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978-1-107-00218-0 - The Return of the Gift: European History of a Global Idea

Harry Liebersohn

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The Return of the Gift

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

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

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University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign



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To Carl Schorske

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