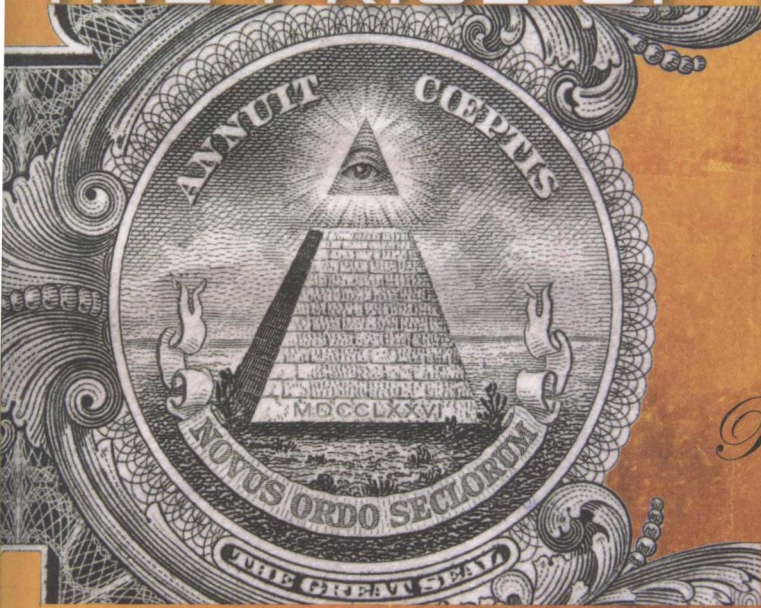


Cultural Memory

in the Present

THE PRICE OF TRUTH



*Gift,
Money,
and
Philosophy*

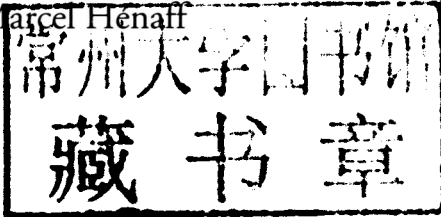
MARCEL HÉNAFF

TRANSLATED BY JEAN-LOUIS MORHANGE

THE PRICE OF TRUTH

Gift, Money, and Philosophy

Marcel Hénaff



*Translated by Jean-Louis Morhange
with the collaboration of Anne-Marie Feenberg-Dibon*

STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA

Stanford University Press
Stanford, California

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The Price of Truth was originally published in French in 2002 under the title *Le prix de la vérité*. © Éditions du Seuil, 2002.

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free, archival-quality paper

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hénaff, Marcel.

[Prix de la vérité. English]

The price of truth : gift, money, and philosophy / Marcel Hénaff ; translated by Jean-Louis Morhange with the collaboration of Anne-Marie Feenberg-Dibon.

p. cm.--(Cultural memory in the present)

“Originally published in French as *Le prix de la vérité*.”

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8047-6081-2 (cloth : alk. paper)--ISBN 978-0-8047-6082-9 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Economic anthropology. 2. Gifts--Philosophy. 3. Money--Philosophy. 4. Value--Philosophy. 5. Exchange--Philosophy. I. Morhange, Jean-Louis, 1956- II. Feenberg-Dibon, Anne-Marie, 1943- III. Title. IV. Series: Cultural memory in the present.

GN449.6.H46 2010

306.3--dc22

2010013546

Typeset by Bruce Lundquist in 11/13.5 Adobe Garamond

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Present

Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries, Editors

Acknowledgments


During the final stage of this project I benefited from the careful reading, criticism, and suggestions of several friends, such as Gérard Sfez, who brought his competence as a rigorous philosopher, and Jean-Pierre Milovanoff, who contributed his talent as a poet-reader. I would like to mention in particular the copyediting work Jean Delaite provided on the first version of the original French manuscript, as well as the exacting, generous, and always inspiring copyediting work Anny Milovanoff performed without sparing her effort in the last stages of the project. I would like to tell them once again how deeply grateful I am for their contributions. Many thanks also to Jean-Louis Morhange for his documentary research over the years and his clear-sighted observations. Finally, I would like to thank Olivier Mongin for the warm welcome he gave this book at Éditions du Seuil from the outset and for the many relevant observations he took the time to make and to discuss with me.

During the years of research required by this investigation I benefited several times from the funding provided by the Academic Senate Committee on Research of the University of California, San Diego, where I teach, and from the support provided by UCSD's Humanities Center and its then-director Frantisek Deak. I must also mention a substantial grant from the Elaine and Albert Borchard Foundation in Los Angeles. The friendly support provided by many of my colleagues at UCSD is worth mentioning as well. I have not forgotten that this research began in Paris in 1985 with a seminar I taught at the Collège International de Philosophie under the very title of this book. The final adjustments and revisions (as well as work on a different project) were facilitated by the exceptional environment of the Research Institute in the Humanities and Social Sciences—Jinbunken—of the University of Kyoto, Japan, where Shigeki Tominaga gave me a most generous welcome during the 2000–2001 academic year.

With respect to the English version of this book, I would like to thank Hent de Vries and Emily-Jane Cohen for the warm welcome they gave me at Stanford University Press. I also owe special thanks to Jean-Louis Morhange for his patient and rigorous translation work, reinforced by the attentive copyediting provided by Philip Gunderson and Erin Malone. Let me also praise Joe Abbott's scrupulous copyediting. I am especially grateful to Anne-Marie Feenberg-Dibon, who translated the introduction, the conclusion, and Chapter 5. I would like to tell all of them once again that I am aware of the debt of gratitude I owe them.

Abbreviations

<i>Apo.</i>	Plato's <i>Apology</i>
<i>AWP</i>	Malinowski's <i>Argonauts of the Western Pacific</i>
<i>Cra.</i>	Plato's <i>Cratylus</i>
<i>CW</i>	Malamoud's <i>Cooking the World</i>
<i>EE</i>	Aristotle's <i>Eudemian Ethics</i>
<i>Eum.</i>	Aeschylus's <i>Eumenides</i>
<i>Euth.</i>	Plato's <i>Euthyphro</i>
<i>G</i>	Mauss's <i>The Gift</i>
<i>NE</i>	Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<i>Oly.</i>	Pindar's <i>Olympians</i>
<i>PE</i>	Weber's <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	Aristotle's <i>Politics</i>
<i>PM</i>	Simmel's <i>The Philosophy of Money</i>
<i>Pro.</i>	Plato's <i>Protagoras</i>
<i>SL</i>	Montesquieu's <i>The Spirit of the Laws</i>
<i>Soph.</i>	Plato's <i>Sophist</i>
<i>Soph. Ref.</i>	Aristotle's <i>Sophistical Refutations</i>
<i>Thea.</i>	Plato's <i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>TI</i>	Levinas's <i>Totality and Infinity</i>



THE PRICE OF TRUTH

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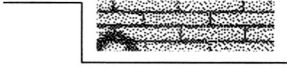
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Overtures

Money, money, one of these days I will say something about you. In this century he who does not dare tell the truth about money is no poet.

HENRI MICHAUX, *Ecuador, a Travel Journal*

We no longer ask what things are but what they cost.

SENECA, *Ad Lucilium Epistolae Morales*

Knowledge and money have no common measure.

ARISTOTLE, *Eudemean Ethics*

I believe he is a real shaman for just that reason: he would not allow those he had cured to pay him.

QUESALID (KWAKIUTL SHAMAN), in Boas, *The Religion of the Kwakiutl Indians*

The witness that I can offer to prove the truth of my statement is, I think, a convincing one—my poverty.

SOCRATES, IN PLATO, *Apology*

Overture I

The Incorruptible Wise Man and the Value of Truth

A rumor has spread in the streets of Athens: Socrates is going to die. He has been in prison for almost a month, awaiting the execution of the sentence pronounced by the judges of the Areopagus. The wait is coming to an end. His old friend Crito, who has come for an early morning visit, lets him know that the ship that brought the sacred procession to Delos has returned. They both know that no capital execution can take place between

the departure and return of this ship, whose annual voyage honors the wish Theseus made after his victory over the Minotaur. The ship has already gone past Cape Sunion and will be in Pireus this very evening. According to tradition, the next day the jailer is to offer the prisoner the cup of poison.¹

Socrates is going to die, and his profound serenity disarms Crito, who came to urge him to flee. Crito is determined to buy the jailers' complicity. He implores Socrates:

But look here, Socrates, it is still not too late to take my advice and escape. Your death means a double calamity for me. I shall not only lose a friend whom I can never possibly replace, but besides a great many people who don't know you and me very well will be sure to think that I let you down, because I could have saved you if I had been willing to spend the money. And what could be more contemptible than to get a name for thinking more of money than of your friends? (Plato *Crito* 44b–c)

Thus Socrates faces this dilemma: either flee by letting his friend bribe the guards—in and of itself a reprehensible act of corruption—or remain and allow people to believe that his friend was reluctant to use his wealth to save him. Socrates counters: does his friend's honor rest on nothing more than the opinion of the crowd (*ta polla*), the very opinion that has led to his own condemnation? And isn't this opinion wrong? If so, why worry about it? This honor would be very shallow indeed. Crito understands the argument but believes it to be rhetorical. He thinks Socrates, in fact, wishes to prevent him and his allies from falling into the hands of the sycophants, those professional informers who demand large sums in exchange for their silence. He tries to reassure Socrates:

Very well, then, don't let it distress you. I know some people who are willing to rescue you from here and get you out of the country for quite a moderate sum. And then surely you realize how cheap those informers are to buy off; we shan't need much money to settle them, and I think you've got enough of my money for yourself already. And then even supposing that in your anxiety for my safety you feel that you oughtn't to spend my money, there are these foreign gentlemen staying in Athens who are quite willing to spend theirs. One of them, Simias of Thebes, has actually brought the money with him for that very purpose, and Cebes and a number of others are quite ready to do the same. So, as I say, you mustn't let any fears on these grounds make you slacken your efforts to escape. (Plato *Crito* 44e–45a–b)

Here Socrates faces a subtler and more dangerous temptation. Unlike the Sophists, he has consistently refused any form of payment for his teach-