

DOI: 10.26319/2911

Alice Nicole Sindzingre
National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS, Paris)
EconomiX-University Paris-Nanterre
School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS),
Department of Economics, University of London

Understanding the Concept of Gift in Economics: Contributions from Other Social Sciences¹

Abstract:

In putting forth a view of economic agents as autonomous individuals driven by self-interest, mainstream economics precludes the possibility of gift. Gift could be found in non-market, “collectivist”, societies, where “informal” norms would include gift-giving. In this context, the paper argues that mainstream views regarding the impossibility of the concept of gift are inaccurate, via an analysis of conceptual and empirical contributions of other social sciences, notably sciences of mankind “par excellence” such as anthropology and philosophy. In particular, the paper shows that critiques of mainstream views that are based on simple contrasts and qualifications do not provide conceptual instruments for a rigorous critique (such as “collectivism”, “informality”, “altruism”). This is also the case with the more “heterodox” views that underscore the unrealistic character of mainstream models of social interactions and norms. The mainstream arguments of self-interest and exchanges, based on expectations of future returns as universal traits of human beings, are indeed not easy to refute, including with the conceptual tools of other social sciences. This paper instead argues that a deeper analysis of concepts such as selfishness, interest, exchange, or the individual yields a more relevant critique of mainstream conceptions of gift—“the interest of whom?” and “exchange shaped by what?” being the pertinent questions. Other social sciences show that these concepts actually always presuppose the pre-existence of soci-

1) This article was presented originally at the 19th Conference of the Association for Heterodox Economics, in the Stream: “The Economics of the Gift”, University of Manchester, England, 10–12 July 2017. The author thanks the anonymous reviewer for his/her very constructive comments and suggestions.

eties before that of individuals, and this is expressed by the many facets of the conceptualisations of the act of giving, whether societies are market or non-market ones.

Keywords:

gift; exchange; neoclassical economics; developing countries; group membership.

1. Introduction

In putting forth a view of economic agents as autonomous individuals driven by self-interest, mainstream economics precludes the possibility of gift. For mainstream views, individuals are self-interested and interactions are exchanges expecting future returns, and these are universal traits of human beings. Gift can be found in non-market, non-capitalist societies. Mainstream institutional economics indeed contrasts market with non-market societies, the former being “individualistic” societies and the latter, “collectivist” ones.² Similarly, non-market societies would exhibit “informal” norms or “social networks” that include gift-giving.³ Likewise, rather than gift, the frameworks provided by behavioral economics or game theory, opposing, e.g., cooperative and non-cooperative behavior, conceptualize the possibility of non-reciprocal and even altruistic behavior, with the latter being more prevalent in non-market societies.

In this context, the paper argues that mainstream views regarding the impossibility of the gift are inaccurate, both at the conceptual and empirical levels. This is shown via an analysis of conceptual and empirical contributions of other social sciences, notably sciences of mankind “par excellence” such as anthropology and philosophy. In particular, the paper shows that critiques of mainstream views that are based on simple contrasts and qualifications do not provide conceptual instruments for a rigorous criticism, e.g., critiques of mainstream views that contrast market societies with those that are non-market, “collectivist”, “altruistic”, “gift-giving”, and “driven by informal norms”, and that often show a superficial use of such concepts. Similarly, critiques of mainstream views, including those of social interactions, norms or gift, often rely on the argument that these are based on unrealistic models and disconnected from facts (e.g., critiques by Milton Friedman⁴). Yet such “heterodox” critiques that primarily underscore the unrealistic character of mainstream models, and that propose more “adapted” accounts, may not provide the most robust instruments for a critical assessment of mainstream views of gift.

Mainstream arguments are indeed not easy to refute. Since Paleolithic times, the behavior of individuals has appeared to be driven by interest; similarly, interest, under the form of reciprocal exchange, among others, may also underlie social norms in non-market non-capitalist societies. Hence, a criticism solely centered on the critique of an ontological view of interest-driven individuals may not be the definitive argument that refutes the mainstream theories of the impossibility of gift. Instead, mainstream views may be criticized because another crucial element of their ontology is false, i.e. that the individual is prior to the society.⁵ Thus, this paper argues

2) Avner Greif, “Cultural Beliefs and the Organization of Society: A Historical and Theoretical Reflection on Collectivist and Individualist Societies,” *Journal of Political Economy* 102, no. 5 (October 1994): 912–50.

3) Jean-Philippe Platteau, *Institutions, Social Norms and Economic Development* (London: Routledge and Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000); Oriana Bandiera and Imran Rasul, “Social Networks and Technology Adoption in Northern Mozambique,” *Economic Journal* 116, no. 514 (October 2006): 869–902.

4) Milton Friedman, “The Methodology of Positive Economics,” in *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 3–43.

5) “The individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god” (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a).

that other social sciences (anthropology, sociology, psychology) show the pre-existence of societies in the shaping of these concepts (“interest”, “exchange”) vis-à-vis individuals who are first members of social groups before having an autonomy that enables them to be “selfish”. This pre-existence is an intrinsic dimension of human beliefs and behavior (and survival in an evolutionary perspective). This is expressed, for example, by the many facets of the conceptualizations of the act of giving, whether societies are of a market or non-market kind. Humans are firstly defined by their links to other individuals, by their membership in groups and the sharing of common norms. Interest may drive beliefs and behavior, but the subjects of “interest” are societies or groups that are anterior to individuals, with the many facets of gift being actualizations of these social links. Hence, deeper analyses of concepts such as selfishness, interest, exchange, yield more relevant critiques of mainstream conceptions of gift – “the interest of whom?” and “exchange shaped by what?” being the most pertinent questions –, and enable more pluralist economic conceptualizations of gift.

One may disagree with the above theses in arguing that mechanisms prevailing in non-market societies are of little relevance for the understanding the mechanisms that drive market and individualistic societies, and in particular regarding gift. Yet this argument is similarly flawed, as “modern” societies are also structured in group memberships, the difference being that the latter are situational and multiple (rather than being determined, for example, by birth).

This paper is organized as follows. First, it examines some assumptions of the mainstream economic views of gift, including some of their criticisms. Second, it analyses their flaws in the light of other social sciences: rather than an ontology based on self-interest; these flaws refer to the impossibility of conceiving of an ontology wherein social links pre-exist to individuals, the multiple forms of reciprocal and univocal exchanges (gifts) being actualizations of these social links.

2. Gift, markets, behavior: some mainstream economic views

Mainstream theories of gift posit its impossibility, in line with the central assumptions of neoclassical economics. These would include methodological individualism, individuals making autonomous choices and having an autonomous utility that they seek to maximize, and self-centered individuals; “order” (in the form of conventions) arises spontaneously – and, in particular, rules of property – which are preconditions of markets.⁶ The ontology that grounds mainstream economics conceives of the individual as self-interested and even selfish. Yet critical (“heterodox”) views may also rely on methodological individualism, and similarly assume autonomous and maximizing individuals, which weakens their criticism.

2.1. Some mainstream views of gift

Mainstream theories define gift as a benevolent, voluntary, public and private redistribution of wealth. Relying on Adam Smith (for example his celebrated *Wealth of Nations*), for these theories, exchanges within markets involve self-interested individuals and result in socially efficient outcomes, while some individuals may have altruistic and pro-social “moral selves” (distributive preferences); and after Pareto, the social Pareto-efficiency of the social equilibrium entails the market Pareto-efficiency of market equilibrium and assumes that all transfers are perfectly substitutable, i.e., an identity of all voluntary transfers (public or private), in terms of their means

6) Robert Sugden, “Spontaneous Order,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 3, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 85–97.

(redistribution) and ends (enhancing equality in wealth distribution).⁷ Thus, a lump-sum wealth redistribution between agents leaves the equilibrium distribution of wealth unchanged.⁸

In social equilibrium theory, gift-giving maximizes donors' preferences, as donors' preference include the valuation of the wealth of the beneficiaries of their gifts, and, as underscored by Jean Mercier Ythier, this is what mainstream economic theory has called altruism since Gary S. Becker.⁹ Such altruism typically occurs within small groups of close relatives (but also, in modern societies, via philanthropy or even redistribution within nations). Making gifts within such "families" may be perfectly rational and maximize the giver's utility, e.g., in fostering the integration of the household, while the selfishness of beneficiaries is a possibility.¹⁰ The act of giving, "charitable" in appearance, may be "motivated by a desire to avoid the scorn of others or to receive social acclaim."¹¹

Moral motives may broaden narrow, pure self-interest. Arrow's "benevolent" givers are also self-centered,¹² with Arrow insisting that the substitution of ethics for self-interest, i.e., the theoretical requirement of ethical behavior, should be confined to circumstances where the price system fails.¹³ Yet while Arrow relies on the framework of measurable utilities, he argues that altruism may stem from a consensus among individual wills (preferences) on the ordering of social alternatives (as did Kant with the concept of moral imperative).¹⁴ Similarly, gift-givers (e.g., philanthropists) may maximize their utility (i.e., further their self-interest) via the act of giving, and if the link with the beneficiary is remote, this simply constitutes an "altruistic externality" – gift-givers may be "public-spirited act" utilitarians and be driven by the Kantian motives, i.e., moral principles.¹⁵ Rational, or utility maximizing individuals may include an ethical rule in their behavior, e.g., seeking to contribute positive outcomes for other individuals, or believing that free riding is morally wrong. Here, even if they have altruistic preferences, individuals remain utility-maximizers and follow a principle of reciprocity within a given group, which restrains them from free-riding and incites them to give, for example, to a public good.¹⁶

Models that assume that givers make altruistic gifts may also assume that beneficiaries of gifts are "egoistic," and in this case the aforementioned assumption of mainstream economics, that unchanged equilibrium distribution of wealth after gifts are made implies the crowding-out of private charity if public transfers, are achieved.¹⁷ One example is welfare states, which may reduce private gifts. In these perspectives, gifts and markets are incommensurable.

7) Jean Mercier Ythier, "The Economic Theory of Gift-Giving: Perfect Substitutability of Transfers and Redistribution of Wealth," in *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism and Reciprocity*, vol.1, ed. Serge-Christophe Kolm and Jean Mercier Ythier (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006), 230–31.

8) Gary S. Becker, "A Theory of Social Interactions," *Journal of Political Economy* 82, no. 6 (November–December 1974): 1063–93.

9) Becker, "Altruism, Egoism and Genetic Fitness: Economics and Socio-Biology," *Journal of Economic Literature* 14, no. 3 (September 1976): 817–26.

10) Becker, "Theory of Social Interactions."

11) *Ibid.*, 1083.

12) Kenneth J. Arrow, "Optimal and Voluntary Income Distribution," in *Economic Welfare and the Economics of Soviet Socialism: Essays in Honor of Abram Bergson*, ed. Steven Rosefielde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 267–88.

13) Kenneth J. Arrow, "Gifts and Exchanges," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1972): 343–62.

14) Kenneth J. Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, 3rd ed., Cowles Foundation Monographs Series No. 12 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), Ch. 7.

15) Robert Sugden, "On the Economics of Philanthropy," *Economic Journal* 92, no. 366 (June 1982): 341–50.

16) Robert Sugden, "The Supply of Public Goods through Voluntary Contributions," *Economic Journal* 94, no. 376 (December 1984): 772–87.

17) Sugden, "On the Economics of Philanthropy."

Regarding their relationships with markets, gifts have been explored in the mainstream literature, and notably in terms of social norms that create failures in the functioning of markets. As famously shown by George S. Akerlof¹⁸ with the notion of reciprocal “gift exchange,” gifts may be given to workers by firms in order to restrain such norms (e.g., on wages’ “fairness”). Akerlof claims that his approach is non-neoclassical, i.e., gift exchanges are not market exchanges – thus confirming the opposition between the concepts of gift and market – but gifts simultaneously remain analyzed in terms of reciprocal exchanges and calculations on their expected returns, i.e., within the rational individual-utilitarian framework. This approach has given rise to a number of studies on the impact of social norms of reciprocity on market outcomes, with many of them being based on experiments.¹⁹ A typical result is that the inclusion of norms of fairness in mainstream analyses allows for better predictions regarding the efficiency of markets.

Similarly, at a more macroeconomic level mainstream economics equally argues that the use of gifts in social interactions is detrimental to economic growth. For example, this is said to be an explanation, among others, of the stagnation of developing countries.²⁰ More generally, apart from the vast mainstream literature in public economics that critically analyses public redistribution, the redistributive social norms that prevail in many developing countries are seen as lowering productivity, creating inequalities and reducing income and entrepreneurial opportunities.²¹ Equally, when a key organization regarding policy toward developing countries, such as the World Bank, started to include social preferences in its analyses, it underscored the ambivalent economic outcomes of generous behavior, e.g., “in-group favoritism and out-group hostilities.”²²

2.2. Some “enhanced” views of gift

The abovementioned views have been subjected to debate and criticisms stemming from various theoretical schools within economics. Regarding markets, these criticisms include analyzing, such things as the nature of public goods, externalities, and the fact that markets can be less efficient than states.²³ Regarding individuals, analyzing the existence of commons and questioning the assumption of rational selfish agents being driven solely by rewards and punishments.²⁴ These criticisms have weakened the argument that behavior driven by self-interest is a mechanism underlying any social order. Ideas such as that of a common good that is preferable to the previous set of preferences of an individual and integrated into her utility may thus drive the behavior of this individual, and in this context the act of giving can be conceived, and even an act that is non-reciprocal and without a counterpart.

18) George A. Akerlof, “Labor Contracts as Partial Gift Exchange,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 97, no. 4 (November 1982): 543–69.

19) E.g., Daniel Kahneman, Jack L. Knetsch, and Richard H. Thaler, “Fairness and the Assumptions of Economics,” *Journal of Business* 59, no. 4, part 2 (1986): 285–300; Armin Falk, “Gift Exchange in the Field,” *Econometrica*. 75, no. 5 (September 2007): 1501–11; Jeffrey Carpenter, *The Sequencing of Gift Exchange: A Field Trial*, Discussion Paper 10736 (Bonn: IZA-Institute of Labor Economics, 2017).

20) Jean-Philippe Platteau, *Traditional Sharing Norms as an Obstacle to Economic Growth in Tribal Societies*, Cahier de recherche de la faculté des sciences économiques et sociales 173 (Namur: Centre de Recherche en Economie du Développement, 1996).

21) Marcel Fafchamps, “Ethnicity and Credit in African Manufacturing,” *Journal of Development Economics* 61, no. 1 (2000) 205–35; Karla Hoff and Arijit Sen “The Kin System as a Poverty Trap?” in *Poverty Traps*, ed. Samuel Bowles, Steven N. Durlauf, and Karla Hoff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

22) World Bank, *World Development Report: Mind, Society, and Behavior* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015), Ch. 2.

23) Joseph E. Stiglitz, “Markets, Market Failures and Development,” *American Economic Review* 79, no. 2 (May 1989): 197–203.

24) Elinor Ostrom, “Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 137–58, and “Policies That Crowd Out Reciprocity and Collective Action,” in *Moral Sentiments and Material Interests: The Foundations of Cooperation in Economic Life* ed. Herbert Gintis, et al., (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005): 253–75.

In particular, the abovementioned views have been subject to much discussion within behavioral economics. More than the concept of gift, this literature has examined the concepts of fairness, cooperation (being an outcome of learning during social life), reciprocity (weak and strong), pro-social behavior, altruism (simple or reciprocal), or other-regarding preferences,²⁵ which take concepts such as the “social” into consideration. In particular, the behavioral economics literature argues that the existence of other-regarding behavior is demonstrated by experiments and games (e.g., ultimatum, dictator, “public goods” games), where players’ behaviors deviate from those predicted for players who would be only self-regarding (e.g., giving money in dictator games).²⁶

These studies have shown the possibility of altruism, notably in the form of punishment of those who violate a social norm (selfish free-riders), though the punisher does not receive a personal reward (and can even incur a cost), which comes close to the “folk” concept of gift, not in its narrow and biased sense of exchange but as a unilateral act that does not receive a counterpart.²⁷ These studies criticize the assumptions that interest drives individuals and enables the possibility of gift. They consider that their questioning of self-interest as a prime characteristic of human psychology is a major enrichment of and change in mainstream microeconomic assumptions.

Yet it can be argued that these studies remain in the mainstream paradigm. Behavioral economic approaches can be included in mainstream views, as they do not depart from methodological individualism or the assumptions of rational agents seeking to maximize their utility and of behavior responding to incentives, maximizing gains (payoffs, rewards), minimizing costs (punishments), optimizing behavior in given environments. Games may thus show that it is strategic incentives that determine when self-regarding preferences dominate other-regarding preferences and vice-versa.²⁸ The integration in theory of deviations from the behavior that is predicted by the rational-selfish models does not induce change in the paradigm. Methodology remains typically based on models, notably game theory or experiments – and as acknowledged, even within mainstream economics, the “malleability” and “context-dependence” of preferences are very difficult to capture in models (and *in fine* are ignored).²⁹ As underscored by Nicholas Bardsley and Robert Sugden,³⁰ “sociality” is introduced in games via assumptions of non-self-interested preferences, e.g., altruism or reciprocity, but this sociality remains conceptualized within the framework of methodological individualism and thus may fail to explain social interaction.

“Heterodox” approaches have also analyzed the concept of gift. Critical theoreticians such as Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis have even demonstrated that humans are in fact a “cooperative species” and driven by altruistic behavior – altruism being defined as “helping in situations where the helper would benefit in fitness or other material ways by withholding help,”³¹ a definition that is close to the folk definition of gift as an

25) Matthew Rabin, “Psychology and Economics,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 36 (March 1998): 11–46.

26) Ernst Fehr and Klaus M. Schmidt, “The Economics of Fairness, Reciprocity and Altruism: Experimental Evidence and New Theories,” in *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism and Reciprocity*, Vol. 1, ed. Serge-Christophe Kolm and Jean Mercier Ythier, (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006).

27) Ernst Fehr and Simon Gächter, “Cooperation and Punishment in Public Goods Experiments,” *American Economic Review* 90, no. 4 (September 2000): 980–94, and “Altruistic Punishment in Humans,” *Nature* 415 (10 January 2002): 137–40.

28) Colin F. Camerer and Ernst Fehr, “When Does ‘Economic Man’ Dominate Social Behavior?” *Science* 311 (6 January 2006): 47–52.

29) Drew Fudenberg, “Advancing Beyond *Advances in Behavioral Economics*,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 44, no. 3 (September 2006): 694–711.

30) Nicholas Bardsley and Robert Sugden “Human Nature and Sociality in Economics,” in *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism and Reciprocity*, Vol. 1, ed. Serge-Christophe Kolm and Jean Mercier Ythier (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006).

31) Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *The Moral Economy of Communities: Structured Populations and the Evolution of Pro-Social Norms* (mimeo) (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, Department of Economics, 1997).

unilateral act that does not expect a counterpart. In the same vein, they have shown that “moral sentiments” are an intrinsic dimension of human behavior: for example, when markets are introduced (e.g., via monetary incentives) for an activity that was previously regulated by moral norms, such as voluntary contributions or gifts, the latter decrease (they are “crowded out”).³² Enriched by other sciences, e.g., anthropology, archaeology, cognitive science, among others, their reflections highlighted that the concept of “moral economy” could be fully integrated in economic analysis.³³ In particular, they underscored the existence of “strong reciprocity” (“propensity to cooperate and share with others similarly disposed, even at personal cost”) and showed the key role of social settings in the shaping of individual behavior, e.g. in games in which individuals preferred to give more to charities or people valuing work.³⁴ For example, in conducting experiments in “real settings” of “small-scale societies,” they could highlight that the canonical free rider was found much less in empirical reality than co-operators, in particular co-operators taking into account the behavior of others (conditional co-operators), i.e. conditioning their behavior to the degree of cooperative behavior of others.³⁵

This perspective is undoubtedly more accurate than the narrow assumptions of the standard model of the selfish individual. Yet it still shares many assumptions with the abovementioned mainstream conceptual framework, in particular a methodological individualism that is inherent in game theory. Specifically, the concept of gift remains analyzed via the limited set of concepts of behavioral economics, such as cooperation, altruism, and, in particular, reciprocity (even if deviations vis-à-vis reciprocal behavior are considered). As in mainstream approaches (except the modality of altruism expressed in altruistic punishment), gift is conceptualized within the framework of exchange, and notably reciprocal exchange.

Equally, despite findings that emphasize sociality, pro-social behavior, and moral sentiments, the use (as in mainstream studies) of a methodology based on experiments and games (dictator, ultimatum games) implies a similar ontology whereby individuals’ decisions exhibit universal characteristics of rationality prior to their links to a society (even if it is found that the contents of these links are shaped by specific social environments and display wide variations across societies). Given their design, these games, be they tested in laboratory or in “natural” settings, may not allow for the full understanding of social facts. For example, the dissemination of social norms, including a social fact such as gift, the shift from the scale of the experiment to a more aggregated one remains problematic and does not guarantee that causalities can be preserved from one scale to another.³⁶ This is particularly likely when the social environment at a given level of analysis may be a key causal variable.

3. Contributions from other social sciences: the interest of whom?

The demonstration that individuals are not driven by self-interest is indeed a difficult theoretical task (as self-interest is not refuted by reciprocation, including “reciprocal altruism”). Hence, it is argued that a critique of the mainstream conceptual framework should separate the latter’s various assumptions (notably utility maxi-

32) Herbert Gintis, et al., “Moral Sentiments and Material Interests: Origins, Evidence, and Consequences,” in *Moral Sentiments and Material Interests: The Foundations of Cooperation in Economic Life*, ed. Herbert Gintis, et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

33) Bowles and Gintis, *The Moral Economy of Communities*.

34) Christina Fong, Samuel Bowles, and Herbert Gintis, “Strong Reciprocity and the Welfare State,” in *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism and Reciprocity*, Vol. 2, ed. Serge-Christophe Kolm and Jean Mercier Ythier (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006): 1439–64.

35) Joseph Henrich, et al., eds., *Foundations of Human Sociality: Economic Experiments and Ethnographic Evidence from Fifteen Small-Scale Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

36) Angus Deaton, *Instruments of Development: Randomization in the Tropics, and the Search for the Elusive Keys to Economic Development*, Working Paper 14690 (Cambridge, MA: NBER, 2009).

mization, behavior driven by payoffs or losses, individualism, equilibrium). Such a critique should not rely on a demonstration that interest does not drive all actions, as this is difficult to prove.

In contrast, a more rigorous critique highlights that another facet of the mainstream paradigm is flawed, i.e. individualism and the assumptions of autonomous decision-making individuals. Such a critique is simply a shift in one of the ontological facets of the mainstream framework: it preserves the observation (and assumption) that interest may drive behavior, but argues that mainstream economics makes false assumptions regarding the fact that this interest is the interest of an individual, with the outcome of all individuals' actions maximizing the net benefits to an abstract "society" that is just the gathering of homologous economic agents. The argument here is that social science demonstrates that humans are *ex ante*, since birth, members of groups (not an abstract "society") and that group membership is the primary identity of individuals, which shapes their beliefs and behavior. The question thus becomes: interest may be a crucial driver of human behavior, including the act of giving, but the interest of whom?

3. 1. The recurrent confusion in economics: one word but referring to heterogeneous facts

Before examining this argument, the issue of defining the concept of gift must be briefly addressed. The word "gift" is intrinsically ambiguous. A gift can be an object given with an expectation of return – a "gift exchange," i.e., a mutual, reciprocal, gift-giving – and the fact that such giving should be considered as a gift is open to debate. On the other hand, it can be an object given without any expectation of return, a one-way behavior. These two intentions – and therefore definitions – are indiscernible by external observation because the intentions of the individual cannot be deduced from her behavior.

Similarly, the mainstream economic literature often analyses within the same movement altruism and gift-giving, which are opposed to selfishness or egoism. Yet altruism is not giving, and there may be gifts without altruism or other-regarding behaviors without "gifts." In addition, these are distinct concepts. Altruism and self-interest are motives (or intentions, or desires, or characteristics of an individual's psychology), while giving is an action, and a gift is the object involved in this action. Motives are situated within individuals' minds and unobservable: the characteristic of "altruism" "within" a mind or the quality of being altruistic for an individual's psychology may not give rise to any action, i.e., a gift. Symmetrically, the giving of a gift, i.e., the observable sharing or redistribution of wealth (as mainstream literature defines "gift") may not derive from any altruistic motive, whereas an observed absence of gift-giving may not stem from any inner psychological quality of selfishness (both can stem from infinite other motives or qualities). The psychological characteristics of an individual cannot be deduced from her observable actions, and vice-versa.

The confusion regarding the concept of gift that is recurrent in mainstream economics may not be surprising, as its definitional criteria for a gift uses the limited concepts that characterize the discipline: e.g., prices, utility, preferences, incentives, resources, supply, demand, etc., with an explicit exclusion of concepts from other social sciences (e.g., sociological or anthropological concepts such as status, group, etc.).³⁷ Mainstream economics thus conflates a great variety of social facts and then subsumes them into the concept of "gift," though these facts may be heterogeneous in terms of mechanisms or functions. For example, some economic studies of "gift" in developing countries may merge phenomena as different as patronage, circuits of social debts, and

37) As famously justified by Edward Lazear, *Economic Imperialism*, Working Paper 7300 (Cambridge MA: NBER, 1999).

obligations across lineages, corruption, mafias, “big men,”³⁸ etc., in unique variations of “gift.”³⁹ All these social facts may have in common a transfer of wealth (a “gift”), but not only do they strongly differ among themselves, they cannot always be equated with the concept of gift, which is only a possible dimension of these facts.

3. 2. Enriching the economic theory of gift with other social sciences

Social science seems to confirm that self-interest is a universal trait of the human mind, a claim that is difficult to refute, even if neurobiology has shown the existence in the human brain of neurons of “empathy” for other humans (“mirror neurons”⁴⁰). The “gift exchange,” which is recurrent in a number of preindustrial societies, shows the difficulty of distinguishing self-interest from altruism.⁴¹ This is an old and complex debate in philosophy. As shown by Kant, one can be honest or generous with another person, but this may not always be a moral act, as it may be produced by a calculus on future returns (e.g., to be liked by the receiver). Altruism can indeed be explained by a variety of tastes and preferences, e.g., a modality wherein an individual derives a high utility from the prosperity of other individuals, which may confirm the assumption of self-interest.

Trust is an example of such form of mutual exchange, and historically, preindustrial societies in Europe embedded economic transactions (e.g., credit) in cascades of trust relationships.⁴² Similarly, anthropology has shown that “gifts” are driven by self-interest and that in preindustrial societies across the world, apparent gifts (redistribution of wealth that an external observer may interpret as a gift) in fact constitute exchanges that expect returns, i.e., reciprocal exchanges. These may consist in goods, persons (e.g., future wives for the next generation), labor, symbols, power (prestige, political power, allegiances), among others.

The expected return may be commensurate with the gift and take place within a finite period, thus displaying a “balanced reciprocity.”⁴³ Gift exchanges may also not have the objective of being commensurate across givers and receivers but rather create debt for the receiving group, which triggers another exchange in return, thus maintaining a general circulation of gifts and debts that grounds the society and binds its members. These flows of gifts and debts involve, in particular, material goods and wives, and exchanges can be temporary or differed across generations; these flows are based on reciprocity and constitute the rationale of all kinship systems, according to a “pendulum” dynamics.⁴⁴ The well-known *potlatch* ceremonies of the Pacific North-West coast of Canada are another example of gifts that are elements of generalized flows of debts between groups and are thus the foundations of the dynamics of social bonds for individuals and groups. In *potlatch*, groups make a spectacular redistribution of their wealth in order to oblige receivers to do the same in a later round and challenge their status, the dynamics of hierarchical relationships between groups being thus main-

38) Marshall D. Sahlins, “Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (April 1963): 285-303.

39) As in Petros Sekeris and Jean-Philippe Platteau, “On the Feasibility of Power and Status Ranking in Traditional Setups,” *Journal of Comparative Economics* 38, no. 3 (2010): 267-82.

40) Stephanie D. Preston and Frans B. M. de Waal, “Empathy: Its Ultimate and Proximate Bases,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 25 (2002): 1-72.

41) Duran Bell, “Modes of Exchange: Gift and Commodity,” *Journal of Socio-Economics* 20, no. 2 (1991): 155-67.

42) Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, Beacon Press, 2001). Originally published 1944.

43) Marshall D. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine, 1972).

44) Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

tained via such agonistic gifts.⁴⁵ The *kula* ring of exchanges across Trobriand Islands is another example.⁴⁶ These “gifts” are compulsory and reciprocal; there is an obligation to give, to receive, and to give again in exchange for the previous gift. Mauss also underscores that such gift exchanges are compatible with markets, e.g., where the goods that are given away are acquired. At the same time – market societies included – not everything is a “valuable,” and there are things “that must be kept,” and not everything can be given or exchanged.⁴⁷

Hence, preindustrial societies, i.e., societies wherein markets do not entirely organize the economy, do not refute mainstream views of self-interested gifts that expect returns. Yet these preindustrial societies highlight some flaws in the assumptions of mainstream economics, notably that the possibility or impossibility of gift may not be related to the existence of markets. Indeed, these non-market societies are based on constant exchanges, which occur both in market and non-market settings (e.g., rituals, ceremonies). Equally, these societies show that contrary to the claims of mainstream economics, it is not selfishness that generates social order; it is, in fact, the social order that shapes individual behavior. A striking example is a series of surveys conducted before and after WWII by psychologists who aimed at testing the “rationality” of peasants in preindustrial societies, by asking for responses to simple syllogisms. None of the peasants could answer the questions because they did not have the social position that allowed them to do so.⁴⁸ In addition, this shows the methodological weakness of the tools that test altruism, reciprocity, and the like, the games and experiments of behavioral economics (even if they are achieved in “natural” contexts and even if they consider “pro-social” behavior) assume that the sole subjects of beliefs or behaviors are solipsistic individuals. The abovementioned peasants were perfectly able cognitively to provide logical answers, but in their answers they wanted to underscore that they were primarily anchored in social groups and hierarchies, and that the provision of such answers was primarily a social act. *Potlatch* similarly expresses compulsory social rules of gifts and debts, which cannot be analyzed with methodological tools that are made for individual behavior. It is not an “individual” who is the “decision-maker.” It is the perception by individuals of their memberships in groups and their positions in hierarchies – fluctuating according to ever-changing situations – which drives their choices and decisions.

Indeed, from an evolutionary perspective, anthropology shows that since the Paleolithic era all societies have defined individuals as group members, this membership defining their “culture”, i.e., beliefs disseminating within this group.⁴⁹ Societies exist prior to the individual and order does not emerge spontaneously. These groups are where the concept of interest can be situated, with the groups calculating and playing games strategically. In preindustrial societies, the units that exchange are groups, and within these groups, individuals exchange according to their place in their group’s hierarchy (age, gender, status, etc.). Groups prevail *ex ante* in the sense that an individual, as soon as he or she comes into existence, is a member of a social group before being an individual (such societies being characterized by “holism”, as opposed to individualism).⁵⁰ (Polanyi, with the concept of “embeddedness”, also defended this anteriority of society.) Group membership can be described as a “core institution.”⁵¹ Moreover, many societies, including “modern” ones, will never conceive of an individual as

45) Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Cohen and West, 1954/1924).

46) Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London: Routledge, 1922).

47) Maurice Godelier, *The Enigma of the Gift* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

48) Pascal Boyer, “Tradition et vérité,” *L’Homme* 26, no. 97-98 (1986): 309–29.

49) Lawrence A. Hirschfeld, “Folksociology and the Cognitive Foundations of Culture,” *Intellectica* 2–3, no. 46–47 (2007): 191–206.

50) Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

51) Alice Nicole Sindzingre, “The Relationships between Institutions and Growth in an Evolutionary Perspective: the Relevance of the Concepts of Membership and Hierarchy,” 24th Annual Conference of the European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy (EAEPE), Krakow, 18–21 October 2012.

autonomous during his or her life cycle (Confucian societies being well-known examples). Equally, for a given individual, there may be a great number of groups, with the boundaries between them varying with circumstances (lineage-, age-, war-, trade-, occupational, territorial groups, etc.). It is the compliance with common rules that defines a group at time t , and an individual may comply with other sets of rules at $t+1$, which will define her membership in another group. Hence the abovementioned flows of gifts follow circuits of exchange between individuals as members of groups and between groups. The social rules that organize these circuits define groups, their hierarchies and boundaries; conversely, social groups imply the existence of rules organizing such circuits.

This key role of groups in social evolution was famously demonstrated half-a-century ago in evolutionary biology by Hamilton's "inclusive fitness" or "kin selection" theory. Among other findings, Hamilton's demonstrations revealed that social behavior generates indirect benefits by enhancing the productivity or survivorship of kin, in particular that altruism among related actors can be selected by evolution;⁵² altruism toward kin can be favored by selection. At the (different) level of social groups, i.e., non-kin-based groups, selection can also favor cooperation between reciprocators, but typically only for small groups.⁵³ Significantly, generous behavior vis-à-vis individuals who are not situated within groups' reciprocal exchanges but outside of them, tends to depend on these individuals' reputation.⁵⁴

In this context, there may be no such thing as a gift given by an individual. François-Régis Mahieu⁵⁵ has thus shown that in these societies human behavior is shaped by circuits of rights regarding other group members (claims on their time, wealth, labor) and symmetrical obligations (debts) towards them, which can be subject to precise calculations, because these circuits constitute the only efficient social protection in environments characterized by scarce and unstable resources. In societies where social protection provided by a third party (e.g., the state via a voluntary contract) does not exist, the only entities able to provide it are the lower, more proximal, levels, i.e., the social groups of which an individual is a member. These circuits of reciprocal rights and obligations stemming from group membership may be viewed as rational devices regarding group members' security. Whatever the infinite variety of cultural rules, compliance by individuals here is rational behavior.⁵⁶ Because of its reliance on methodological individualism, game theory has difficulty in taking into account these calculations, which are induced by contexts of poverty and the absence of the welfare states of industrial economies. This is to say that in poor societies apparent altruism (costly transfers of wealth and time) is an element of strategies of social protection (creation of debts that will require returns when bad times will occur).

Hence the relevant question is: the interest of whom? Gift exchange shaped by what? It has already been argued that the neoclassical framework of general equilibrium has difficulties in explaining the emergence of a social choice only from individual, "sovereign" preferences.⁵⁷ A critical assessment of mainstream theories of gift (i.e., of its impossibility) just shifts the argument. Selfishness and calculations of returns to a "gift" may

52) William Donald Hamilton, "The Evolution of Altruistic Behavior," *The American Naturalist* 97, no. 896 (September-October 1963): 354–56; Andrew F. G. Bourke, "Hamilton's Rule and the Causes of Social Evolution," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 369 (2014): 1–10.

53) Robert Boyd and Peter J. Richerson "Culture and the Evolution of the Human Social Instincts," in *Roots of Human Sociality: Culture, Cognition and Interaction*, ed. Stephen C. Levinson and Nicholas J. Enfield (Oxford: Berg, 2006).

54) Robert Kurzban, Maxwell N. Burton-Chellew, and Stuart A. West, "The Evolution of Altruism in Humans," *Annual Review of Psychology* 66 (2015): 575–99.

55) François-Régis Mahieu, *Les fondements de la crise économique en Afrique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990).

56) Alice Nicole Sindzingre, "Concept and Causation: Issues in the Modelling of Institutions," *Forum for Social Economics* (forthcoming 2017).

57) Claire Pignol, *La théorie de l'équilibre général* (Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2017).

not be refutable. Other social sciences, in particular those that explore preindustrial societies, show that the flaws of mainstream views refer less to the assumption of the universality of self-interest than to the agents of this interest, which are, in fact, groups rather than individuals.

Assuming that groups are the primary units of analysis (“society rules”) and conceptualizing self-interest as an attribute not of individuals but of groups are departures from and a refutation of the framework of mainstream economics on the impossibility of gift. It must be underscored that the concept of group membership cannot be reduced to the observation that society, culture, networks, or interactions with other individuals can determine individual choices. Mainstream economics acknowledges these observations without difficulty, but where *in fine* it is on the individual that agency is bestowed.⁵⁸ It is argued here that individual economic behavior is not autonomous but shaped by social links with others from the day she is born. Membership delineates members and non-members (“we”/“them”) (even if individuals may have many memberships that vary with contexts). At the empirical level, group membership significantly extends the scope of non-market relationships (within and between groups), thus diminishing the scope of the incommensurability put forward by mainstream studies. At the theoretical level, exchanges, be they non reciprocal (such as the popular sense of the one-way gift) or reciprocal (“interested”, “selfish”), are full dimensions of economic behavior of individuals: these individuals are able to act firstly because they belong to groups (in fact many groups), and these exchanges within and between groups crucially maintain the existence and dynamics of these groups.

The above argument has been explored via the example of preindustrial societies, said to be “non-market” societies. Mainstream economics, for its part, refers to market societies, said to be characterized by individualism and impersonal exchanges between individuals.⁵⁹ Arguments drawn from non-market societies would thus be irrelevant for understanding the economies to which mainstream economics refers. This may not be a valid critique, however. First, empirically there have never been “pure” non-market societies; it is a concept, an ideal-type. Second, the “great transformation” from customary exchange to impersonal markets is incomplete.⁶⁰ Market, capitalist, modern societies result from historical transformations and include a great number of mechanisms and norms that are not generated by markets – as was famously shown by Fernand Braudel,⁶¹ who distinguished three layers of time, the *longue durée*, or very long-term geographical time, the economic and social time, and the very short time of politics and events. “Modern” societies are thus also structured in group memberships, the difference being that the latter are situational and multiple (similar to what anthropology has coined as “segmentary” systems) and less determined by birth than by the possession of capital.⁶² Gift-giving may obviously derive from individual decisions, but also from interests that are those of groups wherein individual interests are subservient to collective ones. Examples are numerous of membership groups (people struggling against class exploitation, people aware of climate change, nations, linguistic groupings, etc.) that can form and transform within modern market societies.

58) For example, Alan Kirman and Miriam Teschl, “Searching for Identity in the Capability Space”, *Journal of Economic Methodology* 13, no. 3 (September 2006): 299–325, and John X. Eguia, *Discrimination and Assimilation* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 2015). The author is grateful to the anonymous reviewer for having brought these articles to her attention.

59) Avner Greif, “History Lessons: The Birth of Impersonal Exchange: The Community Responsibility System and Impartial Justice,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 221–36.

60) Avner Offer, “Between the Gift and the Market: The Economy of Regard,” *Economic History Review* 50, no. 3 (August 1997): 450–76.

61) Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996/1949).

62) Alice Nicole Sindzingre and Fabrice Tricou, “Hierarchy, Market and Power in Capitalism: Conceptual Remarks,” 2nd Congress of the French Association for Political Economy (AFEP), Paris, 5–7 July 2012.

4. Conclusion

The criticisms made by heterodox economics against mainstream theories often focus on the entire conceptual framework, e.g., equilibrium, methodological individualism, self-interested individual, utility maximization, among others, arguing, for example, that these are unrealistic or express narrow conceptions of economic behavior. Mainstream economics, however, usually replies with arguments that dismiss heterodox criticisms, arguing, for example, that models do not aim at realism.

Through an analysis of gift supported by contributions from other social sciences, this paper has tried to explore another modality of critique of mainstream economics, which has separated the latter's various assumptions. The argument is that this separation may constitute a more powerful criticism. Indeed, the paper has shown that one of the assumptions of the mainstream framework, i.e., that of self-interested individuals, can be difficult to refute in view of the recurrence of gift exchanges across societies. The paper has therefore not rejected this assumption but has demonstrated that the agents of such "interest" are social groups instead of individuals, contrary to the claims of the mainstream framework. Such criticism weakens the methodology used by mainstream studies, which are usually based on solipsistic games and experiments, and further weakens their assumptions within their own framework.

Bibliography:

- Akerlof, George A. "Labor Contracts as Partial Gift Exchange." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 97, no. 4 (November 1982): 543–69.
- Arrow, Kenneth J. "Optimal and Voluntary Income Distribution." In *Economic Welfare and the Economics of Soviet Socialism: Essays in Honor of Abram Bergson*, edited by Steven Rosefielde, 267–88. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Arrow, Kenneth J. "Gifts and Exchanges." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1972): 343–62.
- Arrow, Kenneth J. *Social Choice and Individual Values*. 3rd ed. Cowles Foundation Monographs Series No. 12. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Bandiera, Oriana, and Imran Rasul. "Social Networks and Technology Adoption in Northern Mozambique." *Economic Journal* 116, no. 514 (October 2006): 869–902.
- Bardsley Nicholas, and Robert Sugden "Human Nature and Sociality in Economics." In *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism and Reciprocity*, Vol. 1, edited by Serge-Christophe Kolm and Jean Mercier Ythier. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006.
- Becker, Gary S. "Altruism, Egoism and Genetic Fitness: Economics and Socio-Biology." *Journal of Economic Literature* 14, no. 3 (September 1976): 817–26.
- Becker, Gary S. "A Theory of Social Interactions." *Journal of Political Economy* 82, no. 6 (November-December 1974): 1063–93.
- Bell, Duran. "Modes of Exchange: Gift and Commodity." *Journal of Socio-Economics* 20, no. 2 (1991): 155–67.
- Bourke, Andrew F. G. "Hamilton's Rule and the Causes of Social Evolution." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 369 (2014): 1–10.
- Bowles, Samuel, and Herbert Gintis. *The Moral Economy of Communities: Structured Populations and the Evolution of Pro-Social Norms* (mimeo) Amherst: University of Massachusetts, Department of Economics, 1997.
- Boyer, Pascal. "Tradition et vérité." *L'Homme* 26, no. 97–98 (1986): 309–29.
- Boyd, Robert and Peter J. Richerson "Culture and the Evolution of the Human Social Instincts." In *Roots of Human Sociality: Culture, Cognition and Interaction*, edited by Stephen C. Levinson and Nicholas J. Enfield. Oxford: Berg, 2006.
- Braudel, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996/1949.
- Camerer, Colin F., and Ernst Fehr. "When Does 'Economic Man' Dominate Social Behavior?" *Science* 311 (6 January 2006): 47–52.
- Carpenter, Jeffrey. *The Sequencing of Gift Exchange: A Field Trial*, Discussion Paper 10736. Bonn: IZA-Institute of Labor Economics, 2017.
- Deaton, Angus. *Instruments of Development: Randomization in the Tropics, and the Search for the Elusive Keys to Economic Development*. Working Paper 14690. Cambridge, MA: NBER, 2009.

- Dumont, Louis. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Eguia, John X. *Discrimination and Assimilation*. East Lansing: Michigan State University, 2015.
- Fafchamps, Marcel. "Ethnicity and Credit in African Manufacturing." *Journal of Development Economics* 61, no. 1 (2000): 205-35.
- Falk, Armin. "Gift Exchange in the Field." *Econometrica* 75, no. 5 (September 2007): 1501-11.
- Fehr, Ernst, and Simon Gächter. "Altruistic Punishment in Humans." *Nature* 415 (10 January 2002): 137-40.
- Fehr, Ernst, and Simon Gächter. "Cooperation and Punishment in Public Goods Experiments." *American Economic Review* 90, no. 4 (September 2000): 980-94.
- Fehr, Ernst, and Klaus M. Schmidt, "The Economics of Fairness, Reciprocity and Altruism: Experimental Evidence and New Theories." In *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism and Reciprocity*, Vol. 1, edited by Serge-Christophe Kolm and Jean Mercier Ythier. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006.
- Fong, Christina, Samuel Bowles, and Herbert Gintis, "Strong Reciprocity and the Welfare State." In *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism and Reciprocity*, Vol. 2, edited by Serge-Christophe Kolm and Jean Mercier Ythier, 1439-64. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006.
- Friedman, Milton. "The Methodology of Positive Economics." In *Essays in Positive Economics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953, 3-43.
- Fudenberg, Drew. "Advancing Beyond Advances in Behavioral Economics." *Journal of Economic Literature* 44, no. 3 (September 2006): 694-711.
- Gintis, Herbert, et al. "Moral Sentiments and Material Interests: Origins, Evidence, and Consequences." In *Moral Sentiments and Material Interests: The Foundations of Cooperation in Economic Life* edited by Herbert Gintis, et al. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005.
- Godelier, Maurice. *The Enigma of the Gift*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Greif, Avner. "Cultural Beliefs and the Organization of Society: A Historical and Theoretical Reflection on Collectivist and Individualist Societies." *Journal of Political Economy* 102, no. 5 (October 1994): 912-50.
- Greif, Avner. "History Lessons: The Birth of Impersonal Exchange: The Community Responsibility System and Impartial Justice." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 221-36.
- Hamilton, William Donald. "The Evolution of Altruistic Behavior," *The American Naturalist* 97, no. 896 (September-October 1963): 354-56.
- Henrich, Joseph, et al., eds., *Foundations of Human Sociality: Economic Experiments and Ethnographic Evidence from Fifteen Small-Scale Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Hirschfeld, Lawrence A. "Folksociology and the Cognitive Foundations of Culture." *Intellectica* 2-3, no. 46-47 (2007): 191-206.
- Hoff, Karla, and Arijit Sen "The Kin System as a Poverty Trap?" In *Poverty Traps*, edited by Samuel Bowles, Steven N. Durlauf, and Karla Hoff. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Kahneman, Daniel, Jack L. Knetsch, and Richard H. Thaler. "Fairness and the Assumptions of Economics." *Journal of Business* 59, no. 4, part 2 (1986): 285-300.

- Kirman, Alan, and Miriam Teschl. "Searching for Identity in the Capability Space." *Journal of Economic Methodology* 13, no. 3 (September 2006): 299–325.
- Kurzban, Robert, Maxwell N. Burton-Chellew, and Stuart A. West. "The Evolution of Altruism in Humans," *Annual Review of Psychology* 66 (2015): 575–99.
- Lazear, Edward. *Economic Imperialism*, Working Paper 7300. Cambridge MA: NBER, 1999.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
- Mahieu, François-Régis. *Les fondements de la crise économique en Afrique*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge, 1922.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London: Cohen and West, 1954/1924.
- Offer, Avner. "Between the Gift and the Market: The Economy of Regard." *Economic History Review* 50, no. 3 (August 1997): 450–76.
- Ostrom, Elinor. "Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 137–58.
- Ostrom, Elinor. "Policies That Crowd Out Reciprocity and Collective Action." In *Moral Sentiments and Material Interests: The Foundations of Cooperation in Economic Life*, edited by Herbert Gintis, et al., 253–75. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005.
- Pignol, Claire. *La théorie de l'équilibre general*. Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2017.
- Platteau, Jean-Philippe. *Institutions, Social Norms and Economic Development*. London: Routledge and Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000.
- Platteau, Jean-Philippe. *Traditional Sharing Norms as an Obstacle to Economic Growth in Tribal Societies*. Cahier de recherche de la faculté des sciences économiques et sociales 173. Namur: Centre de Recherche en Economie du Développement, 1996.
- Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press, Beacon Press, 2001.
- Preston, Stephanie D., and Frans B. M. de Waal. "Empathy: Its Ultimate and Proximate Bases." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 25 (2002): 1–72.
- Rabin, Matthew. "Psychology and Economics." *Journal of Economic Literature* 36 (March 1998): 11–46.
- Sahlins, Marshall D. "Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 5, no. 3 (April 1963): 285–303.
- Sahlins, Marshall D. *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago: Aldine, 1972.
- Sekeris, Petros and Jean-Philippe Platteau. "On the Feasibility of Power and Status Ranking in Traditional Setups." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 38, no. 3 (2010): 267–82.
- Sindzingre, Alice Nicole. "Concept and Causation: Issues in the Modelling of Institutions," *Forum for Social Economics* (forthcoming 2017).

Sindzingre, Alice Nicole and Fabrice Tricou. "Hierarchy, Market and Power in Capitalism: Conceptual Remarks." 2nd Congress of the French Association for Political Economy (AFEP), Paris, 5–7 July 2012.

Sindzingre, Alice Nicole. "The Relationships between Institutions and Growth in an Evolutionary Perspective: the Relevance of the Concepts of Membership and Hierarchy." 24th Annual Conference of the European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy (EAEPE), Krakow, 18–21 October 2012.

Stiglitz, Joseph E. "Markets, Market Failures and Development." *American Economic Review* 79, no. 2 (May 1989): 197–203.

Sugden, Robert. "On the Economics of Philanthropy." *Economic Journal* 92, no. 366 (June 1982): 341–50.

Sugden, Robert. "Spontaneous Order." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 3, no. 4 (Autumn 1989): 85–97.

Sugden, Robert. "The Supply of Public Goods through Voluntary Contributions." *Economic Journal* 94, no. 376 (December 1984): 772–87.

World Bank, *World Development Report: Mind, Society, and Behavior*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015.

Ythier, Jean Mercier. "The Economic Theory of Gift-Giving: Perfect Substitutability of Transfers and Redistribution of Wealth." In *Handbook of the Economics of Giving, Altruism and Reciprocity*, vol. 1, edited by Serge-Christophe Kolm and Jean Mercier Ythier), 230–31. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006.