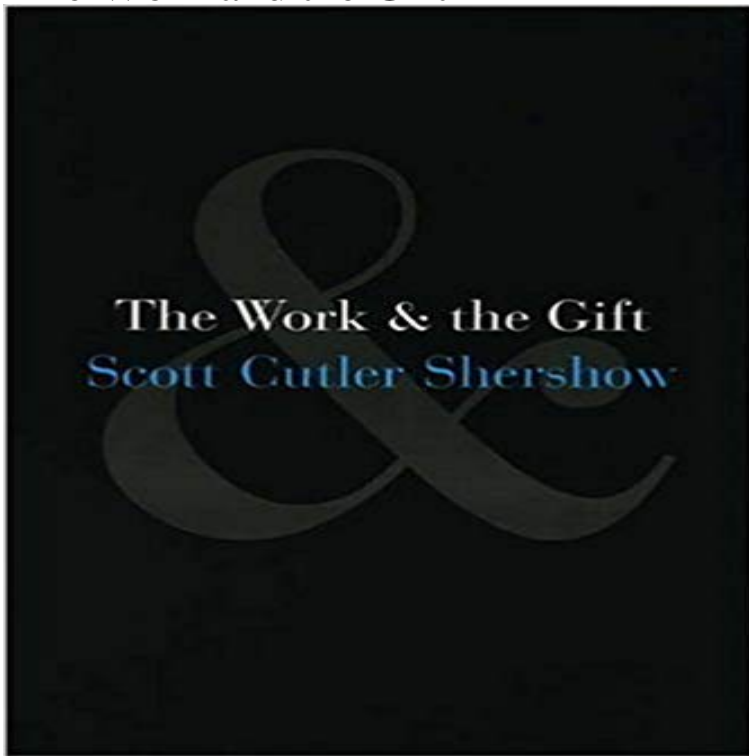


The Work and the Gift



The Work and the Gift considers how working and giving are taken for opposites and revealed as each others ghostly shadow. We ask ourselves, for instance, to work for a wage and a living, dooming ourselves forever to the curse of daily toil; and yet we imagine the magnum opus or the oeuvre as a labor of love. We ask ourselves to give with no thought of return; yet we still tell ourselves to give only to the deserving and only where our giving will do some good. Ranging from Marx and Derrida to Friedrich Hayek and Alvin Toffler, Scott Cutler Shershow here explores the predictions of political thinkers on both the left and the right that work is fundamentally changing, or even disappearing; the debates among anthropologists and historians about an archaic gift-economy that preceded capitalism and might reemerge in its wake; contemporary political battles over charity and social welfare; and attempts by modern and postmodern artists to destabilize the work of art as we know it. Ultimately, Shershow joins other contemporary thinkers in envisioning a community of unworking, grounded neither in ideals of production and progress, nor in an ethic of liberal generosity, but simply in our fundamental being-in-common. What results is a brilliant intervention in critical theory and social thought that will be of enormous value to students of literary criticism, anthropology, and philosophy alike.

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