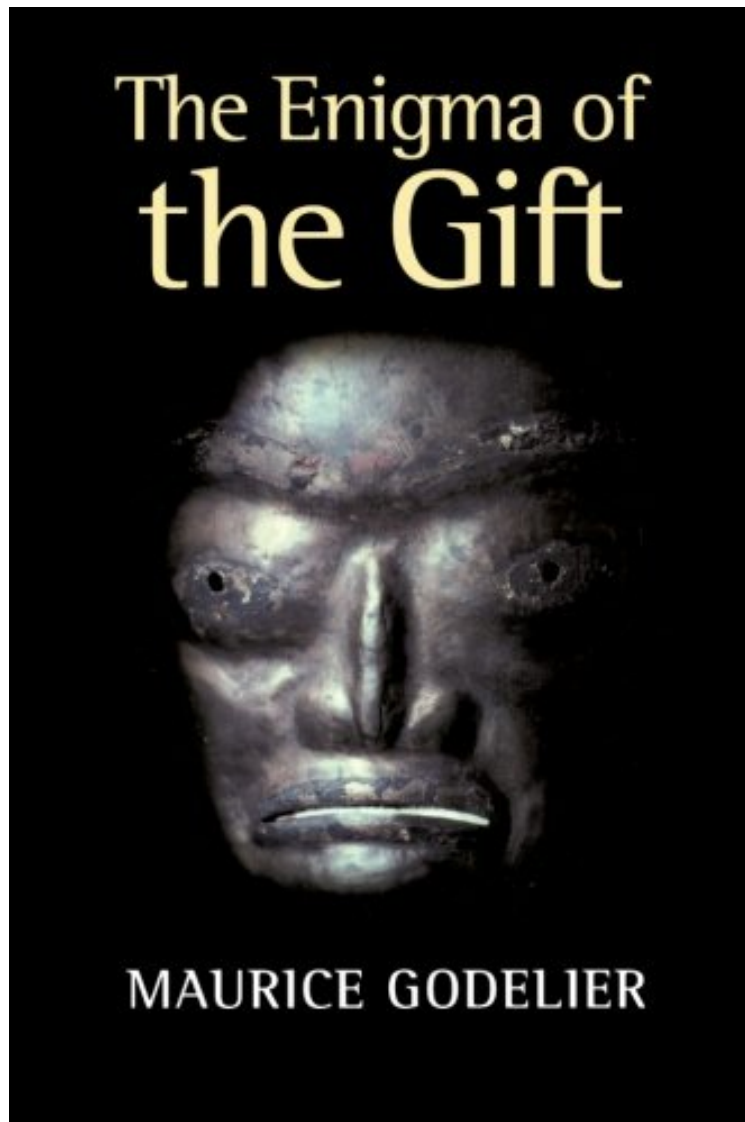


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## The Enigma of the Gift

*Maurice Godelier*

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**Maurice Godelier : The Enigma of the Gift** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Enigma of the Gift:

When we think of giving gifts, we think of exchanging objects that carry with them economic or symbolic value. But is every valuable thing a potentially exchangeable item, whose value can be transferred? In The Enigma of the Gift,

the distinguished French anthropologist Maurice Godelier reassesses the significance of gifts in social life by focusing on sacred objects, which are never exchanged despite the value they possess. Beginning with an analysis of the seminal work of Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss, and drawing on his own fieldwork in Melanesia, Godelier argues that traditional theories are flawed because they consider only exchangeable gifts. By explaining gift-giving in terms of sacred objects and the authoritative conferral of power associated with them, Godelier challenges both recent and traditional theories of gift-giving, provocatively refreshing a traditional debate. Elegantly translated by Nora Scott, *The Enigma of the Gift* is at once a major theoretical contribution and an essential guide to the history of the theory of the gift.

Language Notes Text: English (translation) Original Language: French About the Author Maurice Godelier is directeur d'études at the cole des Hautes études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, head of the Centre de recherche et de documentation sur l'Océanie, and past scientific director of the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). His book *Grands Hommes* (1982) won the Prix de l'Académie Française.