, unlike *wairua.* But here Best finds himself in difficulty with the material manifestation of a person's *hau* used in witchcraft, so that he is alternatively tempted to say that some part of the *hau* can be detached from the body or that the *hau* as witchcraft is not the "true" *hau.*

contrasts sometimes appear. In reference to man, the *mauri* is the more active principle, "the activity that moves within us." In relation to land or the forest, *"mauri"* is frequently used for the tangible representation of an incorporeal *hau.* Yet is is clear that *"mauri"* too may refer to a purely spiritual quality of land, and, on the other hand, the *hau* of a person may have concrete form—for example, hair, nail clippings, and the like used in witchcraft. It is not for me to unscramble these linguistic and religious mysteries, so characteristic of that Maori "esprit théologique et juridique encore imprécis." Rather, I would emphasize a more apparent and gross contrast between *hau* and *mauri,* on one side, and *wairua* on the other, a contrast that also seems to clarify the learned words of Tamati Ranapiri.

Hau and *mauri* as spiritual qualities are uniquely associated with fecundity. Best often spoke of both as the "vital principle." It is evident from many of his observations that fertility and productivity were the essential attributes of this "vitality." For example (the italics in the following statements are mine):

> The *hau* of land is its vitality, *fertility* and so forth, and also a quality which we can only, I think, express by the word prestige (Best, 1900–1901, p. 193).

> The *ahi taitai* is a sacred fire at which rites are performed that have for their purpose the protection of the life principle and *fruitfulness* of man, the land, forests, birds, etc. It is said to be the *mauri* or *hau* of the home (p. 194).

> . . . when Hape went off on his expedition to the south, he took with him the *hau* of the *kumara* [sweet potato], or, as some say, he took the *mauri* of the same. The visible form of this *mauri* was the stalk of a *kumara* plant, it represented the *hau,* that is to say, the vitality and *fertility* of the *kumara* (p. 196; cf. Best, 1925b, pp. 106–107).

> The forest *mauri* has already received our attention. We have shown that its function was to protect the *productiveness* of the forest (p.6).

> Material *mauri* were utilized in connection with agriculture; they were placed in the field where crops were planted, and it was a firm belief that they had a highly beneficial effect on the growing crops (1922, p. 38).

> Now, the *hau* and *mauri* pertain not only to man, but also to animals, land, forests and even to a village home. Thus the *hau* or vitality, or *productiveness,* of a forest has to be very carefully protected by means of certain very peculiar rites . . . For *fecundity* cannot exist without the essential *hau* (1909, p. 436).

> Everything animate and inanimate possesses this life principle *(mauri):* without it naught could *flourish* (1924 vol. 1, p. 306).

So, as we had in fact already suspected, the *hau* of the forest is its fecundity, as the *hau* of a gift is its material yield. Just as in the mundane context of exchange *hau* is the return on a good, so as a spiritual quality *hau* is the principle of fertility. In the one equally as in the other, the benefits taken by man ought to be returned to their source, that it may be maintained as a source. Such was the total wisdom of Tamati Ranapiri.

"Everything happens as if" the Maori people knew a broad concept, a general principle of productiveness, *hau.* It was a category that made no distinctions, of itself belonging neither to the domain we call "spiritual" nor that of the "material," yet applicable to either. Speaking of valuables, the Maori could conceive *hau* as the concrete product of exchange. Speaking of the forest, *hau* was what made the game birds abound, a force unseen but clearly appreciated by the Maori. But would the Maori in any case need to so distinguish the "spiritual" and the "material"? Does not the apparent "imprecision" of the term *hau* perfectly accord with a society in which "economic," "social," "political" and "religious" are indiscriminately organized by the same relations and intermixed in the same activities? And if so, are we not obliged once more to reverse ourselves on Mauss's interpretation? Concerning the spiritual specifics of the *hau,* he was very likely mistaken. But in another sense, more profound, he was right. "Everything happens as if" *hau* were a total concept. *Kaati eenaa.*

Political Philosophy of the Essay on the Gift.

For the war of every man against every man, Mauss substitutes the exchange of everything between everybody. The *hau,* spirit of the donor in the gift, was not the ultimate explanation of reciprocity, only

a special proposition set in the context of an historic conception. Here was a new version of the dialogue between chaos and covenant, transposed from the explication of political society to the reconciliation of segmentary society. The *Essai sur le don* is a kind of social contract for the primitives.

Like famous philosophical predecessors, Mauss debates from an original condition of disorder, in some sense given and pristine, but then overcome dialectically. As against war, exchange. The transfer of things that are in some degree persons and of persons in some degree treated as things, such is the consent at the base of organized society. The gift is alliance, solidarity, communion—in brief, peace, the great virtue that earlier philosophers, Hobbes notably, had discovered in the State. But the originality and the verity of Mauss was exactly that he refused the discourse in political terms. The first consent is not to authority, or even to unity. It would be too literal an interpretation of the older contract theory to discover its verification in nascent institutions of chieftainship. The primitive analogue of social contract is not the State, but the gift.

The gift is the primitive way of achieving the peace that in civil society is secured by the State. Where in the traditional view the contract was a form of political exchange, Mauss saw exchange as a form of political contract. The famous "total prestation" is a "total contract," described to just this effect in the *Manuel d'Ethnographie:*

> We shall differentiate contracts into those of total *prestation* and contracts in which the *prestation* is only partial. The former already appear in Australia; they are found in a large part of the Polynesian world . . . and in North America. For two clans, total *prestation* is manifest by the fact that to be in a condition of perpetual contract, everyone owes everything to all the others of his clan and to all those of the opposed clan. The permanent and collective character of such a contract makes it a veritable *traité,* with the necessary display of wealth *vis-a-vis* the other party. The *prestation* is extended to everything, to everyone, at all times . . . (1967, p. 188).

But as gift exchange, the contract would have a completely new political realization, unforeseen and unimagined in the received philosophy and constituting neither society nor State. For Rousseau, Locke, Spinoza, Hobbes, the social contract had been first of all a pact

of society. It was an agreement of incorporation: to form a community out of previously separate and antagonistic parts, a superperson of the individual persons, that would exercise the power subtracted from each in the benefit of all. But then, a certain political formation had to be stipulated. The purpose of the unification was to put end to the strife born of private justice. Consequently, even if the covenant was not as such a contract of government, between ruler and ruled, as in medieval and earlier versions, and whatever the differences between the sages over the locus of sovereignty, all had to imply by the contract of society the institution of State. That is to say, all had to insist on the alienation by agreement of one right in particular: private force. This was the essential clause, despite that the philosophers went on to debate its comprehensiveness: the surrender of private force in favor of a Public Power.

The gift, however, would not organize society in a corporate sense, only in a segmentary sense. Reciprocity is a "between" relation. It does not dissolve the separate parties within a higher unity, but on the contrary, in correlating their opposition, perpetuates it. Neither does the gift specify a third party standing over and above the separate interests of those who contract. Most important, it does not withdraw their force, for the gift affects only will and not right. Thus the condition of peace as understood by Mauss—and as in fact it exists in the primitive societies—has to differ politically from that envisioned by the classic contract, which is always a structure of submission, and sometimes of terror. Except for the honor accorded to generosity, the gift is no sacrifice of equality and never of liberty. The groups allied by exchange each retain their strength, if not the inclination to use it.

Although I opened with Hobbes (and it is especially in comparison with *Leviathan*[17] that I would discuss *The Gift),* it is clear that in sentiment Mauss is much closer to Rousseau. By its segmentary morphology, Mauss's primitive society rather returns to the third stage of the *Discourse on Inequality* than to the radical individualism of a

17. I use the Everyman's edition for all citations from *Leviathan* (New York: Dutton, 1950), as it retains the archaic spelling, rather than the more commonly cited *English Works* edited by Molesworth (1839).

Hobbesian state of nature (cf. Cazaneuve, 1968). And as Mauss and Rousseau had similarly seen the oppositions as social, so equally their resolutions would be sociable. That is, for Mauss, an exchange that "extends to everything, to everyone, to all time." What is more, if in giving one gives himself *(hau),* then everyone spiritually becomes a member of everyone else. In other words, the gift approaches even in its enigmas that celebrated contract in which, "Chacun de nous met en commun sa personne et toute sa puissance sous la suprême direction de la volonté générale; et nous recevons en corps chaque membre comme partie indivisible du tout."

But if Mauss is a spiritual descendant of Rousseau, as a political philosopher he is akin to Hobbes. Not to claim a close historic relation with the Englishman, of course, but only to detect a strong convergence in the analysis: a basic agreement on the natural political state as a generalized distribution of force, on the possibility of escaping from this condition by the aid of reason, and on the advantages realized thereby in cultural progress. The comparison with Hobbes seems to best bring out the almost concealed scheme of *The Gift.* Still, the exercise would have little interest were it not that this "problématique" precisely at the point it makes juncture with Hobbes arrives at a fundamental discovery of the primitive polity, and where it differs from Hobbes it makes a fundamental advance in understanding social evolution.

POLITICAL ASPECTS OF *THE GIFT* AND *LEVIATHAN*

In the perspective of Mauss, as it was for Hobbes, the understructure of society is war. This in a special sense, which is sociological.

The "war of every man against every man," spectacular phrase, conceals an ambiguity; or at least in its insistence on the nature of man it ignores an equally striking structure of society. The state of nature described by Hobbes was also a political order. True that Hobbes was preoccupied with the human thirst for power and disposition to violence, but he wrote too of an allocation of force among men and of their liberty to employ it. The transition in *Leviathan* from the psychology of man to the pristine condition seems therefore at the same time continuous and disjunctive. The state of nature was *sequitur* to

human nature, but it also announced a new level of reality that as polity was not even describable in the terms of psychology. This war of each against all is not just the disposition to use force but the *right* to do so, not merely certain inclinations but certain *relations* of power, not simply a passion for supremacy but a sociology of dominance, not only the instinct of competition but the legitimacy of the confrontation. The state of nature is already a kind of society.[18]

What kind? According to Hobbes, it is a society without a sovereign, without "a common Power to keep them all in awe." Said positively, a society in which the right to give battle is retained by the people in severalty. But this must be underlined: it is the right which endures, not the battle. The emphasis is Hobbes's own, in a very important passage that carried the war of nature beyond human violence to the level of structure, where rather than fighting it appears as a *period of time* during which there is no assurance to contrary, and the will to contend is sufficiently known:

> For WARRE , consisteth not in Battell onely, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battell is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of *Time*, is to be considered in the nature of Warre; as it is in the nature of Weather. For as the nature of Foule weather, lyeth not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many dayes together; So the nature of Warre, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE (Part I, Chapter 13).

Happily, Hobbes frequently used the archaic spelling, "Warre," which gives us the opportunity of taking it to mean something else, a determinate political form. To repeat, the critical characteristic of Warre is free recourse to force: everyone reserves that option in pursuit of his greater gain or glory, and in defense of his person and possessions. Unless and until this partite strength was rendered to a

18. Why this should seem particularly so in *Leviathan* in comparison with the earlier *Elements of Law* and *De Cive* becomes intelligible from McNeilly's recent analysis to the effect that *Leviathan* completes the transformation of Hobbes's argument into a formal rationality of interpersonal relations (in the absence of a sovereign power), which involves abandonment, as concerns the logic of argument, of the prior stress on the content of human passions. Hence if in the early works, "Hobbes attempts to derive political conclusions from certain (very doubtful) propositions about the specific nature of individual human beings . . . in *Leviathan* the argument depends on an analysis of the *formal* structure of the *relations* between individuals" (McNeilly, 1968, p. 5).

collective authority, Hobbes argued, there would never be assurance of peace; and though Mauss discovered that assurance in the gift, both agreed that the primitive order is an absence of law; which is the same as saying that everyone can take the law into his own hands, so that man and society stand in continuous danger of a violent end.

Of course, Hobbes did not seriously consider the state of nature as ever a general empirical fact, an authentic historic stage—although there are some people who "live to this day in that brutish manner," as the savages of many places in America, ignorant of all government beyond the lustful concord of the small family. But if not historical, in what sense was the state of nature intended?

In the sense of Galilean logic, it is sometimes said: a thinking away of the distorting factors in a complex appearance to the ideal course of a body moving without resistance. The analogy is close, but insofar as it slights the tension and the stratification of the complex appearance, it perhaps does not do justice, neither to Hobbes nor to the parallel in Mauss. This "Warre" does exist, if it is only that people "lock their doors behind" and princes are in "constant jealousy." Yet though it exists, it has to be imagined because all appearance is *designed* to repress it, to overlay and deny it as an insupportable menace. So it is imagined in a way that seems more like psychoanalysis than physics: by probing for a hidden substructure that in outward behavior is disguised and transfigured into its opposite. In that event, the deduction of the pristine state is not a direct extension of experimental approximations, still consistent with the empirical even as it is projected beyond the observable. The real is here counterposed to the empirical, and we are forced to understand the appearance of things as the negation rather than the expression of their truer character.

In just this manner, it seems to me, Mauss posited his general theory of the gift on a certain nature of primitive society, nature not always evident—but that exactly because it is contradicted by the gift. It was, moreover, a society of the same nature: Warre. The primitive order is a contrived agreement to deny its inherent fragility, its division at base into groups of distinct interest and matched strength, clanic groups "like the savage people in many places of America," that can join only in conflict or else must withdraw to avoid it. Of course, Mauss did not begin from Hobbesian principles of psychology.

His view of human nature is certainly more nuanced than that "perpetuall and restless desire of Power after power, that ceaseth only in Death."[19] But his view of social nature was an anarchy of group poised against group with a will to contend by battle that is sufficiently known, and a disposition thereto during all that time there is no assurance to the contrary. In the context of this argument, the *hau* is only a dependent proposition. That supposed adoption by the ethnologist of a native rationalization is itself, by the scheme of *The Gift,* the rationalization of a deeper necessity to reciprocate whose reason lies elsewhere: in threat of war. The compulsion to reciprocate built into the *hau* responds to the repulsion of groups built into the society. The force of attraction in things thus dominates the attractions of force among men.

Less spectacular and sustained than the argument from *hau,* that from Warre nevertheless reappears persistently in *The Gift.* For Warre is contained in the premises, constructed by Mauss in the very definition of "total prestation": those exchanges, "undertaken in seemingly voluntary guise . . . but in essence strictly obligatory, *on pain of private or open warfare*" (1966, p. 151; emphasis mine). Similarly: "To refuse to give or to fail to invite is, like refusing to accept, equivalent to a declaration of war; it is to refuse alliance and communion" (pp. 162-163).

Perhaps it strains the point to insist on Mauss's appreciation of the potlatch as a sort of sublimated warfare. Let us pass on to the concluding paragraphs of the essay, where the opposition between Warre and exchange is developed with progressive amplitude and clarity, first in the metaphor of the Pine Mountain Corroboree, finally in a general statement that begins . . .

> All the societies we have described above, except our own European, are segmentary societies. Even the Indo-Europeans, the Romans before the *Twelve Tables,* the Germanic societies until very late—up to the Edda—Irish society until the time of its principal literature, all were still based on clans, or at the least great families, more or less undivided internally and isolated from one another externally. All these societies are or were far removed from our own degree of unification, as well as from that unity with which they are endowed by inadequate historical study (1966, p. 277).

19. Mauss did note in certain transactions of the present day some "fundamental motives of human activity: emulation between individuals of the same sex, that 'deep-seated imperialism' of men, at base part social, part animal and psychological. . . ." (1966, pp. 258-259). On the other hand, if as Macpherson (1965) argues, Hobbe's conception of human nature is just the bourgeois eternalized, then Mauss is squarely opposed to it (1966, pp. 271-272).

From this organization, a time of exaggerated fear and hostility, appears an equally exaggerated generosity:

> When, during tribal feasts and ceremonies of rival clans and of families that intermarry or initiate reciprocally, groups visit each other; even when, among more advanced societies—with a developed law of "hospitality"—the law of friendship and contracts with the gods have come to assure the "peace" of the "market" and the towns; for a very long period of time and in a considerable number of societies, men confront each other in a curious frame of mind, of exaggerated fear and hostility and of generosity equally exaggerated, which is however mad in no one's eyes but our own (p. 277).

So the people "come to terms" *(traiter),* happy phrase whose double meaning of peace and exchange perfectly epitomizes the primitive contract:

> In all the societies that have immediately preceeded ours and that still surround us, and even in numerous usages of our own popular morality, there is no middle way: either complete trust or complete mistrust. One lays down one's arms, renounces magics and gives everything away from casual hospitality to one's daughters and goods. It is in conditions of this kind that men put aside their self-concern and learnt to engage in giving and returning. But then they had no choice. Two groups of men that meet can only withdraw—or in case of mistrust or defiance, battle—or else come to terms (p. 277).

By the end of the essay, Mauss had left far behind the mystic forests of Polynesia. The obscure forces of *hau* were forgotten for a different explanation of reciprocity, consequent on the more general theory, and the opposite of all mystery and particularity: *Reason.* The gift is Reason. It is the triumph of human rationality over the folly of war—

> It is by opposing reason to emotion, by setting up the will for peace against rash follies of this kind, that peoples succeed in substituting alliance, gift and commerce for war, isolation and stagnation (p. 278).

I stress not only this "reason," but the "isolation" and "stagnation." Composing society, the gift was the liberation of culture. Oscillating permanently between confrontation and dispersion, the segmentary

society is otherwise brutish and static. But the gift is progress. That is its supreme advantage—and Mauss's final appeal:

> Societies have progressed in the measure that they themselves, their subgroups and finally their individuals have been able to stabilize their relations, to give, receive, and to repay. In order to trade it was necessary first to lay down the spear. It is then that one succeeded in exchanging goods and persons, not only between clan and clan, but between tribe and tribe, nation and nation, and, above all, between individuals. It is only consequently that people became capable of mutually creating and satisfying their interests, and finally of defending them without recourse to arms. It is thus that clans, tribes, peoples have learned—and it is thus that tomorrow in our world called civilized the classes, nations, and also individuals must learn—how to oppose without massacring one another, and how to give without sacrificing one to another (pp. 278-279).

The "incommodities" of the Hobbesian state of nature had been likewise a lack of progress. And society was similarly condemned to stagnation. Here Hobbes brilliantly anticipated a later ethnology. Without the State (commonwealth) he is saying, lacking special institutions of integration and control, culture must remain primitive and uncomplicated—just as, in the biological realm, the organism had to remain relatively undifferentiated until the appearance of a central nervous system. In some degree, Hobbes even went beyond modern ethnology, which still only in an unconscious way, and without serious attempt to justify its decision, is content to see in the formation of the state the great evolutionary divide between "primitive" and "civilized," while in the meantime subjecting that famous passage of Hobbes's where it is explained just why the criterion is good, to nasty, brutish and short burlesques. Hobbes at least gave a functional justification of the evolutionary distinction, and an indication that qualitative change would alter the quantity:

> *The incommodities of such a Warre.* Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention shall furnish them withall. In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth, no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require

> much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time, no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short (Part 1, Chapter 13).

But to pursue the resemblance to Mauss, from this insecurity and poverty man seeks to escape: for reasons largely of emotion, according to Hobbes, but by means strictly of *reason.* Menaced by material deprivation and haunted by fear of violent death, men would incline to reason, which "suggesteth certain convenient Articles of Peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement." Thus Hobbes's well-known Laws of Nature, which are counsels of reason in the interest of preservation, and of which the first and fundamental is *"to seek Peace, and follow it."*

> And because the condition of Man, (as hath been declared in the precedent Chapter) is a condition of Warre of every one against everyone; in which case every one is governed by his own Reason; and there is nothing he can make use of, that may not be a help unto him, in preserving his life against his enemyes; It followeth, that in such a condition, every man has a Right to every thing; even to one another's body, And therefore, as long as this naturall Right of every man to every thing endureth, there can be no security to any man, (how strong or wise soever he be,) of living out the time, which Nature ordinarily alloweth men to live. And consequently it is a precept, or generall rule of Reason, *That every man, ought to endeavour Peace, as farre as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of Warre.* The first branch of which Rule, containeth the first, and Fundamentall Law of Nature; which is, to seek Peace, and follow it (Part 1, Chapter 14).

That Hobbes had even foreseen the peace of the gift is too strong a claim. But this first law of nature was followed by eighteen others, all in effect designed to realize the injunction that men seek peace, and the second through fifth in particular founded on the same principle of reconciliation of which the gift is merely the most tangible expression—founded also, that is to say, on reciprocity. So in structure the argument unites with Mauss's. To this point, at least, Hobbes understands the suppression of Warre neither through the victory of one nor by the submission of all, but in a *mutual surrender.* (The ethical importance is obvious, and Mauss would duly emphasize it, but theoretically too the point is in opposition to the cult of power and organi-

zation that was to mark a later evolutionism—and to which Hobbes went on to contribute.)

On the deeper analogy of reciprocity, one may thus juxtapose to gift exchange Hobbes's second law of nature, *"That a man be willing, when others are so too, as farre-forth, as for Peace, and defence of himselfe he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with as much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himselfe";* and the third law, *"That men performe their Covenants made";* and again, the fifth, *"That every man strive to accomodate himselfe to the rest."* But of all these apposite precepts, the fourth law of nature touches nearest the gift:

> *The fourth law of nature, gratitude.* As Justice dependeth on Antecedent Covenant; so does GRATITUDE depend on Antecedent Grace, that is to say, Antecedent Free-gift: and is the fourth Law of Nature; which may be conceived in this Forme, *That a man which receiveth Benefit from another of meer Grace, Endeavour that he which giveth it, have no reasonable cause to repent him of his good will.* For no man giveth, but with intention of Good to himselfe; because Gift is Voluntary; and of all Voluntary Acts, the Object is to every man his own Good; of which if men see they shall be frustrated, there will be no beginning of benevolence, or trust; nor consequently of mutuall help; nor of reconciliation of one man to another; and therefore they are to remain still in the condition of *War;* which is contrary to the first and Fundamentall Law of Nature, which commandeth men to *Seek Peace* (Part I, Chapter 15).

Thus the close correspondance between the two philosophers: including, if not exactly the gift, at least a similar appreciation of reciprocity as the primitive mode of peace; and also, if this more marked in Hobbes than in Mauss, a common respect for the rationality of the undertaking. Furthermore, the convergence continues with a negative parallel. Neither Mauss nor Hobbes could trust in the efficacy of reason alone. Both concede, Hobbes the more explicitly, that reason against the force of an imprinted rivalry is insufficient to guarantee the contract. Because, says Hobbes, the laws of nature, even if they be reason itself, are contrary to our natural passions, and men cannot be expected unfailingly to obey unless they are generally coerced to do so. On the other hand, to honor the laws of nature without the assurance that others do likewise is unreasonable; for then the good become prey, and the strong arrogant. Men, says Hobbes, are not

bees. Men are driven constantly to compete for honor and dignity, out of which arises hate, envy and finally, war. And "covenants without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all." Hobbes consequently is led to this paradox: that the laws of nature cannot succeed outside the frame of a contrived organization, outside the commonwealth. Natural law is established only by artificial Power, and Reason enfranchised only by Authority.

I stress again the political character of Hobbes's argument. The commonwealth put an end to the state of nature but not to the nature of man. Men agreed to surrender their right to force (except in self-defense), and to put all their strength at the disposal of a sovereign, who would bear their person and save their lives. In this conception of state formation, Hobbes once more rings very modern. What more fundamental sense has since been made of the state than that it is a differentiation of the generalized primitive order: structurally, the separation of a public authority out of the society at large; functionally; the special reservation to that authority of coercive force (monopoly control of force)?

> The only way to erect such a Common Power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of Forraigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their owne industry, and by the fruites of the Earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is, to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, unto one Will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one Man, or Assembly of men, to beare their Person; and every one to owne, and acknowledge himselfe to be the Author of whatsoever that he that so beareth their Person, shall Act, or cause to be Acted, in those things which conern the Common Peace and safetie; and therein to submit their Wills, every one to his Will, and their Judgements, to his Judgement (Part 2, Chapter 17).

But Mauss's resolution of Warre also had historic merit: it corrected just this simplified progression from chaos to commonwealth, savagery to civilization, that had been the work of classical contract theory.[20] Here in the primitive world Mauss displayed a whole array of intermediate forms, not only of a certain stability, but that did not

20. Hobbes's particular inability to conceive primitive society as such is manifest by

make coercion the price of order. Still, Mauss too was not confident that reason alone had been responsible. Or perhaps it was just an afterthought, upon looking back over the peace of the gift, that he saw in it the signs of an original wisdom. For the rationality of the gift contradicted everthing he had said before on the subject of *hau.* Hobbes's paradox was to realize the natural (reason) in the artifical; for Mauss, reason took the form of the irrational. Exchange is the triumph of reason, but lacking the embodied spirit of the donor *(hau),* the gift is not requited.

A few last words about the fate of *The Gift.* Since Mauss, and in part by way of rapprochment with modern economics, anthropology has become more consistently rational in its treatment of exchange. Reciprocity is contract pure and mainly secular, sanctioned perhaps by a mixture of considerations of which a carefully calculated self-interest is not the least (cf. Firth, 1967). Mauss seems in this regard much more like Marx in the first chapter of *Capital:* if it can be said without disrespect, more animistic. One quarter of corn is exchangeable for *X* hundredweight iron. What is it in these things, so obviously different, that yet is equal? Precisely, the question was, for Marx, what *in these things* brings them into agreement?—and not what is it about these parties to the exchange? Similarly, for Mauss; "What force is there in the thing given that makes the beneficiary reciprocate?" And the same kind of answer, from "intrinsic" properties: here the *hau,* if there the socially necessary labor time. Yet "animistic" is manifestly an improper characterization of the thought involved. If Mauss, like Marx, concentrated singularly on the anthropomorphic qualities of the things exchanged, rather than the (thinglike?) qualities of the people, it

his assimilation of it, that is of the patriarchal chiefdom, to the commonwealth. This is clear enough in the passages of *Leviathan* on commonwealths by acquisition, but even more definitive in the parallel sections of *Elements of Law* and *De Cive.* Thus, in the latter: "A *father* with his *sons* and *servants,* grown into a civil person by virtue of his paternal jurisdiction, is called a *family.* This *family,* if through multiplying of *children* and acquisition of *servants* it becomes numerous, insomuch as without casting the uncertain die of war it cannot be subdued, will be termed an *hereditary kingdom.* Which though it differ from an *institutive monarchy,* being acquired by force, in the original and manner of its constitution; yet being constituted, it hath all the same properties, and the right of authority is everywhere the same; insomuch as it is not needful to speak anything of them apart" *(English Works* [Molesworth, ed.], 1839, vol. 2, pp. 121-122).

was because each saw in the transactions respectively at issue a determinate form and epoch of alienation: mystic alienation of the donor in primitive reciprocity, alienation of human social labor in commodity production (cf. Godelier, 1966, p. 143). They thus share the supreme merit, unknown to most "Economic Anthropology," of taking exchange as it is historically presented, not as a natural category explicable by a certain eternal disposition of humanity.

In the total prestations between clan and clan, said Mauss, things are related in some degree as persons and persons in some degree as things. More than irrational, it exaggerates only slightly to say that the process approaches clinical definitions of neurosis: persons are treated as objects; people confuse themselves with the external world. But even beyond the desire to affirm the rationality of exchange, a large section of Anglo-American anthropology has seemed instinctively repelled by the commercialization of persons apparently implied in the Maussian formula.

Nothing could be farther apart than the initial Anglo-Saxon and French responses to this generalized idea of prestation. Here was Mauss decrying the *inhumanity* of modern abstract distinctions between real and personal law, calling for a return to the archaic relation between men and things, while the Anglo-Saxons could only congratulate the ancestors for having finally liberated men from a debasing confusion with material objects. And especially for thus liberating women. For when Lévi-Strauss parleyed the "total prestation" into a grand system of marital exchanges, an interesting number of British and American ethnologists recoiled at once from the idea, refusing for their part to "treat women as commodities."

Without wanting to decide the issue, not at least in these terms, I do wonder whether the Anglo-American reaction of distrust was ethnocentric. It seems to presume an eternal separation of the economic, having to do with getting and spending, and besides always a little off-color, from the social sphere of moral relationships. For if it is decided in advance that the world in general is differentiated as is ours in particular, economic relations being one thing and social (kinship) another, than to speak of groups exchanging women does appear an immoral extension of business to marriage and a slander of all those engaged in the traffic. Still, the conclusion forgets the great

lesson of "total prestation," both for the study of primitive economics and of marriage.

The primitive order is generalized. A clear differentiation of spheres into social and economic does not there appear. As for marriage, it is not that commercial operations are applied to social relations, but the two were never completely separated in the first place. We must think here in the same way we do now about classificatory kinship: not that the term for "father" is "extended" to father's brother, phrasing that smuggles in the priority of the nuclear family, but rather that we are in the presence of a broad kinship category that knows no such genealogical distinctions. And as for economics, we are similarly in the presence of a generalized organization for which the supposition that kinship is "exogenous" betrays any hope of understanding.

I mention a final positive contribution of *The Gift,* related to this point but more specific. At the end of the essay, Mauss in effect recapitulated his thesis by two Melanesian examples of tenuous relations between villages and peoples: of how, menaced always by deterioration into war, primitive groups are nevertheless reconciled by festival and exchange. This theme too was later amplified by Lévi-Strauss. "There is a link," he wrote, "a continuity, between hostile relations and the provision of reciprocal prestations. Exchanges are peacefully resolved wars and wars are the result of unsuccessful transactions" (1969, p. 67; cf. 1943, p. 136). But this implication of *The Gift* is, I think, even broader than external relations and transactions. In posing the internal fragility of the segmentary societies, their constituted decomposition, *The Gift* transposes the classic alternatives of war and trade from the periphery to the very center of social life, and from the occasional episode to the continuous presence. This is the supreme importance of Mauss's return to nature, from which it follows that primitive society is at war with Warre, and that all their dealings are treaties of peace. All the exchanges, that is to say, must bear in their material design some political burden of reconciliation. Or, as the Bushman said, "'The worse thing is not giving presents. If people do not like each other but one gives a gift and the other must accept, this brings a peace between them. We give what we have. That is the way we live together'" (Marshall, 1961, p. 245).

And from this comes in turn all the basic principles of an economics properly anthropological, including the one in particular at the heart of succeeding chapters: that every exchange, as it embodies some coefficient of sociability, cannot be understood in its material terms apart from its social terms.