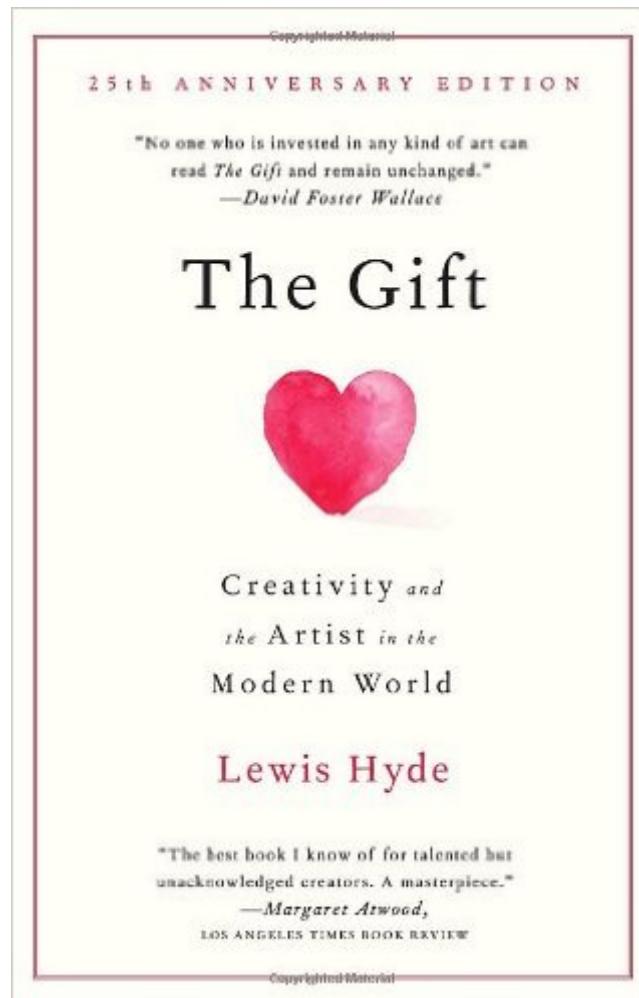


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# The Gift: Creativity And The Artist In The Modern World



## Synopsis

By now a modern classic, *The Gift* is a brilliantly orchestrated defense of the value of creativity and of its importance in a culture increasingly governed by money and overrun with commodities. Widely available again after twenty-five years, this book is even more necessary today than when it first appeared. An illuminating and transformative book, and completely original in its view of the world, *The Gift* is cherished by artists, writers, musicians, and thinkers. It is in itself a gift to all who discover the classic wisdom found in its pages.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book has been published under various subtitles since it first appeared in 1983: "Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property", "How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World" and "Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World". None of these quite captures what it really is, and that's probably because the book doesn't know what it really is, either. Lewis Hyde takes obvious delight in his work's ability to defy categorization or the pithy summary. Unique books have that quality. So do many that are poorly written. It took me a while to figure out which kind this is. Hyde's central theorem - that true art does, and must of its nature, stand outside the market economy, and this therefore presents a serious problem for the artist forced to live in a world increasingly subsumed by the market economy - could have achieved its full elaboration in the space of a single chapter. In the first half of the book we get that, but we also get quite a lot of wide-ranging argument about economics and the traditional tribal life of gift exchange. Not all of this is relevant, but it's all admittedly fascinating. Less fascinating are Hyde's attempts to locate contemporary examples. For

example, he argues rather unconvincingly that the scientific community is "a gift community to the extent that its ideas move as gifts". Fair enough, but the extent to which they do in fact move as gifts is negligible. Scientists are among the most egotistical, petty and jealously self-serving academics ever born. Science isn't about sharing ideas, or not only that. It's about promoting "my ideas" and having "my name" forever associated with them. It's about personal prestige and glory.

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