

Primitive Classification (Routledge Revivals) (Routledge Revivals: Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings in Social Theory) (Volume 3)

By Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss

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In this influential work, first published in English in 1963, Durkheim and Mauss claim that the individual mind is capable of classification and they seek the origin of the 'classificatory function' in society. On the basis of an intensive examination of forms and principles of symbolic classification reported from the Australian aborigines, the Zuñi and traditional China, they try to establish a formal correspondence between social and symbolic classification. From this they argue that the mode of classification is determined by the form of society and that the notions of space, time, hierarchy, number, class and other such cognitive categories are products of society.

Dr Needham's introduction assesses the validity of Durkheim and Mauss's argument, traces its continued influence in various disciplines, and indicates its analytical value for future researches in social anthropology.

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Editorial Review

Review

‘This is a significant essay because it is the most unqualified expression of its authors’ grand idea that the origins and meaning of mental categories are to be sought in the organisation of societies.’ – *The Times Literary Supplement*

From the Back Cover

This book is particularly instructive for anyone who wonders what social anthropology is: how, if at all, it differs from sociology and whether it has any unifying theoretical problem.

About the Author

Marcel Mauss (1870–1950) was a French sociologist and founding figure of twentieth-century anthropology.

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