

Turbulences of the Present¹

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Even if the word “reciprocity” is currently used to mean almost anything (Graeber 2001: 217), what it certainly signals, in the context of most ethnographic accounts, is a timeless metaphysic of sociality expressed by a timely repayment (Bourdieu 1990). Kant describes reciprocity as an abstract relationship in a canceled time. In this paper I will address Kant’s relation to Malinowski’s teachings (Parry 1986) on reciprocity. I will argue that we should avoid reducing reciprocity to an “urban ideology” (Weiner 1992: 29) so that we may attend more carefully to the turbulence of temporalities each reciprocal act implies. In looking for a fluid mechanics for such turbulences, I will return to Mauss’ (1925) understanding of The Gift as a sociological approach to the norm or reciprocity or relation (Allen 2000: 92). In Mauss’ work the present-time does not offer a stable background for human actions. It is through recurrences, survivals and future possibilities that the gift given encompasses and normalizes current human actions. Following Mauss, I will conclude that instead of an “impossible gift” (Derrida 1991), reciprocal gift-giving produces an understanding of time that, by means of turbulent recurrences, implies an impossible simple-present-temporality or tense.

¹ I have taken many of the brilliant ideas on my professors. I would like to thank here Jane Guyer, Marcel Detienne, and Veena Das for their generosity. I do apology for errors and the incomplete and sometimes turbulent form I have given to them.

MALINOWSKI TEACHES RECIPROCITY

According to Gudeman (2001: 83), Mauss did not originate the idea of reciprocity but rather used Malinowski's ethnography (1922) to develop his general argument. Alvin Gouldner (1960) traces the origins of theorizing reciprocity back to Howard Becker (1956), Richard Thurnwald (1916, 1932), and George Simmel (1950) among other authors of social thought. Weiner (1992: 28), under the subtitle "the norm of reciprocity in Western history", gives the following list of seminal works on reciprocity: Hobbes, Locke, Smith. Duran Bell (2002) directly situates its origins in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, anthropology has said little about the most extensive, abstract and critical definition of the norm of reciprocity, as it has been elaborated by an early and famous anthropologist, Immanuel Kant (Kant 1974).

Since reciprocity resists the very idea of origins (by always implying an anachronic return), Malinowski's reciprocity represents an excellent starting point for further inquiries on the Kantian foundations of socio-cultural anthropology².

Commonly understood as "the basis of social relations" (Weiner 1992: 24), Malinowski's "primitive" reciprocal transactions appear to be unconstrained by utilitarian needs. It is Malinowski not Mauss (Stratern 1988: 19), who contrasts gift exchange to utilitarianism. Primitives, in a constant giving and taking (Malinowski 1961 [1922]: 167) differ from the "cold" and "calculating" moderns because of their reciprocal bonds. In other words, Malinowski's primitives stay at the origins of sociality because they oppose eighteenth- and nineteenth-century utilitarian principles by living an unselfish social life. In Malinowski's words,

² Given also the importance of the critical "Copernican" turn Kant produced in Western Philosophy, I will only point out to some problems Phenomenology inherited from him. Even although those problems still concern living or more or less recently dead philosophers (in order of apparition Husserl, on overcoming "subjectivism and objectivism" see Heidegger with echoes in Bourdieu, on the temporality of the Gift Derrida following Heidegger, on givenness and reduction Marion,). However, it is beyond my possibilities to analyze them here.

“The view that the native can live in a state of individual search for food, or catering for his own household only, in isolation from an interchange of goods, implies a calculating, cold egotism... [such views] ignores the fundamental human impulse to display, to share, to bestow. They ignore the deep tendency to create social ties through the exchange of gifts” (Malinowski 1961 [1922]: 175)

Although the concept of the “pure gift” was retracted (1926) after Mauss’ (1925) critique, it is still useful to see how Malinowski inverts commonsense utilitarianism premises of what was commonly known as the “Western world” to portray his “savages”. In a paper published in *Man*, Malinowski (1920) proceeds by establishing oppositions and making categorical distinctions. Malinowski writes,

“The usual *a priori* notion of savage trade would be that of an exchange of indispensable, or, at least, useful things, done under pressure of need by direct barter, or casual give and take presents, without much ceremony and regulation. Such conception *would almost reverse* all the essential features of the Kula. Thus, first, the objects of exchanges – the armshells and strings of shell-disks- *are not utilities in any sense of the word*; as said above, they are hardly ever used as ornaments, for which purpose they could serve. (Malinowski [1920]: my emphasis)

In this sense, and according to Parry, notions such as “pure gift” and what he calls Malinowski’s teachings (Parry 1986) have determined the Anglo-speaking reception of Mauss’ *The Gift*. For instance, by the analytical dyadic pair interest/disinterest (sometimes embodied in Malinowski’s accounts by individual-economic-driven-utilitarianism versus aesthetic-and-social-primitivism) has ordered two different ideologies (Parry 1986: 469) in which transactions enter irremediably. As one can easily reads from the above quoted paragraphs, on one side of the dichotomy Malinowski puts economic phenomena, while in other, congruently with the Kantian disinterestedness of the aesthetic judgment, Malinowski equated the exchange of gifts with pure sociality and the beauty of its expressions (on the sources of Kantian search for purity –specially pure love and pure disinterest- see LeBrun 2000: 213-232).

In Malinowski’s and his disciples’ accounts, reciprocity implies the disinterest of a modern “gift ideology” (Parry 1986: 468). It would not be difficult to see how lately, in the Malinowskian academia, commodity economies (or “commodity cultures” i.e. Cook 2004) have also grown up as opposed to gift economies (Gregory 1982), producing a

cosmic opposition of the so-called Western world versus the rest of the world. The “intellectual lineage” of such a division has been mistakenly ascribed to the Mauss’ essay (Rupp 2003: 182). But even when Mauss (1925: 86) coined the term “gift economy” he never supported the idea that both terms could be logically opposed against the background of a given and homogeneous empty present-temporality. Instead, in *The Gift* and other of his texts, Mauss points towards concrete historical transformations, logical evolutions and historical differentiations of one from the other. From transitional gifts logically stem transitional commodities. This means that the second form of exchange (commodity exchange) depends, to some extent, on the first (gift-exchange), and it is explainable only as a late development. Moreover, the last emergent form is a product of concrete actions, not eternal analytical forms (gift versus commodity).

Berthoud explains that,

“Malinowski has established an absolute distinction between the two forms of exchange and he has insisted on the fact that the Kula had non-utilitarian functions” (Berthoud 1996: 170)

For Mauss, the opposition of these two forms arises after a long “revolution”. Even when they are the actions of ancient or archaic peoples, they are identifiable and particular. However, the opposition is not absolute. In Mauss’ words,

“These hypotheses concerning very ancient Roman law relate somewhat to a prehistoric order. The law, morality, and economy of the Latins must have had these forms, but they were forgotten when their institution entered the historical period. For it is precisely the Romans and the Greeks who, perhaps, following upon the Semites of the north and west, invented the distinction between personal and real law, separated sale from gift and exchange, isolated the moral obligation and contract, and in particular, conceived the difference that exists between rites, laws and interests. It was they who, after a veritable, great, and admirable revolution, went beyond the outmoded morality, and this economy of the gift. It was too dependent on chance, was overexpensive and too sumptuous, burdened with consideration for people, incompatible with the development of the market, commerce and production, and all in all, at the same time was anti-economic.” (Mauss 1990: 53-54)

” Ces hypothèses concernant le très ancien droit romain sont plutôt d'ordre préhistorique. Le droit et la morale et l'économie des Latins ont dû avoir ces formes, mais elles étaient oubliées quand leurs institutions sont entrées dans l'histoire. Car ce

sont justement les Romains et les Grecs ³, qui, peut-être à la suite des Sémites du Nord et de l'Ouest ⁴, ont inventé la distinction des droits personnels et des droits réels, séparé la vente du don et de l'échange, isolé l'obligation morale et le contrat, et surtout conçu la différence qu'il y a entre des rites, des droits et des intérêts. Ce sont eux qui, par une véritable, grande et vénérable révolution ont dépassé toute cette moralité vieillie et cette économie du don trop chanceuse, trop dispendieuse et trop somptuaire, encombrée de considérations de personnes, incompatible avec un développement du marché, du commerce et de la production, et au fond, à l'époque, anti-économique. (Mauss 1925: 139-140)"

The inventions of the distinction between personal law and real law; selling and gift-giving; contracts and moral obligations; and, overall, rites of law and rites of interest, surely deserve more explanations. Nevertheless, perpetuating these distinctions in philosophical accounts preclude such investigation. Instead of developing a subject of knowledge once and forever given⁵, I will point Mauss' accounts of the different makings of the category of reciprocity. He goes from concrete historical and ethnological cases to abstract notions. The object of this paper is not any concrete fact but the objects of inquiry of some of his papers. I compare them to other writers who have applied analytical categories which are not the fruit of the Maussian method called "precise comparison". In Malinowski and Kant's analytics, conceptual oppositions stay in a Manichean balance.

³ Notes :Nous n'avons pas suffisamment étudié le droit grec ou plutôt les survivances du droit qui a dû précéder les grandes codifications des Ioniens et des Doriens, pour pouvoir dire si vraiment les différents peuples grecs ont ignoré ou connu ces règles du don. Il faudrait revoir toute une littérature à propos des questions variées : dons, mariages, gages (v. GERNET, Eyyuxt, Revue des Études grecques, 1917 ; Cf. VINOGRADOFF, Outlines of the History of Jurisprudence, 1, p. 235), hospitalité, intérêt et contrats, et nous ne retrouverions encore que des fragments. En voici cependant un : ARISTOTE, Éthique à Nicomaque, 1123 a 3, à propos du citoyen magnanime et de ses dépenses publiques et privées, de ses devoirs et de ses charges, mentionne les réceptions d'étrangers, les ambassades, [...], comment ils dépensent [...], et il ajoute [...] « Les dons ont quelque chose d'analogue aux consécration » (cf. plus haut p. 99, no 1, Tsimshian). Deux autres droits indo-européens vivants présentent des institutions de ce genre : Albanais et Ossétien. Nous nous bornons à référer aux lois ou décrets modernes qui prohibent ou limitent chez ces peuples les excès des dilapidations en cas de mariage, mort, etc., ex. KOVALEWSKI, Coutume contemporaine et Loi ancienne, p. 187, n.

⁴ On sait que presque toutes les formules du contrat sont attestées par les papyrus araméens des Juifs de Philae en Égypte, Ve siècle avant notre ère. V. COWLEY, Aramaic Papyri, Oxford, 1923. On connaît aussi les travaux d'Ungnad sur les contrats babyloniens (v. Année, XII, HUVELIN, p. 508, et CUQ, Études sur les contrats de l'époque de la Ire Dynastie babylonienne (Nouv. Rev. Hist. du Dr., 1910).

⁵ This kind of givenness outside change and "outside exchange" can be found in the phenomenological interpretation of Marion (1989, 2001, 2002). Marion, following Husserl more than Heidegger, alleges that Lévi-Strauss (1968) and Godelier (1996) differentiate between "interpretation" and "empirical observations" (Marion 2002: 345). Giving more slogans to Phenomenology he says: "exchange is not given" and "the given

IMMANUEL KANT, ONCE UPON A TIME

The categories of understanding for Kant are implicit in the object (or the thing, person, animal, idea, etc., as far as they are known, perceived or they are not “in-themselves”⁶). Categories are forms of knowing--human forms of knowing, I should say--projected and mirrored in the objects of knowledge. Categories are presupposed in every human experience and they frame and limit human understanding. Kant’s enterprise in the *Critique of Pure Reason* was to set the boundaries which divide the human knowable from the unknowable, and, to reflect on these boundaries. As Adorno has pointed out,

“The power of the Critique of Pure reason resides not so much in its responses to the so called metaphysical questions as in its highly heroic and stoical refusal to respond to these questions in the first place. What makes this possible for Kant is the self-reflexive nature of reason. By this I mean that, as a rational being, I am capable of reflecting on my own reason, and through this reflection I am able to give myself an account of what it can and cannot achieve. This dual aspect of self-reflexivity is what enables Kant to claim that he has established the foundation of experience – in other words the original leading concepts of our knowledge of nature; and on the other hand, it is what prevents us from going beyond this knowledge and entering into speculations about the Absolute.” (Adorno 1995, 7)

Nevertheless, something returns from any stoical refusal.

is not exchanged”. I cannot discuss his argument here. However, it surely has something to do with the idiosyncratic use “there is” in German.

⁶ By presenting Kant’s critiques (and later Durkheim’s arguments) in a two-world schema, Alfred Gell (1992: 3-14) says: “[t]he phenomenal world is wholly distinct from the substrate of noumena, the ultimately real world of things-in-themselves” (Gell 1992: 8). Here, I think one must face some returns of Metaphysical arguments to evaluate even the skeptic metaphysics of empiricism and post-metaphysical philosophies of our times. In this sense, I should also point out that thing-in-themselves, for Kant are empty concepts, not at all any material substrate. They emerge in the first critique, as a result of the use of reason critiquing reason. Noumena, as concepts without content, point out towards the unknowable not towards any “real world”. According to Adams, “[t]he etymology of “intuition” (intuitio in Latin and Anschauung in German) suggests the image of looking at something. The point is that intuitions have content such as might be presented to our gaze (or to some sense modality other than sight). Concepts, for Kant, do not similarly have content in their own right. They are functional forms which order content that they must derive from intuitions. Hence Kant’s famous dictum that “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (A 51=B 75). In Kant’s view the fundamental reason why things as they are or may be in themselves cannot be given as objects for our cognition is not that we do not have the concepts for it, but that we do not have the intuitions for it (cf. KpV Ak V, 54).” (Adams 1997, 806)

In chapter II, of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant comments on three analogies of pure understanding. The third one is called “Principle of Coexistence, in accordance with the Law of Reciprocity or Community” and states that, “all substances, in so far as they can be perceived *to coexist in space*, are in thoroughgoing reciprocity” (Kant 1966: 166).

Nevertheless, such a coexistence in space does not depend on an actual space. Informed by the human spatial apperception, coexistence is logically given and depends on the non-conceptual, non-categorical and “pure” formal status of space. Therefore, the ninth category of understanding “community or reciprocity between agent and patient” depends on the Kantian definition of space; as the category of cause (and effect) on the definition of time⁷ (investigated by Hubert 1905).

These logical oppositions work under the rule of the zero sum, which finds its balance and symmetry in suppression. On one side of the equation, causality (investigated in Hubert and Mauss 2002 [1950]) depends, for Kant, on the pure and formal apperception of succession or “inner sense”. On the other hand, reciprocity depends on formal spatiality given by the “outer sense”.

However, the following questions thus arise: Where and how does Kant establish the boundary between inner and outer senses? Or more generally, where, finally, does the difference or distinction between time and space come from? Which is the private

⁷ Time and space are not categories or even concepts for Kant, but “forms of intuition”. Space is the form of outer sense and time of inner sense (A22-3/B37-8). By denying the primary existence of time and space as concepts or categories of understanding, Kant situates time and space at the most purest forms, or condition, of any human experience, human intuitions, representations and categories. Thus, Kantian time and space are true limits imposed on human understanding by the human embodied mind (Svare 2007). They constitute the physical interaction with substances and do not exist independently of human formal apperceptions. In other words, what is important for Kant is that human cognition is embodied and cannot go beyond its limits. Human apperception necessarily happens in time and in space, but circularly time and space are also products of human apperceptions or intuitions. Space and time are not empirical concepts. Kant gives two reasons for believing that they are not concepts at all. First, there is only one space: “If one speaks of many spaces, one understands by that only parts of one and the same unique space. Also, these parts cannot precede the one all-embracing space, as through they were its constituents (out of which composition would be possible); rather, they can only be thought in it” (A25/B39). He similarly insisted on the unity of time (A31-2/B47). The significance of these arguments is that they assume his definition of a concept in terms of its being what many representation have in common, that is, what I am calling his generic sense of concept. Space and time are not concepts for him because the relationship between the many spaces or times in particular representations and the one space or time is that of part to whole, not species to genus (cf Godlove 1996: 442).” (Schmaus 2004: 40)

gesture that demarks times from spaces in the critical mind of Kant? It does not own something to someone else?

These questions seem to be the clue to understanding not only Kant's enterprise but more importantly, here, any oppositional schema about togetherness (in spaces-times). According to the Durkheimian school, this and other distinctions arose from social actions, (i.e. rites of law and rites of interest). Underestimating the radical critique Durkheim posited to Kant's categories drives to psychologist deadlocks in social sciences. When the Durkheimian school claimed for sociology the historical processes of categories-making, their main obstacle to overcome was individualism in the two forms of rationalism and empiricism.

NOTHINGNESS ARTICULATES OPPOSITIONS

For Kant one privileged source of boundaries and articulations is the principle of suppression (Aufhebung). Suppression produces logical oppositions and real oppositions. As Shell has brilliantly noted, the principle of suppression is frequently represented by Kant as an economic equation. Using Newtonian Physics and the economic relation between debt and credit, Kant associates equation with mutual suppression, "[to] always end[s] with a metaphysical and political justification of the liberal free-market system" (Shell 1993: 135).

In the case of the Kantian category of reciprocity, reciprocity works only if it is a relationship among objects deduced to exist simultaneously. When in the second analogy, Kant defines reciprocity, he makes it clear that:

"Things are coexistent so far as they exist in one and the same time. But how do we know that they are in one and the same time? We do so when the order in the synthesis of apprehension of the manifold is a matter of indifference, that is, whether it be from A through B, C, D to E, or reversewise from E to A. For if they were in succession to one another in time, in the order, say, which begins with A and ends in E, it is impossible that we should

begin the apprehension in the perception of E and proceed backwards to A, since A belongs to past time and can no longer be an object of apprehension." (Kant 1966:167)

The crux of such a definition resides in indifference and reversibility. More particularly, indifference to any order of the synthesis of apprehension. As a matter of indifference, the ideal Kantian present-time, in its perfect reversibility, exemplifies the simple mathematics of an equation, or the "money of the mind" (Shell 1993: 142) which is only possible under a zero-sum temporal regime. If an object "belongs" to the past, it can no longer be apprehended in its coexistence or reciprocity with other objects. It cannot be apprehended and made reversible, according to Kant's reasoning. Reciprocity opposes causality because time opposes space. However, Kant deals with oppositions by equating them. In Shell's words,

"In Kant's thinking, an *Aufhebung* is the cancellation to zero, or stasis, of a debt (*Aktivschuld*) by a credit (*Passivschuld*) when both *Schulden* are "predicates belonging to a single subject and are quantitatively equal to each other". The *Grund* is zero. Kant seems to generalize this notion of reciprocal exchange infinitely. In *The Concept of negative Quantities*, he applies the notion of mathematical negativity and reciprocity to psychology, to the estimation of the total values of pleasure and displeasure, to crime and punishment, and so on. For Kant, the sum total of such opposites is or should be zero. The concept of zero and of negativity is thus crucial to Kant's studies of morality and human intentions." (Shell 1993: 135).

Thus, Kantian reciprocity presupposes a cancellation of time, succession and causality. Moreover, the order in the synthesis of apprehension does not presuppose any succession. One can talk of Kantian reciprocity only when a perfect reversibility exists, and this implies a denial or suppression of any order in the apprehension of the manifold. Therefore, Kant's reciprocity depends on a pure present-time of the mind in which succession (and therefore causality) has been canceled to zero. Reciprocity or relations between past, present and future actions are, in Kant's terms, impossible. Likewise, Malinowski's reciprocity depends on the pure-simple-present-temporality Kant has crafted for his secular and enlightened Europeans.

MAUSS AND THE COMMON LIFE OF RECIPROCITIES

In one of the most comprehensive studies of Marcel Mauss' texts as a whole, N.J. Allen (2000) has boldly stated that we should read *The Gift* as a "preliminary study bearing on the category of relation" (2000: 97). Opening up his suggestion, I approach Mauss' work not only in light of the Aristotelian category of "relation", but also as a response to the Kantian norm of reciprocity. My intent extends Allen's enterprise. Allen does not assume that Mauss reduced himself to Aristotle's categories but, on the contrary, that Mauss, like Durkheim before him, had used them as a guide to overcome the philosophical poverty of the Kantian categories. According to Durkheim,

"At the root of our judgments, there are certain fundamental notions that dominate our entire intellectual life. It is these ideas that philosophers, beginning with Aristotle, have called the categories of understanding: notions of time, space, number, cause, substance, personality. They correspond to the most universal properties of things. They are like solid frames that confine thought. Thought does not seem to be able to break out of them without destroying itself, since it seems we cannot think of objects that are not in time or space, that cannot be counted, and so forth." (Durkheim 1995 [1912]: 8-9)

At his turn, Mauss did not explicitly say that his famous papers critiques or improves our understanding of a particular category--in this case, of relation or reciprocity. Even though he wrote, with Durkheim, the programmatic text on "primitive" categories and classification (Durkheim and Mauss 1903), his latter work became more pragmatic. Although there are many differences between Mauss's later work and his uncle's, there is a clear intellectual continuity in which some previous ideas are, first followed, then critiqued and later overcome by the *L'Année Sociologique* school.

Durkheim and Mauss (1903) surely wanted to add a new perspective on the Kantian categories. They do not try to solve a philosophical problem with an overarching definition. What Durkheim and Mauss assumed the categories were is still a disputed problem for Schmauss⁸ (2004). Besides which philosopher most influenced Mauss or

⁸ Schmauss gives an interesting account of different interpretations on to whom definitions of categories the Durkheimian school was adhering or contesting, "... Susan Stedman Jones (2001: 69ff.), Donald Nielsen (1999), John Brooks (1998: 215), and Terry Godlove (1996), who regard Durkheim's theory of the categories as having been informed by his reading of Charles Renouvier and Octave Hamelin. Brooks (1998, passim) and Jones (2001: 32, 62-3) see Durkheim as having emerged from the eclectic spiritualist tradition, but do not

Durkheim, or, which definition of the categories were they contesting or developing, the lack of a temporal dimension within the categories of understanding, or broadly, of the “human mind”, offers a starting point from which the new French sociological disciplines were constituted. Moreover, the variability (in time and space) of the categories was not an issue for Mauss and his uncle but the proof of the plasticity of human reason.

Instead of misunderstandings, produced by Pierre Maine de Biran’s and Victor Cousin’s spiritualist interpretation of Kant as a plain subjectivist, (this is Schmauss’ hypothesis), Mauss and Durkheim seem to have understood pretty well the Kantian critiques.

However they had different aims than a philosopher. Instead of writing a philosophical critique of the Kantian Critiques, Mauss and Durkheim aim to overcome the creationist repetition of each individual mind being created as an image of an eternal one. Kant’s, Renouvier’s and Aristotle’s definitions of the categories were surely at the starting point of more plural, temporally and sociologically based descriptions of the categories. Allen says,

“From time to time he [Mauss] referred to the Aristotelian list [of categories]. For instance when –at the age of 66- he presented to British colleagues his ‘sample of the work of the French School of sociology’. But he did no limit himself to that list. In the 1924 text cited above he goes on to say: “The Aristotelian categories are in fact not the only ones that exist in our minds, or that have existed in the human mind”, and as examples of other categories he gives the small and the great, the animate and the inanimate, right an left.” (Allen 2000: 92)

However, at the bottom of the *L’Année Sociologique* school there is the directive idea that every formal capacity of individual human minds co-depends on evolving social formations (as one person depends on other to be humanized). Therefore, Durkheimians, it has been said, intended to produce a synthetic social knowledge (Marcel 2001: 271) through the finding of the social underpinnings of ontologies through time. As Allen has also remarked, Mauss’ stand against philosophy couldn’t be bolder,

discuss his theory of the categories in this context. Most other commentators on Durkheim’s sociology of knowledge have treated it as simply a response to Kant’s theory of the categories. These include E. Benoit-Smullyan (1948: 518 n.167), Steven Collins (1985: 46ff.), Mary Douglas (1975: xv), Anthony Giddens (1978: 111), Robert Alun Jones (1984: 74), Steven Lukes (1973: 447), Stjepan Mestrovic (1989: 260), William S.F. Pickering (1993: 53), and Paul Vogt (Jones and Vogt 1984: 54).” (Schmauss 2004: 155 n.13)

“I would easily say that Sociology needs more of Anthropology and History. I would also say that a complete anthropology could replace Philosophy, since it would comprehend precisely that history of the human mind that Philosophy takes for granted” (Mauss 1969, III: 127-128; my translation).

Then, we should temporarily conclude that Mauss does not subscribe to any philosophical definition of the categories but contest all of them because of such a-historical and individualist “taken for granted” preconceptions.

RECIPROCITY WILL TEAR US APART, AGAIN

Instead of mentioning the word “reciprocity”, which seldom appears in *The Gift*, Mauss points to different combinations of the terms “obligation” and “exchange”. The scarcity of the word “reciprocity” is curious if one compares its abundance in his *Manual* (Mauss 2007). Mauss does not study the whole category of relation or reciprocity through societies and history but he “isolates” and dedicates his *The Gift* to the “problem” (Mauss 1925) of returns. He constructs this problem as an analyzable case study which illuminates the whole category of reciprocity through time whilst leaving other reciprocal phenomena aside (action and passion, agent and patient beyond gift-giving). Therefore, Mauss bases his “precise” and “comparative” research on the incommensurability of returns represented between two analytical and *a posteriori* defined terms: obligations and exchanges. Constituted as the third part of the gift-deal, the return--or, in the anthropological terminology, the “reciprocation”--bonds and exchanges givers and receivers between themselves, but without any concrete possibility of exactly determining where exchange ends and where bonding begins. Thus, Mauss studies the reciprocity “principle” through the problem of concrete returns through history as the earliest source of social normativity (Caillé 2002). The object of his paper is defined by the following questions,

“What is the *norm* of law and of interest that, in archaic and old societies, makes that the received present would be obligatorily returned? What *force* is there *inside the thing* that one gives that makes the receiver to return it? Here there is the problem to which we specially commit ourselves even when we index others. (Mauss 1925 : 33 ; my translation)

Quelle est la règle de droit et d'intérêt qui, dans les sociétés de type arriéré ou archaïque, fait que le présent reçu est obligatoire_ment rendu ? Quelle force y a-t-il dans la chose qu'on donne qui fait que le donataire la rend ? Voilà le problème auquel nous nous attachons plus spécialement tout en indiquant les autres. (Mauss 1925 : 33)⁹

Before any morality (or legality) of exchange arises as specific and different sphere for human experience, these two indiscernible aspects were “blended” in the “proto-history” (Mauss 1925: 32) of total social prestations. For Mauss, exchange unfolds itself into obligations. The reciprocal phrasing is also true, for him, “the obligation to give is that giving creates an obligation”.

Mauss does mention that the gift-giving form of exchange could have modified a category of understanding. Otherwise, does the human mind have to be considered unreachable by social activity? Meanwhile, people and/or things move, decomposition and composition of “social” ontological relationships and binding forces take place through time. The Durkheimian definition of society as “people and thing”, gets in Mauss precise descriptions of the multiple and changing forms of social cohesions actualized through time.

Berthoud (1999) has noted that agreements and disagreements between Mauss and Malinowski have been productive to the anthropological category of reciprocity, but overall, to the temporal multiplicity of the entity called “society”¹⁰. It could be said that, both Mauss and Malinowski fought, against an older generation, for an understanding

⁹ Halls translates, “What rule of legality and self-interest, in societies of a backward type, compels the gift that has been received to be obligatorily reciprocated? What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?” (Mauss 1990: 3). I am not going to discuss here the problems the different translations of *The Gift* present to the English speaking readers. I will just note what I consider idiosyncratic and connotative the use of “self-interest” instead of “interest” (moreover when Mauss is reflecting mainly on exchanges between groups and not individuals); “power” instead of “force” (when Mauss explains that things and persons, indistinctly, tend to be in a sort of togetherness); “object” instead of “thing”, etc. For example, the word “force” is critical into Kant’s application of Newtonian Physics to philosophy.

¹⁰ The ontological complexity of the “ensemble”, or the temporal assemblage, Mauss called society resides overall in its transient links. He considers “society” as an ephemeral whole, present and together only in few occasions (Mauss 1969, III: 14). Thus, the evolution of variable forms of togetherness appears as fundamental to understand the theoretical underpinnings of his famous essay.

of the inner diversity of the social whole. But only Mauss gives some account of the effectiveness of temporal remains. In few words, it could be said that the different parts of the social organism, in itself diverse, stand together by means of social cohesion, in which reciprocal exchanges play a crucial part. In a 1928 text, Mauss reminds us that,

However, we have that Morgan and Durkheim respectively have exaggerated the clan's amorphism, and, as Malinowski has remarked to me, they have given an insufficient account of the idea of reciprocity. (Mauss 1969: 110; my translation)

« Cependant, il reste que Morgan et Durkheim, à la suite, on exagéré l'amorphisme du clan, et comme M. Malinowski me le fait remarquer, ont fait une part insuffisante à l'idée de réciprocité. (Mauss 1969 : 110) »

For Mauss individuality and amorphism are later inventions. He explains that the complex precedes the simpler. By suggesting that the first individual self seems to have emerged from a material thing when it gets its "soul" and its "history" through exchange (i.e. a North-West copper or a Pacific *taonga*, with its soul or hau) he goes far beyond the Christian compulsion for historicity that inscribes and contrasts individual acts against the background of eternity (Nietzsche 1969). Tracing back evolving of forms of exchange leads Mauss to produce the category of total social prestations. According to him, groups exchange everything and articulate themselves (in different inner parts) through exchange. Nevertheless, time is not in Mauss' discourse the ultimate source of boundaries between phenomena. For us, total social facts are present today, even when we do not understand the turbulences of the present,

"All these phenomena are at the same time juridical, economic, religious, and even aesthetic and morphological, etc. they are juridical because they concern private and public law, and morality that is organized and diffused throughout society; they are strictly obligatory or merely an occasion or merely an occasion for praise or blame; they are political and domestic at the same time, relating to social classes as well as clans and families. They are religious in a strict sense, concerning magic, animism, and a diffused mentality. They are economic. The idea of value, utility, self-interest, luxury, wealth, the acquisition and accumulation of goods –all these on the one hand- and on the other, that of consumption, even that of deliberate spending for its own sake, purely sumptuary: *all these phenomena are present everywhere, although we understand them differently today.*" (Mauss 1990: 79 my emphasis)

Time and transformation is represented by morphological accounts. Mauss takes “careful loans” (Mauss 1927) from Lamarck’s evolutionist discourses (on the whole Durkheimian school see Gissis 2002). Stating that actual time and space produce distinct forms of the category of reciprocity, Mauss analyses the spatial and temporal variability of the reasons and forms for exchanging. Different categories of reciprocity, even in “our times”, when reciprocity seems to be almost confined to the moral sphere, coexist by implying anachronical recurrences.

Gouldner (1960) reminds us how Functionalism reacted against the “early anthropological notion of survival”. He argues that the problem of survivals was addressed in terms of the inexplicability of a “custom” of which “consequences for social arrangements are not longer present” (1960: 162). In this sense, also Malinowski says that the “survival character of an act” will tell the ethnographer if it is a “dead thing” or a vital one (Malinowski 1922: 20) through its “concomitant behavior”.

LOST AND FOUND: GIVEN AWAY OBJECTS

To reiterate, I argue that the existence of objects in one cancelled time is the clue to understanding “community or reciprocity” in Kant’s terms. The Kantian teaching on reciprocity states that someone perceives or thinks in a plurality of objects as a *relation*, as having reversible relationships among them (A-B-C-D). Nevertheless, Kant is not interested in explaining how and when such form of perception or thought came to the mind Likewise, Malinowski, and overall, my analytic character here called the “Malinowskian reader of Mauss”, abjure what I also call the “present composed” (temporality and gift). In a letter addressed to his friend Masson, Malinowski, one day before leaving the islands towards Melbourne, notes the complexity of his remembrances. Even in a personal letter, his use of the past tense precludes that what he calls “the mixture of barbarism” contaminating his present tense,

“I and Billi started early in the morning for Kiriwi. There the last meal I had with Billi and Mick and a last talk. I was sitting there in Mick’s store and I suddenly looked on all

the quaint mixture of Greek and Melanesian barbarism with Anglo-Saxon trade culture as one looks at a memory- it was receding into the realm of remembrances...“
(Malinowski in Young 1998: 273)

By thinking of the present as a non-dimensional punctum, as an infinitively small and incommensurable period or boundary where future and past divide, we actively deny the existence of any other relationship (beyond indifference) between temporalities. Otherwise, past, present and future should be intertwined mutually and reciprocally contaminating each other. I think this is one of the most powerful Maussian suggestions from *The Gift*. There, Mauss also presents recurring and turbulent temporal forms of togetherness of “our” times, not only archaic forms “for the living Museum of social facts”.

When Mauss says that he doesn't like “the word “survival”, for some “still alive and generative institutions” (Mauss 1938: 7), I think he is referring to the Darwinian use of it.¹¹ For instance, he does mention that “popular classes” currently live old-fashioned forms of reciprocal feastings. In this case, nobody can accuse Mauss of having been an armchair sponsor of social feastings in his native Lorraine,

In that separate existence that constitute our social life, we ourselves cannot ‘lag behind’, as the expression still goes. We must give back more that we have received. The round of drinks is ever dearer and larger in size. Thus, in our childhood in Lorraine, which normally contented itself with living very frugally, ruined itself for the sake of its gasts on saints days, and at weddings, first communion, or funerals. One must act the ‘great lord’ upon such occasions. It may even be said that one section of our people is constantly behaving like this, and spends with the utmost extravagance on guests and on feast days, and with New Year gifts. (Mauss 1990: 65-66)

“Dans cette vie à part qu'est notre vie sociale, nous-mêmes, nous ne pouvons « rester en reste », comme on dit encore chez nous. Il faut rendre plus qu'on a reçu. La « tournée » est toujours plus chère et plus grande. Ainsi telle famille villageoise de notre enfance, en Lorraine, qui se restreignait à la vie la plus modeste en temps courant, se ruinait pour ses hôtes, à l'occasion de fêtes patronales, de mariage, de communion ou d'enterrement. Il faut être « grand seigneur » dans ces occasions. On peut même dire qu'une partie de notre peuple se conduit ainsi constamment et dépense sans compter quand il s'agit de ses hôtes, de ses fêtes, de ses « étrennes ». (Mauss 1925: 161)

¹¹ He uses the English word, “Je n’aime pas le mot de survivals, survivances, pour des institutions encore vivantes et proliférantes)

Mauss also states that in new ways, these old-forms of reciprocity will return. Mauss foresees that “survivals” of old forms of sociality will reappear in the future. For example, he does mention a copyright law promulgated in 1923 in France as an index of the return of old relationships between personal and real rights. But more importantly, Mauss states that objects (persons and things as they are known), are always in “economic effervescence”, tending to get out of themselves, composing and decomposing old-new forms of returns. In his words,

“Thus, from one extreme of human evolution to the other, there are no two kinds of wisdom. Therefore let us adopt as the principle of our life what has already been a principle of action and will always be so: to emerge from self, to give, freely and obligatorily. We have no risk of disappointment.” (Mauss 1990: 71)

« Ainsi, d'un bout à l'autre de l'évolution humaine, il n'y a pas deux sagesse. Qu'on adopte donc comme principe de notre vie ce qui a toujours été un principe et le sera toujours: sortir de soi, donner, librement et obligatoirement; on ne risque pas de se tromper. » (Mauss 1925: 107)

The belief in the existence of a gap of nothingness between them and us, here and there, then and now, crucially depends on repetitive gestures and rites of law and of interest that mark what is the inner and what the outer senses. These articulations have been studied by Mauss in many of his papers, of which the most important is, of course, *The Gift*, but this not the only one. Without conceiving them in a linear evolutionary schema, I would like to mention just some of the diverse forms of reciprocity Mauss has suggested. The notion of total social prestations (Australian and Mauss 1925, 1922) is a complex starting point. We can follow its agonistic version of reciprocity in several forms. The first form is the North-Western Potlatch (Mauss 1925) with has “its extension” in Melanesia (Mauss 1969, III: 29-34 [1920]). In this text Mauss says that the “potlatch is a festival of the dead at the same time that the living people” (Mauss 1969, III: 33 [1920]). The second form is the ancient contractual form of reciprocal obligation among the Traces (Mauss 1969, III: 35-43 [1921]). In this form, Mauss identifies the Greeks as the inventors of the “spondè”, and of the modern contract” (Mauss 1969, III: 37 [1921]). The third form is the drinkable form of reciprocity of the Germanic tribes called, in *Oevres* vol. III, “Gift-Gift” (Mauss 1969, III: 46-51). The forth, among the Celts,

is the suicide as “supreme contra-prestation” (Mauss 1969, III:52-57 primarily analyzed in Posidonius’ text). Fifth is the house’s reciprocity, representing a continual reciprocity of ancestor and descendants. Mauss also brings the North-Western institution of the *Numaym* to represent the house as a corporate entity or “personne morale”. In the “Parentés à Plaisanteries” (Mauss 1969, III: 109-124 [1926]) there is a description of what could be called joking reciprocity among in-laws. In “La cohesion social”, (1969, III: 11-27 [1931]) Mauss describes different forms of reciprocities among the different segments of society (according to “clivage par sexes, par génération et par clans”, and what is also important, a form of reciprocity called “tradition”, as the “transmission of things, practices and social representations” (Mauss 1969: 23).

On the other hand, French “post-structural” schemas have ordered reciprocity only among “interested” phenomena (Bourdieu 1977, Derrida 1992, 1996, Marion 1997, 2001) and exchange among the impossible (Derrida 1992, Baudrillard 1999). Mauss’ historization of the divide between altruism and self-interest has been once again neglected. Denying that a particular “[i]deology of the pure gift may thus itself promote and entrench the ideological elaboration of a domain in which self-interest rules supreme” (Parry 1986: 469), philosophy once again takes for granted the evolutions of forms and rites. Even when Mauss demonstrated that interest/disinterest, persons/things, and past/future are not “given” analytical categories but produced (and reproduced) ones, one of the most discomfiting Christian Theological virtues returns. Offensive and “hurting” to who accept it (Mauss 1925: 160), Charity is also back.

THE GIFT’S PROMISE: “DO UT DES”

The aim of this final section is to present a simplified version of the interface of temporalities implied in a particular case of gift-giving, with special emphasis on the future of the gift as a source of normativity. As it is commonly said, this is a work in progress. Its focal point resides, here, in the complex formation of the future (but it could perfectly be complemented with a description of the production of the past as trade with

ancestor or "tradición"). The geographical setting is an inner Yucatec village. Its object is the aesthetic aspect of a sacrificial gift (don-sacrifice) embedded among many other forms of exchanges (such dances, nurture, food, music, etc), synthetically denominated by Mauss "festival-cum-market" (Mauss 1990: 79).

All the time, Xocenences express many of their rituals in exchange terms. Privately sponsored ceremonies known as loh-nah (house redemption), loh-corrall (farmyard redemption) and k'ex (exchange) are intended to regain power over the animals, the house and the human body from ancestral "owners" and "winds" that are affecting them. We already know many of the idioms and their history. Voluntary or involuntary evil-doers "get paid" to leave the house, the farm or the human body, as part of an understood temporal pact and a common ground for living between the invisible and the visible. This does not take a permanent form but rather must be arranged and rearranged through the ritualized deals that content and resituate "ancestral owners" and "winds" by paying tributes over a temporal sequence and engaging in public celebrations that take the form of exchange. The outcomes of these sacred exchanges could be "miracles" or "punishments". A personal disgrace is understood to be a corrective "punishment" for having not fulfilled, or for simply having forgotten, the sacred engagement or "compromise" of sponsoring a celebration, dedicating a "novena" to the cross or making offering to some divinity (on "miracles" and "punishments" in other Latin-American geographical area see Harris in Cannell 2006: 57).

For centuries Mexican cargo-ritualists have expressed gift-giving practices in terms of "promesas" and "compromisos". In Xocén, a promise explicitly precedes ceremonial gift-giving of cargoholders. In the particular case of the Gremios celebrations, to which I limit myself here, the ritual cycle of promising-giving-receiving-giving back-and-sanction, objectifies a year-long near future, nested into longer teleological processes. The promise becomes a pledge through a dance ("k'ub pol" or "head delivery"). The giver and his helpers receive the cargo and the responsibility of sponsorship. They pledge to support the next year's celebration by dancing nine turns eastward, and nine westward, around a table with offerings. The dance "pleases" the cross and the audience. The cuch, "cargador", or main sponsor holds over his head a cooked pig's

head, an animal provided by the outgoing "cargador", who has killed it and arranged its preparation. Once the head is transformed into food, it is consecrated and offered to the Santísima Cruz Tun. The difference between gift-sacrifice (persons giving food to the idols) and gifts among pairs (sponsors transferring items among them) is not easy to draw (and it would take more than my space limits allow to describe the 24 hours of gift-giving, prayers and rites that constitute the whole Gremios celebration).

Schematically, these gifts engage the participants (see how Mauss 1924 and 1925 relates gift and "gage" or pledge) by implying a "projected common activity" (Das 1983: 451). Although few studies have analyzed the shape of future-oriented engagements (see Munn 1986: 117), almost nothing has been said regarding the impossible conundrum of temporalities which a gift conveys. In terms of an analytic segregation of three times (past, present and future), every exchange produces a turbulence that annuls these times as separate entities.

In the case of the K'ub pol dance, meanwhile the sun is setting, the cargadores pass the burden of sponsorship from "this-year" to the "next-year" sponsors. A year of sponsorship ends. Another starts. However, one can say that the next-years sponsors are receiving a year-long present in which they will have to struggle to accumulate the resources which must be given away in order to pass the cargo to someone else the following year. They have exactly one year to get the necessary money and the goods (around us\$3000) for "buying life, buying the rain" for them. This positive sanction brings renewal to the "cargadores'" houses. Called in Spanish "Milagro", this sanction comes when sponsors "act with faith and commitment"; a negative sanction or "punishment" comes when they do not.

It also is clear (since Gernet and Mauss) that, almost by definition, sponsors take turns and response (sponsio). However, nothing has been said on the gift Mesoamerican sponsors promise, receive, give, return and get sanctioned from. I am referring more particularly to the present in both senses (gift and temporality) sponsors get from their former pairs as obligation that transects them, because it is not just "simple present" but a very composed one.

Even the present continuous could help me to express some futurity of their promises and pledges--here I am lacking (and every language lacks) the binding force that

reciprocal acts produce by conflating times. Acts (such as this dance) unfold and relate different temporalities. In a state of flux, ancestors dance, as well as, dancers trans-act with them.

Those who pass the burden of sponsorship conclude their yearly futures as sponsors but they are still tied to the regeneration of life that their prestation would bring. Those who receive the Mesoamerican “indian present” are getting a year-long future in which they will have to work hard to obtain money and resources to support the rites. Both of them have pledged and envision promises of happiness that will be confirmed or negated in a yearly (but intertwined) near-futures. Beyond debt and extension it is their futures which oblige their presents. In other words, the *cargadores*’s present is tensioned by their futures (and from the sanctions the future will bring to them). The order of what we call “law” stems from the looping order of their times.

The periodization of these cyclical rites (which are not at all simply circular and self-contained) mark entwined temporal terms. However, these yearly near-futures, as concrete temporal entities, oppose the perpetually-postponed long-term future which Christian (and Secular Christian) economists propose (Guyer 2007).

RITUAL ECHOES IN POLITICAL REACTIONS

In Xocén, Yucatan, Mexico, the practice of what Mauss referred to as “prestations” invokes not only market and political ideologies but also deeply historical and rite-based conceptions. Two annual calendric modalities of production and prestation intersect. The first one is the local version of the well-known Mesoamerican cargo system. The second is the seasonal subsidy for farmers called “Procampo” (“Farmers direct support program”) received from the Mexican state and underwritten by the United States in the context of NAFTA. Based on different traditions, histories and analytics, the encounter of these rites of renewal and post-Bretton Woods’ development program, for Xocenences and for many Mexican farmers in similar situations, invoke different objectifications of the future, and, therefore, of social engagement. One postpones redemption to the far-

distant process of development; the other, to the sacralized annual cycle of slash and burn agriculture.

The promises of those gifts (Procampo subsidies and ceremonial gift-giving) objectify different theological and teleological future scenarios. The two influence each other in national and local social life.

Questions arise such as, to what extent does the sharing of a common future produce reciprocal obligations and engagements between Xocenences, the Nation-State and the international organizations which support this program? How do these engagements differ according to the different envisioned near-futures that are implicit or explicit in cultural frames?

Ritual gift-giving in Xocén clearly informs the language of political “compromisos” or “deals”, and the basis on which a compromise can be enforceable retrospectively. In 1999 Xocén’s receivers of seasonal money transfers from the Mexican Government program “Procampo”, traveled to the nearby city of Chemax to claim an alleged “compromise” on a transfer that had failed to materialize. In Chemax, the state governor promised to give the total amount of the subsidy without retention of any “interests”. After the speech, the governor left and farmers from many nearby villages received their subsidies: in fact, only half of what had been promised. According to the diary of the “Comisario” of Xocen, when the farmers realized that the promise had not been completely fulfilled, they tried to lynch the functionary who was in charge of the payment (Terán and Rasmussen eds. 2001: 105-106). There are many other episodes of unfulfilled promises of gifts, including one as recent as July 2007. In all of them, politicians and state functionaries have been incarcerated until the gift they have promised arrived.

The idioms of political claim and the intensity of these reactions borrow from the repertoire of religious gifts and their implications for collective life. Understood as seasonal gifts, the Procampo transfers have brought to Xocén a new set of promises about the future. However, there is no a Maussian “confusion” between juridical,

economic and moral terms (Testart 1993, 1998) when they claim the gift that has been promised. Xocen's donors have the "right" to claim a return.

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