THE *HAU* OF THE GIFT IN ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT

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Introduction

Ethnocentricity is always a problem for the ethnographer. So also is a superficial or too narrow focus on a particular feature. Dealing with secondary sources adds further to the difficulties of reaching a clear view. These handicaps are all involved in the attempt of Marcel Mauss to use a single element of Maori culture, the notion of *hau* as it is involved in gift exchange, in building a "general theory of obligation" (Mauss 1952:10). He interprets *hau* of the gift as "spirit" of the gift. In this paper I argue that his isolation of *hau* and neglect of other cultural factors involved led him to personify *hau* and credit it with too much importance.

Marcel Mauss's *Essay on the Gift* has been described as "his own gift to the ages" (Sahlins 1974: 149), a "valuable analysis" (Firth 1959:418), an "influential essay" (MacCormack 1976:97), and the "relapse of Mauss" (Panoff, in McCall 1982:303). Yet it also provoked these writers to dissect Mauss's interpretation and then attempt to reconstruct the "true" meaning of *hau* themselves. However, these attempts have been largely reworkings of the same limited data.

While dependence on secondary sources is unavoidable in reassessing the meaning of *hau,* the problems of ethnocentricity, narrow focus, and consequent distorted interpretations can be reduced by placing the discussion in a much broader cultural context. This is the basis of my

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approach in reassessing the meaning of the *hau* of the gift. For it is only in relation to other notions such as *mauri, mana, tapu,* and *utu* that the qualities of *hau* and their joint effects on exchange become evident. But although Mauss's conclusions were distorted by his overriding objective and the narrow context of his analysis, it also becomes evident that he was moving in the right direction.

So my approach takes a view wider than simply reexamining Mauss's argument and the Maori texts of Tamati Ranapiri, which were drawn upon by Mauss and his critics. I also attempt to understand *hau* in the wider context of the old Maori worldview, particularly its interrelationship with both the social aspects of property ownership and exchange obligations, as well as the sacred dimensions of *mana* (supernatural power) and *tapu* (sacred sanction, with potential for *mana).* In particular this involves a review of Firth's description of such aspects of Maori life in his *Economics of the New Zealand Maori* (1959). Attention is also given to Weiner's sharper examination of the type of gifts for which *hau* is significant (1985), as well as the contributions by Shirres (1982), Salmond (1978), and others to understanding aspects of the Maori worldview. An important consideration involves the Maori understanding of possessions as integral extensions of their owner.

But to reach a clearer understanding of *hau,* a number of confusions need to be tackled as well. For confusions exist in writings on *hau,* particularly regarding its relation to *mauri* (life principle) and the nuances involved in the relation of both *mauri* and *hau* to persons, to the forest, and to valuable possessions *(taonga).* I attempt to shed some light on the fine distinctions involved and the close relationships of *hau* and *mauri* to *mana* and *tapu.* Then, in that context, I examine the close link between *hau* and *utu* (recompense), and their impact in mediating a balance of *tapu* and *mana.*

The "Spirit of the Gift"

The term "spirit of the gift" derives from the answer that Mauss found to his own two questions: "In primitive or archaic types of society what is the principle whereby a gift received has to be repaid? What force is there in the thing given which compels the recipient to make a return?" (Mauss 1952:l). The second question implies an assumption that the "force of return" is to be found in the "thing given." This assumption lends itself to Mauss's interest in forming a "general theory of obligation" whereas the first question alone leads more to the particular human and cultural elements enforcing a return. It is the argument of

this paper that the "force of return" does not lie in *hau* alone but in the interacting impact of several notions upon social relations.

Mauss's answer is derived from a Maori text by Tamati Ranapiri,[1] an informant of the ethnographer Elsdon Best. In this text Ranapiri was explaining a basic principle of gift exchange in order to elucidate another text in which he explains the operation of an increase ritual for forest game[2] (cf. MacCormack 1982:289-291). He describes the passing of a gift *(taonga)* among three people. The first person gives it to the second, who later makes a gift of it to a third person. The third person then makes a return gift to the second person, who is then obligated to pass it on to the first person because it is the *hau* of the first gift. Mauss translated the *hau* of the gift as the "spirit" of the gift, and on this translation and his interpretation of it hang the whole debate.

Mauss then went on to interpret this "spirit" as a "spiritual power" that is a part of the personality of the giver and that has an impulse to return to its place of origin. In this way Mauss saw *hau* as the force of the obligation to reciprocate: "The obligation attached to a gift itself is not inert. Even when abandoned by the giver, it still forms a part of him" (Mauss 1952:9). Moreover, he continued, this "spiritual power" that travels with the gift enables the original giver to have a hold over the recipient to insure that the giver is reciprocated. For the *hau* animates the gift and "pursues" the one who holds it no matter how many times it is passed on. "The *hau* wants to return to the place of its birth, to its sanctuary of forest and clan and to its owner" (Mauss 1952:9). So Mauss viewed the *hau* of a gift as an inseparable part of the owner's personality--"to give something is to give a part of oneself' and the recipient "receives a part of someone's spiritual essence." Holding this essence of another person is dangerous, wrote Mauss, and "it retains a magical and religious hold over the recipient" (Mauss 1952: 10). Somewhat confusingly, though, he also described the *hau* as "itself a kind of individual" that gives impetus to a continuing "obligatory circulation of wealth, tribute and gifts in Samoa and New Zealand" (Mauss 1952: 10).

It is important to note here Weiner's point that Mauss was aware that a particular kind of gift was involved: *hau* was to be found only in those classified as *taonga* or valuable (Weiner 1985:215). However, Weiner accepts Mauss's personification of *hau* and explains the sense in which a *taonga* is part of a person: "in the sense that the *taonga* is the material document of its owner's ancestral past and is itself the carrier of *had* (Weiner 1985:223). Mauss, though, described *taonga* as carriers of *mana,* as valuable objects such as "emblems, charms, mats and sacred idols," and as "closely attached to the individual, the clan and the land;

they are the vehicle of their *mana*--magical, religious and spiritual power" (Mauss 1952:8). The importance of a wider context of related notions is indicated here in the mention of *mana.* But neither Mauss nor Weiner takes up the apparent link between *mana* and *hau*. Weiner, however, takes up Mauss's description of such items as *"immeuble"* or inalienable. Only certain classes of *taonga* could circulate and then, "the affective qualities constituting the giver's social and political identity remain embedded in the objects so that when given to others the objects create an emotional lien upon the receivers" (Weiner 1985:212).

Various Critiques

The edifice that Mauss built on his interpretation of *hau* has been vigorously shaken, notably by Firth. Firth argues that Mauss has ascribed to *hau* "qualities with which it is not really endowed" (Firth 1959:419) and that the text of Ranapiri does not support ascribing a personality to *hau* that unremittingly strives to return to its source. He also argues that *hau* is not the agent of punishment for failure to reciprocate. He gives evidence that this was instigated by witchcraft (Firth 1959:419).

Gathercole maintains that the *hau* of persons is distinct from the *hau* of things (Gathercole 1978:338). Mauss, however, appears to merge them into one and does not make it clear how this *hau* or "spiritual power" of the first gift is transferred to the different gift by which it returns to its source. Sahlins initially reduces *hau* to an economic principle; that is, it represents the "yield" on a gift that should be returned to the original giver (Sahlins 1974: 157). *Hau* is thus the original value of the gift plus the "profit" it produces. However, this argument does not agree with the text describing the *hau* of the forest (see n. 2), for only a small portion of the increase of game produced by the ritual is returned to the forest as an offering to the priests. Later Sahlins attempts to modify his secular emphasis by acknowledging that *hau* is a spiritual quality "uniquely associated with fecundity" (Sahlins 1974: 167). Yet he is left with a dual interpretation: "the *hau* of the forest is its fecundity, as the *hau* of the gift is its material yield' (Sahlins 1974168). The former he describes as "spiritual quality" while the latter is the "mundane context of exchange." While he suggests that his varying interpretations are viewed by the Maori as a "total concept" (Sahlins 1974: 168), his analysis does not bring them together in an integrated way. In particular, as Weiner has noted (Weiner 1985:221), Sahlins neglects the significance of the qualities of *taonga* and their association with *hau* and *mana.*

Also unsatisfactory is McCall's attempt to demystify ***hau*** by declaring

it a "popular metaphor" and then giving it a highly abstract meaning: "integrity, in the sense of wholeness, association, even boundedness. By association I mean more than mere sociation, but demonstrated, visible, and seemingly mutual commitment" (McCall 1982:303-304). While the sense of wholeness is important, it needs to be spelled out more concretely in relation to other worldview notions rather than being presented as an alien abstraction that swallows up the concreteness of *hau,* obscures its variety, and negates its religious associations. Salmond more effectively presents the sense of wholeness by placing *hau* in the context of her discussion of the balancing of opposites in ritual transactions (Salmond 1978: 116).

Maori Worldview

Much of the unsatisfactory nature of the debate stems from Westerners' ethnocentric separation of spiritual and secular realms. However, the Maori culture in question was part of the presecularized world in which sacred and secular dimensions were not separated. Rather, the secular was imbued with the sacred and vice versa. To understand *hau* as the Maori did, it is essential to place it in the context of this worldview.

This integration of sacred and secular can be seen in the links between the practices of ownership and exchange on the one hand and the notions of *tapu* (sanction or potential for sacred power) and *mana* (prestige or sacred power) on the other. With an understanding of these links the notion of *hau* can be understood better. Hence I will now review the apparently secular practices of ownership and exchange, and then examine the impact of *mana* and *tapu* upon them.

Individual Ownership of Property

Firth makes it clear that "a system of very definite individual rights obtained' over movable property (Firth 1959:340-343). He draws on the evidence of Colenso, who stressed the individualistic aspect of Maori ownership. The type of goods held as personal property included utilitarian items for digging, fishing, hunting, cooking, and weaving, as well as clothing, body ornaments, and a few prized articles. Game and fish caught on solitary expeditions were considered the property of the hunter, although they were incorporated into the family food supply.

Such personal property was acquired either by collecting or manufacturing, or by exchange or inheritance. Individual ownership rights were respected by others and unauthorized removal could be severely pun-

ished. Borrowing was freely practiced, but under definite guidelines including an obligation to recompense the owner for the loan (Firth 1959:343-344). However, Firth indicates that individual ownership was qualified by the superior right of the community to use such goods for a wider need (Firth 1959:356).

Communal Ownership of Property

Some material items met group needs and were owned communally. The most important was the house *(whare),* which was generally owned and occupied by members of an extended family *(whanau)* (Firth 1959:349-350). The basis of communal ownership appears to have been the size of the appropriate user group together with kinship associations. Thus a small eel weir could belong to a single *whanau* while a large eel weir or a meeting house, which required the labor of the whole village for its construction, was regarded as the property of the village group *(hapu)* (Firth 1959:350-353).

Taonga, which Firth describes as valued heirlooms, were held by members of chiefly families and were inherited by sons or the nearest male relatives. However, those items with wider significance were also regarded as tribal property held in trust by the chief. Firth notes that these could be freely circulated among families of rank but tended to be returned eventually to the family of the original owners (Firth 1959:353-356). Weiner observes that Firth does not fully appreciate the value of *taonga* and merely distinguishes them by associations of sentiment (Weiner 1985:220-221). Instead they are carriers of family history, which "are considered to be filled with much *mana* and are therefore treated with extreme care" (Irwin 1984:20).

Maori Exchange

Exchange operated within the principle of recompense or reprisal called *utu* that applied to repayment of both good and evil. Exchange operated in concord with the individual ownership of property, even when differences of rank were involved. Drawing on Colenso, Firth gives the example of a man of middle or lower rank who had caught fish or snared birds. While these were his own property, he dare not refuse a request for them by his superior chief. However, this was not simply appropriation by might but occurred within the system of exchange: "since by custom such a gift was sure to be repaid with interest it was readily yielded" (Firth 1959: 340). An interplay of the obligation to

repay with the necessity to maintain prestige by a generous return could also be expected (Firth 1959:298).

Firth distinguishes two broad classifications of the types of exchange: economic exchange with a focus on the practical utility of goods and ceremonial exchange involving a wider social purpose. Within communities exchange was limited mainly to exchanges with craft specialists and for services of magic or curing illness. Extracommunal exchanges were more frequent and appeared to fit mainly into Sahlins's category of balanced exchange, although seasonal factors caused some delays in repayment. The interests here were to obtain different economic resources, particularly between the coast and inland, and to acquire the prized greenstone (Firth 1959:402-409).

Several principles of exchange can be drawn from Firth's description. First, "every exchange was made after the manner of *gift and counter-gift"* (Firth 1959:409). He stresses that barter or set values were not involved but a hint was frequently given of what was desired in return if expectations were not clear. Then the principle of *utu* (recompense) applied: for *"every gift another of at least equal value should be returned"* (Firth 1959:412-413; his emphases). These principles are relevant to Ranapiri's text where he stressed "you give it to me without price. We do not bargain over it" (Mauss 1952:9). Biggs translated this as: "We have no agreement about payment" (see n. 1). On this point Gathercole draws attention to the often unclear boundaries between Maori and European conceptual ideas and the need to clarify Maori concepts in distinction from European ones (Gathercole 1978:337). From the Maori point of view Ranapiri was stressing that Maori exchange was different from the European market system, but it should not be taken that he was denying the *expectation* of a return gift. In fact Ranapiri used the word *utu* for the repayment decided upon by the second recipient. The introduction of a second recipient serves to emphasize that the first recipient has not lost the obligation to reciprocate, and that it is dangerous for *hau* to remain deflected from the original giver. Ranapiri said, "I will become *mate"* (sick).

Firth describes another important aspect of Maori exchange in relation to a delay in reciprocity. In this case "the second gift was often made larger than the first" (Firth 1959:422). He relates this feature to the tendency not to skimp on the return but to be generous, even lavish, in an attempt to fulfill the obligation. Such liberality contributes to prestige and standing in the community, and so *utu* has a positive impetus to it. Firth's description indicates that there was social value in a "return with interest," although he also points out that there was a

strong undercurrent of self-interest that prompted an insistence on reciprocity (Firth 1959:423). These generous economic aspects of social prestige are distinct from, but undergird and reaffirm, the sacred dimension of prestige that is derived from the notion of *mana.* The possession of *mana* or "psychic power" also establishes social prestige (Firth 1959:255).

This somewhat pragmatic approach to ownership and exchange now needs to be viewed in the context of the overarching aspects of the Maori worldview. Key notions in this worldview are *tapu* and *mana,* and the practice of *tapatapa* is also relevant.

The Notions of Tapu *and* Mana

Firth approaches the notion of *tapu* in terms of Maori behavior toward *tapu* objects, that is: "Any person or thing which was regarded as *tapu* was only to be approached or handled with caution, and under certain rigidly delimited conditions. Otherwise harm was believed to occur. For the ordinary villager things *tapu* were to be avoided" (Firth 1959:246). But Firth does not address the way an object becomes *tapu* other than to say, "since the *tapu* is thought to receive its virtue and power from the gods, it has come to be accepted in many cases as a synonym for 'sacred' " (Firth 1959:246).

This "protective sacredness" of *tapu* is better understood when its close link with *mana* is recognized. Michael Shirres elaborates on this link in a study of three Maori documents and defines *tapu* as "being with potentiality for power" (Shirres 1982:46), that is, the power of *mana.* An object or person is possibly dangerous or *tapu* because of the possession of *mana* in itself or by extension; for example, the personal *tapu* of chiefs could be extended to their personal property (Shirres 1982:37-38). This is shown by the practice of *tapatapa,* which is discussed below.

Irwin defines *mana* as "a supernatural force said to be in a person, place, object or spirit. It is commonly understood as prestige, status or authority--although the status is derived from possessing *mana"* (Irwin 1984:23). *Mana* is beneficial to the rightful possessor, but is dangerous to others without the control or protective shielding of *tapu.* Hence *mana* and *tapu* are integrally linked. A breach of *tapu* renders a person liable to sickness or death from uncontrolled *mana* unless a ritual of purification can be performed to render the person *noa* (ordinary, free from *tapu).* The severity of the "infection" is related to the strength of *mana* in a person or object. Also, *mana* could be imparted from a person to "inanimate objects such as ornaments and hand weapons, espe-

cially when made of greenstone or whalebone" (Irwin 1984:22), or to a *kumara* (sweet potato) as talisman of a crop, or to an object such as a boundary marker.

So, with the notion of *tapu* "goes the notion of awe and sacredness, which commands both respect and fear and which calls for a separation, a keeping apart, from this being with all its dynamic potential for power" (Shirres 1982:46). Furthermore Shirres identifies six occurrences of intrinsic *tapu,* derived from the six children of Rangi and Papa, the heavens and the earth. "These *atua,* 'spiritual powers', are identified with each of the basic Maori categories of beings and all things begin from them" (Shirres 1982:38). The six are Tangaroa (the fish), Rongo-maa-Taane (the *kumara),* Haumia-tiketike (the edible fernroot), Taane-matauenga (the trees and birds), Taawhiri-maa-tea (the wind), and Tuu-matauenga (man). Shirres states: "Each section of creation has its own spiritual power which is its ancestor, *tupuna,* and its source of *tapu* and *mana"* (Shirres 1982:48). Consequently, any breach of *tapu* is a disregard for this spiritual power (or "god") and the transgressor is presumably opened to the destructiveness of its exposed *mana* or spiritual power. Human *mana* and *tapu* are gained by inheritance (Shirres 1982:39) and the closer the link to the ancestors, the higher is the rank and the power of personal *mana* and *tapu.* Hence the chief and his belongings were highly sacrosanct. Things and events are not *tapu* in themselves, says Shirres, but are *tapu* according to their association with or extension from one of the intrinsic *tapu.* Clashes of *tapu* with *tapu,* and of *mana* with *mana,* are of central concern to Maori public ritual (Shirres 1982:41-43).

It follows that *tapu* and *mana* were pervading factors in social life. Firth describes the great influence of *tapu* in economic life: "The *tapu* was most concerned with natural resources, the highly valued cultural objects, and man himself" (Firth 1959:247). *Tapu* lay upon the forest, its trees, products and wildlife, material culture accessories in proportion to their "social value" (e.g., large canoes and nets), and upon individuals. Firth quotes Best's observation: "*Tapu* and *makutu* (witchcraft) are practically the laws of Maoridom. Property, crops, fish, birds, etc. were protected by them" (Firth 1959:249). These descriptions of *tapu* and *mana* indicate their constraining impact on economic and social life in both positive and negative ways. The productiveness of the environment was related to the observance of *tapu* sanctions, and both protective and productive rituals were practiced to ensure fertility and harmony in the environment. Hence economic and social activities had both pragmatic and religious dimensions that cannot be separated,

Now it might be assumed from this discussion that the relation of

objects to people was simply a matter of pragmatic individual ownership, and that the notions such as *tapu, mana,* and *hau* formed a "sacred umbrella" to ensure harmonious relations between people. However, a practice called *tapatapa* suggests that individual ownership of things had its own sacred dimension.

The Implications of Tapatapa

Firth describes the essence of the custom of *tapatapa* as a means that a chief could use to bring "a desired article into association with himself' (Firth 1959:345) and isolate it for his own use. To do this, a chief could "call the desired object by his own name, or refer to it as being a part of his body, when, if the property of any persons of his own or a friendly tribe, it would be at once handed over to him" (Firth 1959:345). Firth gives an example of a chief desiring a canoe who called out: "That canoe which separates off in front of the others is my backbone." He had named the canoe after the most *tapu* part of his body and none would dare retain it, for the canoe was now infected with his *tapu.* The chief, of course, was bound by obligation to reciprocate with an adequate return.

While this practice could only be employed by a chief with sufficient *mana* and *tapu* to support his actions, it does suggest a general view among the Maoris that personal possessions were in some sense an extension of the owner and were protected by his personal *tapu.* This is supported by Shirres's description of the extension of *tapu* to other objects and events (Shirres 1982:36-42), as noted above.

Before relating *hau* to *tapu* and *mana,* it is necessary first to discuss *hau's* distinction from the closely related notion of *mauri.*

The Notions of Mauri *and* Hau

Unfortunately the literature on the fine distinctions between *mauri* and *hau* in sparse, conflicting, and inconclusive. Williams glosses *mauri* as: "1. life principle, thymos of man . . . 2. source of the emotions . . . 3. talisman, a material symbol of the hidden principle protecting vitality, mana, fruitfulness, etc." (Williams 1971:197). Salmond, following Williams, lists a range of meanings for *hau:* "vitality of man, land"; "return present for one received'; "strike, smite"; "food offered to *atua* in propitiatory rites" (Salmond 1978:17). But much of the confusion lies in distinguishing the *mauri* and *hau* of persons and the forest, and the *hau* of *taonga* (valuable possessions). I suggest the following working glosses:

mauri of a person:	life principle, i.e., as a living organism
hau of a person:	living breath, vitality, capacity for activity, personality (cf. Gathercole 1978: 338)
mauri of the forest:	1. life principle, i.e., as a productive environment; 2. material symbol of *mauri* (stone, tree, feather, etc.) (Irwin 1984 : 62-63)
hau of the forest:	fecundity, vitality evidenced by productivity (Best, in Gathercole 1978:335)
hau of *taonga:*	Salmond glosses this simply as "return present for one received" (Salmond 1978: 17). An underlying gloss could be: its vitality as a vehicle of *mana.*

It is evident from the text translated by Best on the *hau* of the forest (see n. 2) that *mauri* and *hau* are closely linked: "It is the *mauri* that causes birds to be abundant in the forest, that they may be slain and taken by man. . . . offerings should be made to the *hau* of the forest." Best came to the conclusion that the *hau* and the *mauri* of the forest were the same (quoted in Gathercole 1978:338), but the text appears to uphold the working glosses above. The birds taken are "an equivalent for that important item, the *mauri"* (the material talisman representing the productive environment), but the offering is to the "*hau* of the forest products" (a recompense for productivity), so that both *hau* and *mauri* "may return to the forest--that is, to the *mauri,*" i.e., the talisman represents both of them.

Irwin also describes the forest *mauri* as "the mauri of Tane" (Irwin 1984:62), the god of the forest. A cover of *tapu* restrictions applied to the forest and any abuse of *mauri* would no doubt also breach *tapu* and expose the *mana* of Tane (cf. Firth 1959:225). So, as Irwin suggests, the *mauri* could also be said to represent the *mana* of the forest (Irwin 1984:63). Fertility and productivity of the forest depended on the maintenance of *mauri,* and hence *hau,* intact and unharmed (Firth 1959:255).

Best distinguishes between the *mauri* and *hau* of persons, but also says that in some ways "the *mauri* of a person resembles the *hau,* which latter is the very essence of vitality. If a person's *hau* be taken and brought under the influence of black magic, then death comes swift and certain" (Best, in Gathercole 1978:335). He also indicates that a material part of a person can represent the hau--for example, clothing, hair, or spittle. In such a manner the heart or other part of the first enemy

slain in battle "was taken as representing the *hau* of the enemy--that is, his vital power--and was offered to the gods" (Best 1924:241). Again it is clear that the well-being of the person is considered dependent upon the maintenance and integrity of the person's *hau.* As with the *hau* of the forest, it can also be assumed that a person's *mana* is closely linked to *mauri* and *hau.* Any loss of the latter would infringe on the *tapu* protecting a person's *mana.*

Now to consider the *hau* of a valuable gift *(taonga),* this also can be seen to be closely linked to the *mana* of the giver when the valued possession is seen to be an extension of the person, containing *mana* of the giver and infected with his *tapu.* The *hau* of the gift, then, can be understood as the gift's vitality as a bearer of the *mana* of its owner. It follows then that the giving of *taonga,* with its *hau* or vitality deriving from the giver's *mana,* requires a compensatory return or replacement to balance the giver's *mana.* The *hau* of the original gift may be returned by the same gift or by a replacement gift. Here Ranapiri's statement makes sense, "that valuable which was given to me [as repayment], that is the *hau* of the valuable which was given to me before."

This process now points to a clear link between *hau* and *utu,* the principle of compensation.

Hau *and* Utu

As already discussed, *utu,* in relation to exchange, required a return gift of at least equal value and preferably of greater value than the original gift. Likewise, the output of *hau* (bearing *mana)* required that compensatory return be made to maintain balance or harmony. In other words, both the notions of *hau* and *utu* provided impetus for a gift to be returned or replaced by an equivalent.

In her "Semantic Approach to the Traditional Maori Cosmos," Salmond includes both *utu* and *hau* in an interesting treatment of the threshold or liminal zone mediating between the main oppositions she draws--particularly between *ora* (life) and *mate* (death), and between *tapu* and *noa* (free of *tapu)* (Salmond 1978: 15-17). (Following Shirres's comments, *utu* and *hau* can also be taken as mediating between opposing *tapus* or extensions of *tapu* [Shirres 1982:49].) "In the threshold zone," says Salmond, "the preoccupation is with balance" (Salmond 1978:16). Imbalance or "attack' may be caused by violence, magic, or gift. Then the "knack of coming out on the right side of such transactions . . . is expressed *as mana"* (Salmond 1978: 17).

Gathercole also makes a useful correlation of *utu* and *hau,* seeing *utu*

as providing a positive impetus and *hau* a negative one. "*Utu* was a positive principle which galvanised relationships of reciprocation, even that of revenge. *Hau* helped to shape the character of *utu* because it was, in this context, the reverse of positive. It was here a negative phenomenon, possibly dangerous because it might precipitate the action of witchcraft" (Gathercole 1978:339).

This point clearly supports the picture that *hau* alone was not the prime factor in Maori exchange, but was one of several interrelated aspects of the Maori worldview that impinged upon the social practices of exchange. *Utu* can be understood to have positive impact in the maintenance of the *mana* of participants in economic exchanges, while *hau* has negative impact in the avoidance of misfortune that would arise from breach of the *tapu* associated with *taonga* in ceremonial exchanges.

Hau, Tapu *and* Mana

So if *hau*, like *mauri*, is seen in conjunction with *tapu* and *mana*, then Mauss's description of the impulse of *hau* as the "spirit of the gift" to return to its source can be understood without having to overpersonify it. *Hau*, as the vitality of the forest or of a gift and as the bearer or safeguard of *mana* that must be kept in balance, requires some compensation for the productivity that issues from it. Hence a sample offering of birds was made as a return of *hau* to the forest, and a gift or its equivalent had to be returned to the giver. Failure to make such compensation was an infringement of *tapu* and retribution would follow, for example, by physical violence, witchcraft, or by unnatural accident or illness. While the *hau* of a gift and the *hau* of the giver are closely associated, Mauss made the error of merging the two, not discerning that the real link between the two was the *mana* of the giver. Nevertheless he had the right idea in his understanding that an outflow of *hau* had to be compensated for by a return. In his discussion of the northwest American Indian potlatch, Mauss expounds this pattern of return in terms of three obligations--to give, to receive, and to repay (Mauss 1952:37-41). But this pattern is embodied in the Maori understanding of *utu* as much as in *hau*.

The Gift as Extension of the Owner

So we have come full circle to Mauss, who clearly had such notions in mind--"to give something is to give a part of oneself." However, he

overstated his case by personifying the *hau* of the gift and merging it with the *hau* of the giver. But his intention is clearer and can be accepted when the valuable gift is understood as an *extension* of the owner after the manner of *tapatapa.* Then it follows that the *hau* of a valuable possession is integrally linked to the *hau* and *mana* of the owner and that any gift of a valued object to another person requires a compensating gift--that is, return of *hau*--to maintain the "being" or prestige *(mana)* of the person concerned and to avoid offending his *tapu.* The gift has its own *hau* (vitality) that is derived from the *mana* of the giver with which the gift is imbued. Hence *mana,* rather than *hau,* can be described as the "spiritual power" that travels with the gift.

Weiner expresses this in saying: "The *hau* attached to objects embodies the relation of the person to the sacred world of spiritual force . . . it must be replaced continually in people and things. . . . As the agent of replacement, the *hau* is a force against loss, securing a group's individual strengths and identities against the demands of others" (Weiner 1985:223-224). Rather than calling *hau* the "agent of replacement," calling it the "principle of replacement" would more clearly indicate the human response involved and would parallel *hau* with *utu.* Again it is important to remember Weiner's point that the gifts involved were not all gifts but only *taonga,* valuables that represent an individual's group status and identity. "By bringing one's ancestral and mythical histories into the present the ***taonga*** endows present actions with greater force" (Weiner 1985: 224).

A problem that arises is how to maintain such status and identity while meeting the obligation to give. The dilemma is reduced by the process of return or replacement that "allows a person to retain some part of inalienable possessions or some degree of inalienability" (Weiner 1985:224).

Conclusion

I have delved into the worldview of the old Maori culture in order to find an understanding of *hau* in relation to other significant notions. With this wider perspective, it is clear that *hau* did not provide the sole impetus for exchange as Mauss suggests, but needs to be seen in balance with the impetus provided in particular by the notions of *utu, tapu,* and *mana.* The "force of return" is not embodied in the gift itself in a personified *hau,* but in the complex of social relations and in the constraints of the sacred dimensions upon these relations.

Despite the frequent criticism that Mauss read too much into *hau,*

this wider perspective indicates that he did have the right feel for the sacred dimensions of the relation of valuable possessions to people (cf. MacCormack 1982:288) and for the necessity for compensation that is wider than a simple obligation (cf. Levi-Strauss, in MacCormack 1982:288). However, his attempt to construct a general theory of obligation on the basis of *hau* is clearly discredited. *Hau* remains as a distinctive feature of the old Maori worldview, but with less centrality and significance than that assigned to the notion by Mauss.

This discussion has also revealed the dangers of bias from ethnocentric preconceptions (Mauss's desire for a universal theory), and from too superficial a view when the understandings of data gained from the observer's perspective are not adequately balanced by the deeper level of perception gained from the participants' worldview. In this case, the wider cultural context has both revealed Mauss's misplaced overemphasis on *hau* and also deepened our understanding of it.

NOTES

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The two key texts of Tamati Ranapiri as presented by Marshall Sahlins in *Stone Age Economics* (London, 1974), 152, 158, are reproduced below with the permission of Tavistock Publications.

1. The *hau* of the gift--an interlinear translation by Biggs.

Na, mo te hau o te ngaaherehere. Taua mea te hau, ehara i te mea
Now, concerning the *hau* of the forest. This *hau* is not the *hau*

ko te hau e pupuhi nei. Kaaore. Maaku e aata whaka maarama ki a koe.
that blows (the wind). No. I will explain it carefully to you.

Na, he taonga toou ka hoomai e koe mooku. Kaaore aa taaua whakaritenga
Now, you have something valuable which you give to me. We have no

uto mo too taonga. Na, ka hoatu hoki e ahau mo teetehi atu tangata, aa,
agreement about payment. Now, I give it to someone else, and,

ka roa peaa te waa, aa, ka mahara taua tangata kei a ia raa taug taonga
a long time passes, and that man thinks he has the valuable,

kia hoomai he utu ki a au, aa, ka hoomai e ia. Na, ko taua taonga
he should give some repayment to me, and so he does so. Now, that

i hoomai nei ki a au, ko te hau teenaa o te taonga i hoomai ra ki a au
valuable which was given to me, that is the *hau* of the valuable which was

i mua. ***Ko taua taonga me hoatu e ahau ki a koe. E kore***
given to me before. I must give it to you. It would not
rawa e tika kia kaiponutia e ahau mooku; ahakoa taonga pai rawa, taonga
be correct for me to keep it for myself, whether it be something very good,
kino raanei, me tae rawa taua taonga i a au ki a koe. No te mea he **hau**
or bad, that valuable must be given to you from me. Because that valuable
no te taonga teenaa taonga na. Ki te mea kai kaiponutia e ahau taua taonga
is a *hau* of the other valuable. If I should hang onto that valuable
mooku, ka mate ahau. ***Koina te hau, hau taonga***
for myself, I will become *mate.* So that is the *hau--hau* of valuables,
hau ngaaherehere. Kaata eenaa.
hau **of the forest. So much for that.**

2. The *hau* of the forest--the translation by Best.

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

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