

Introduction

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Today there is no doubt that the reputation of Mauss (1872–1950) is significant and growing. There is a marked divergence of opinion, however, on the nature of his contribution and influence.

On the one hand stands a strong body of opinion which holds that Mauss's work did not amount to a systematic and coherent general theory and method, but was influential through the specific inspiration of unique studies, such as *The Gift* (1966, 1990). On the other hand, there is another appropriation that is divided into two lines of assessment, but both suggest there was a profound unity in Mauss's teaching and research that amounted to a systematic theory. One line of this argument is that Mauss's general theory was a contribution to structuralism (an argument presented in Lévi-Strauss's famous *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (1987)). The other line is that which suggests that the inner core of Mauss's theory was identified by Bataille, Caillois and others at the end of the 1930s in the famous Collège de Sociologie, and subsequently elaborated by general theorists of symbolic exchange such as Baudrillard. Writers from both lines – Lévi-Strauss to Godelier and Bataille to Baudrillard – have taken Mauss's anthropological theory and wedded it to a version of Marxist theory, a step that Mauss himself would certainly not have thought legitimate. The methodological guidelines he drew up were supposed to deal with this possibility. The fact that they seemed to have failed implies that the legacy of Mauss is sometimes seen as uncertain or even paradoxical (Cazeneuve 1968). Did Mauss's contribution constitute a coherent whole, or was it made up of individual unique studies that could potentially be made the basis of further and conflicting elaborations?

A reading of his methodological writings, principally those included in this collection, is essential to understanding his thought in the widest sense. If today there is not only a renewed interest in Mauss, and one that goes beyond any one individual study such as *The Gift*, it is also an interest that in many

cases seeks to relocate Mauss in the context of the sociological – not the Marxist tradition. These reassessments are possible with the publication of Mauss's collected political writings (1997) in the context of the collapse of international communism and the changed political horizons of the new millennium. The indications of this new interest are to be found in studies such as the conference collection edited by James and Allen (1998), and Allen's *Categories and Classifications: Maussian Reflections on the Social* (2000), but also in France the intellectual biography *Marcel Mauss* by Marcel Fournier (1994), Bruno Karsenti's *L'Homme Totale: Sociologie, Anthropologie et Philosophie chez Marcel Mauss* (1997) and Camille Tarot's *De Durkheim à Mauss: l'Invention de Symbolique* (1999). A translation of Mauss's important thesis, *On Prayer*, was published in 2003.

Here, in this collection, is included the essay entitled 'Sociology' by Fauconnet and Mauss which was published in 1901 (in *La Grande Encyclopédie* – for background on this publication see Tollebeek 2002:343–45), and the essay 'Sociology: Its Divisions and Their Relative Weightings', which was published in 1927. In reading these two essays we are in a position to judge to what extent there was a shift in the nature of the work of the school over a twenty-five-year period divided by the First World War.

Mauss, as is well known, has become principally associated with the discipline of anthropology, while Durkheim remains a key founder of modern sociology but neither separated the two disciplines. Mauss himself explicitly states in 1927 that the separation of anthropology from sociology would constitute a danger. But today we may ask, did Mauss in fact contribute in some ways to laying the ground for this separation, which became more pronounced after his death? And, given Mauss's own growing academic specialisation in anthropological work and theory, did he provide adequate methodological safeguards against the inappropriate generalisation of his own anthropological analyses within the wider domain of sociology?

These questions themselves remain paradoxical, since the Durkheimians made it a key feature of their project to reflect on their practices as sociologists and anthropologists, and wrote a great many texts on their methodological principles. Indeed, the rules they created were applied not only to specific procedures such as how to observe, but also to the organisation of the work of the entire project. They asked the question: what is the fundamental objective of sociology, and how should a school of sociology divide the work and arrange specialist tasks in a coherent whole? As Mauss reported in his obituary of Fauconnet (Mauss 1999), there was a project around the year 1900 for a consideration of the methods of the new school which was to be a group effort involving himself, Durkheim and Fauconnet. Of this project only individual papers were published and these were never collected together, thus the project never achieved the coherence of a new statement of orientation that was originally hoped for.

What was the intellectual situation in 1900 in the Durkheim group? In terms of publications the period around 1900 was dominated by the appearance of the *Année sociologique*. Between 1898 and 1913 twelve volumes were published, although the volumes that contained significant analyses or articles ended with volume 9 in 1906. A conspectus of the contributions of Durkheim and Mauss indicate that their work was dominated by questions of the nature of the elemental forms of social and cultural structure. The first volume of 1898 contained Durkheim's essay on the origins of the incest taboo. The second published Durkheim's essay on the definition of religious phenomena, and Mauss and Hubert's essay on sacrifice. The next major items by Durkheim appeared in volume 4 (1902), containing Durkheim's essay on penal evolution, and in volume 5 with Durkheim's essay on totemism. Volume 6 (1903) contained Durkheim and Mauss on 'Primitive Classification'. Volume 7 (1904) contained Mauss and Hubert's essay on magic. Volume 8 (1905) contained Durkheim's essay on 'The Matrimonial Organisation of Australian Societies', volume 9 (1906) contained Mauss and Beuchat's essay 'Seasonal Variations of the Eskimo'. Incontestably the essays published in the new journal were dominated by themes of religion, ritual, classification and sanctions in 'primitive' societies.

No further important articles appeared in the first series of the journal. The subsequent volumes were published in 1907 (volume 10), three years later in 1910 (volume 11) and a last volume (number 12), was published in 1913; they were henceforth completely dominated by reviews. From this conspectus we can see that the focus of published work in this period was certainly dominated by what now would be called anthropological topics and concerns. A number of commentators have noticed the shift in these years to a concern with non-European elemental forms, so that in the words of Paul Vogt, 'French sociology was done largely without extensive reference to modern French society' (in Hamilton 1990, I:178). Others have drawn parallel conclusions, pointing to the systematic absence of sociological analysis of key institutional formations of modern societies, such as political parties and power structures (Lukes, in Durkheim 1982:22). But the overall strategy of the Durkheimians is clear: it is to establish a new type of comparative and evolutionary sociology that would avoid the errors of Comte's positivist sociology on the one hand, and all the variations of individualistic methodologies on the other. Like Comte, the Durkheimians thought reflection on method essential to social science, but unlike Comte they considered method a dynamic element of the practice of sociology that had to change as the science itself developed.

In fact, around 1900 – following closely on the long and innovative methodological reflections in his study *Suicide*, published in 1897 – Durkheim himself published a number of interrelated methodological essays, including 'Sociology in France in the Nineteenth Century' (1901), 'Sociology and its

Scientific Field' (1900), and 'On the Objective Method in Sociology' (1901 – republished as the second Preface to a new edition of *The Rules of Sociological Method*). In this Preface Durkheim returned to his famous discussions of the object of sociology and the conception of the 'social fact' but only to draw attention to the new conception – sociology as the science of institutions – developed by Mauss and Fauconnet in 1901: 'In fact, without doing violence to the meaning of the word, one may term an institution all the beliefs and modes of behavior instituted by the collectivity; sociology can then be defined as the science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning' (Durkheim 1982:45).

The contribution of Fauconnet and Mauss of 1901 ('Sociology', 1901, in *La Grande Encyclopédie*) was conceived as part of a larger statement of the school (Gane 1988:30–38). This project for a general presentation of the sociological project around 1900 is described by Mauss in his 'Intellectual self-portrait' (in Besnard 1983, and in James and Allen 1998). Initially he says there was to be a sequel to Durkheim's *Rules*, a book in three parts. The first part was the essay 'Sociology' which appeared in *La Grande Encyclopédie* (Durkheim's letters offering advice to Mauss on this article are now available in Durkheim 1998:257–64). The second part, said Mauss, 'is the article by Durkheim and Fauconnet, in fact written by the three of us, which is entitled 'History of Sociology and the Social Sciences' (1903, a translation can be found in Durkheim, 1982:175–208). 'The third part has never been published' (Mauss in Besnard 1983:150–51). In the recently published obituary notice Mauss wrote for Fauconnet in 1939, Mauss says that the third part was called 'Les divisions de la Sociologie'. The three parts were to be published together as an 'Introduction à la Sociologie' (Mauss 1999:28).

The role of rules of method for Durkheim and Mauss was to reflect on and to control the process of scientific analysis from beginning to end, without at the same time creating obstacles to the necessary free action of the scientific imagination. At each stage of the development of sociological science it was essential to stand back and to examine definitions, the rules of observation and of analysis, and of the division of labour between the branches of the activity of the school. Thus it can be seen that each attempt at methodological reflection was an attempt to guide, even inspire, the work of the school. This mode of reflection does not exactly provide résumés of specific studies, but it does provide an official manifesto of the orientations of the school. Thus for example *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895) clearly reworked guideline materials from *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893) in preparation for the next study, *Suicide* (1897). The various methodological writings around 1900, which include the essay by Paul Fauconnet and Mauss published in this collection, evidently relate to the studies that the school was engaged in after the publication of Durkheim's *Suicide*, and include the first essays by Mauss. It is important to compare, then, the phrasing of Fauconnet and Mauss in 'Sociology' with that of earlier formulations. The objective in their essay was to

present sociology as something that already had an important established reality, and yet was open to further significant development. ‘Sociology’ certainly follows some of Durkheim’s ideas in *The Rules* very closely. Given that the project involved Mauss, Fauconnet and Durkheim himself, the texts are also ones which announce a new collective endeavour of a team of sociologists. The orientations of this new school in fact draw upon some distinctive ideas. A change of emphasis, however, is noticeable if we consider four essential ideas which were promoted by Durkheim in the mid-1890s.

The first of these principles mandate the sociologist to approach the objects of the discipline with a special frame of mind: social phenomena (‘social facts’) are to be considered as being external to each individual. Indeed there is a mark or sign of this externality in social facts which must be found, identified and then must guide the sociologist as a focus in the subsequent analysis. A mark, such as the obligatory character of such phenomena, indicates the real necessity of the social relationship or action involved. Evidently, according to the Durkheimians, the principal errors that sociologists hitherto have been tempted to make are those arising from assuming that analysis must follow the free actions of individuals. The strategy of the Durkheimians was to extend the causality principle into the social domain – initially by guiding analysis towards social action that is most obviously socially caused, here interpreted as that mode of action clearly independent (either negatively or positively) of individual, free volition. Durkheim’s formulation of 1895 in *The Rules of Sociological Method* suggested that the object of sociology, the ‘social fact’, can be defined as ‘any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint’ (Durkheim 1982:59). This very striking formulation gave rise to considerable debate, some of which Durkheim thought badly misguided. In his ‘Second Preface’ to the *The Rules*, in 1901, which tried to play down the importance of coercion as an aspect of constraint, he said that the ‘coercive power that we attribute to the social fact represents so small a part of its totality that it can equally well display the opposite characteristic. Institutions’, he said, ‘place constraints upon us, and yet we find satisfaction in the way they function, and in that very constraint’ (ibid.:47). The Durkheimians did not abandon the principle of externality even if they introduced subtleties in relation to the notion of constraint.

A second feature was the development of a set of rules about the nature and quality of the data available to the sociologist. Having emphasised the necessity for the sociologist to study things not ideas, the sociologist must also be trained to tackle the problem of the reliability of information. In fact, in Durkheim’s essays on method the question of the nature of sources and robustness of information is rarely examined. It is pushed into the background while either concerns of a more philosophical nature take precedence, or Durkheim simply indicates a preference for legal data over, for example, literary descriptions (ibid.:83). Mauss and Fauconnet on the other hand, begin the discussion of the

reliability of sources in a much more systematic way. And this is continued by Mauss in his subsequent writings (for example the elaboration of what he calls the ‘critical method’ (2003:39)).

A third major feature apparent in Durkheim’s writings of the 1890s, certainly in his methodological statements, is the theme of social pathology. A chapter is devoted to this theme in the *The Rules*, where clearly it functions to link analysis with action. One of the key objectives for sociology, he says, is its potential to identify social health. This theme is not abandoned at the turn of the century, for in his 1902 ‘Preface to the Second Edition’ of *The Division of Labour in Society*, he indicated, in one of his most clearly diagnostic texts, the problems following the absence of corporative institutions in modern France, producing ‘the most far reaching consequences... [for] the general health of the social body’ (1964:29). Mauss himself was to emphasise a number of times that this was the central practical and political recommendation of Durkheim. But there is no place in Mauss’s method for this category, and it does not figure in the methodological writings published under his name. The entry in *La Grande Encyclopédie*, translated here, even though it discusses all the other categories of method established by Durkheim in *The Rules*, does not include a consideration of the rules for the analysis of social pathology. It is important, if we are to establish the nature of Mauss’s contribution, to compare the statement in ‘Sociology’ with both Durkheim’s individual statements and also his practice. If we consider only the relation between the encyclopedia entry and Durkheim’s *Rules*, we find not only the absence of a discussion of the category of social pathology, but also the appearance of a new topic, that of ‘general sociology’ (which was to have an important influence on Mauss’s subsequent writing). This interest in the divisions within sociology reflects, no doubt, the discussions in the *Année* team to classify the different fields within the sociological project itself.

A fourth feature of Durkheim’s approach of the 1890s is the attempt to work out an order of analysis that follows a theoretically identified priority of causal connections. Indeed, as early as his very first general statement of sociology, his 1888 ‘Opening Lecture’ (in Durkheim 1978:43–70), Durkheim described the domain of sociology as being divided into morphology and physiology which, he says, are drawn in parallel with the division in biology between structure and function of organisms (1978:65). In *The Rules* of 1895, Durkheim again discusses morphology and physiology (1982:57f., 135f.). The key proposition of *The Rules* is that the facts of morphology, of the composition of its inner social environment, ‘play a preponderant role’ in explanation (ibid.:135), made up of ‘firstly, the number of social units or as we have also termed it, the “volume” of the society; and secondly, the degree of concentration of the mass of the people, or what we have called the “dynamic density”’ (ibid.:136). Durkheim emphasises that the latter term concerns ‘the moral concentration of which physical concentration is only the auxiliary

element' (ibid.:136). In his works of the 1890s Durkheim suggests that it is through the analysis of social morphology (rather than function (physiology)) that sociology must establish causal relations. As Andrews has pointed out, Durkheim's thinking on morphology changed subtly in the late 1890s, so that collective representations could attain a relative autonomy in relation to the morphological basis of a society (1993:119). This primacy of morphology over representation, as an analytical proposition following from theoretical principles, was accepted by Mauss and formed one of the cornerstones of subsequent Durkheimian analysis (Allen provides an extensive discussion which develops the latent position to be found in Mauss: see Allen 2000:109f.).

After Durkheim's death and the interregnum of the First World War, the *Année sociologique* was restarted, and in this second series Mauss, following Durkheim's model, began again to reflect on method. His essay included here was published in the second, and indeed final, issue of the new series of the *Année* in 1927. If read from a rhetorical point of view these two texts are quite different. The text on method is transitional, and the old framework is bursting at the seams as Mauss attempted to reconstruct the sociological project in a new situation. A third set of publications – no longer called the *Année sociologique*, but the more accurately *Annales sociologiques* – was started in 1934. In its first volume was published another important strategic statement of the school, Mauss's essay 'Fragment d'un sociologie generale descriptive' with a subtitle, 'Classification et méthode d'observation des phénomènes généraux de la vie sociale dans les sociétés de type archaïques (phénomènes généraux spécifique de la vie intérieure de la société)' (in Mauss 1968–9, iii:303–54. The *Annales sociologiques* were published in parallel series A, B, C, D and E, between 1934 and 1942 (a comprehensive list of contents of the major Durkheimian journals can be found in Nandan 1977, and see Clammer 2000).

In 1927 Mauss was searching to reestablish the sociological project in the second series of the *Année*, and he admits explicitly at the beginning of the essay that he wished, in restoring the project, to 'continue a respectable tradition and not upset former and faithful readers'. However, Mauss clearly is not altogether satisfied with the organisation of the work of the school of sociology as he finds it in 1927. In particular he notes 'general sociology' and 'social morphology' are not in their proper positions (Chapter 1). The proportions are also wrong (Chapter 2). It seems as if there is a new content waiting to burst through the old formal arrangements, but Mauss is reluctant to let the process proceed. In the end Mauss appeals to his conversations with Durkheim to legitimise a fundamental change which was discussed but not developed as far back as the late 1890s. For Durkheim the overall nature of the sociological project of the first series of the *Année* could be summed up in 1909 in a formal way as follows:

I. *Social Morphology*

The study of the geographic base of various peoples in terms of its relationships with their social organisation

The study of population: its volume, its density, and its disposition on the earth

II. *Social Physiology*

Sociology of religion

Sociology of morality

Sociology of law

Economic sociology

Linguistic sociology

Aesthetic sociology

III. *General Sociology*

(Durkheim 1978: 83)

Durkheim says of general sociology that its object 'is to reveal the most general properties and laws of life. This is the philosophical part of the science' (Durkheim: 1978:82); and see Gane, in Pickering 2002:17–28; and Clammer 2000:30).

It is this division of work which Mauss begins to alter. His Chapter 3 of this essay 'is largely based on his conversations' with Durkheim. Indeed it is clear that the category 'general sociology' as used in the *Année sociologique* was problematic for Durkheim. In a note in volume 5 (1902) Durkheim lamented the 'extreme indeterminateness of its object' and suggested that 'general sociology could and should be something different... the role of general sociology might be to constitute the unity of all that is dissected by analysis' (in Durkheim 1982:243). Clearly, Mauss in 1927 wanted to take up the challenge Durkheim had indicated and he outlines the set of problems involved in thinking about the character of a particular society. Chapter 3 starts with a division between morphology and social physiology, and a division of the latter into the physiology of practices and the physiology of collective representations. Having discussed the advantages of this new division and arrangement, he introduces a new discussion of the category of 'concrete general sociology' (Chapter 4). The last chapter introduces issues that for Durkheim were discussed largely in relation to pathology, but which here become the concerns of 'applied sociology or politics'.

In Mauss's essay of 1927 it is clear that in effect he presents a transitional statement of the divisions within the sociological field. He presents them in this manner:

I. *Social Morphology*

Material structures

II. *Social physiology*

Practices

Representations

III. *General sociology*

Language and the symbolic

Science

Collective ethology
Applied sociology and politics

What is striking is that Mauss begins to work out a detailed conception of general sociology that is almost completely lacking in Durkheim's formulations of the 1890s. It has been claimed that Mauss thus essentially restructures the field of sociology entirely. Karsenti, for example, controversially argues that 'relations are formed, connections established, and passages introduced which lead to a redistribution of knowledge. The latter, insofar as it no longer suffers from a foundational split, can now be seen from a unitary viewpoint and can take back the name of anthropology – although the old term has now acquired a new meaning' (Karsenti, in James and Allen 1998:80). Indeed for Karsenti, sociology in the Maussian scheme, 'has the imperative duty to fulfil itself on this basis and rediscover its place within anthropology' (*ibid.*).

The logic of such a development can be seen, perhaps, in the new consideration of the field published in 1934. In this version Mauss suggests that, in the final analysis, there exist only individual societies, as 'this or that closed system' (1968–9, III:306). It is this ultimate object, which can be studied only when all the individual parts of it are finally known, that can be considered the true synthetic object of 'general sociology' (*ibid.*). Mauss, at the same time as he emphasises the individuality of this object, was interested, he says, in defining the place of general phenomena, by which he means those that are common throughout all categories of social life (population, practices and representations). To the already given division (morphology and physiology), he suggests redefining 'general phenomena' so that it can be subdivided into its national and international aspects. To do this means, he says, abandoning the division of such a 'general sociology' into morphological and physiological facts (*ibid.*:312). Outlining a new set of problems, Mauss redefines basic terms such as social cohesion, social discipline and authority, and the mechanisms of their transmission (tradition, education). Then he moves on to examine intersocial relations of peace and war, and then to what he calls 'civilisation' or the contacts and commerce between individual societies. To make analysis complete, he says, there are two further divisions to examine: first the psychological, and secondly the biological. These are very quickly discussed before concluding that a complete sociological analysis would cover all the elements itemised in his plan. Thus the conception of 'general sociology' to which he has been working is outlined in four parts:

- [A] general phenomena of one society – thus national
 - cohesion
 - discipline and authority
 - transmission
 - tradition
 - education

- [B] general phenomena of a group of societies – thus international war and peace
civilisation
- [C] relation to individual psychology
collective psychology
collective ethology
individual psychology (with origin in the collective)
collective psychology (with origin in the individual)
- [D] relation to human biology
biometrics
somatic anthropology

Mauss, at the end of this discussion, suggests that the goal of a complete sociological analysis is to know:

the birth		from a triple point of view
the life		(i) pure sociology
the ageing	{of a society}	(ii) sociopsychology
and death		(iii) sociobiology
		(Mauss, 1968–9, III:353)

He concludes this essay of 1934 by observing that ‘it is of little use to philosophize on general sociology when one has so much to find out and to know, and when one first has so much to do in order to understand’ (ibid.:354).

Bataille, Caillois, Leiris and Lévi-Strauss were attracted to Mauss’s work by what they saw as a profoundly theoretical project. Bataille wrote that his own work was derived from the consideration of law and transgression in Mauss’s anthropology: ‘Mauss, unwilling to formulate his ideas too definitely, has merely expressed them periodically in his lecture courses’ (Bataille 1990:208). Yet Mauss himself clearly avoided direct contact with Bataille’s project (see Marcel 2003). Lévi-Strauss famously wrote that ‘no acknowledgement of him can be proportionate to our debt, unless it comes from those who knew the man and listened to him. Only they can fully appreciate the productiveness of his thinking, which was so dense as to become opaque at times; and of his tortuous procedures, which would seem bewildering at the very moment when the most unexpected itinerary was getting to the heart of problems’ (Lévi-Strauss 1987:1). It would appear, then, that Mauss would in lectures suggest more of a unified theoretical perspective than appears in his descriptive methodological writings. Recently, however, Lévi-Strauss has remarked that he did not in fact attend Mauss’s lectures and that he ‘only saw him a few times. It was less his person than his work that was decisive for me’ (Massenzio and Lévi-Strauss 2001:423). Bataille did not attend Mauss’s lectures either but depended on reports from Métraux and others (see Marcel 2003:141–2). When Bataille tried to develop a theory of horror and sacred transgression, it was

pointed out to him that he had broken all the methodological rules set out by Mauss. 'If we take sociological science as it has been established by men like Durkheim, Mauss, and Robert Hertz as our reference, it is essential to stick to their methods. Otherwise, in order to clear up any ambiguity, we have to stop calling ourselves "sociologists"' (Leiris, in Hollier 1988:355).

If Mauss seems to have moved very strongly, under pressure from Durkheim, in the direction of anthropology – whether it be called ethnology or ethnography – and away from sociology, Mauss even says, later, 'I have never been a militant of sociology' (in Besnard 1983:142). He was certainly willing to commit himself to political analysis as such in a way that Durkheim rarely was. But Mauss kept this side of his writing quite distinct and separate from his academic work which focused precisely on anthropological themes. Thus with the publication of his political writings, it is clear that Mauss had very specific criticisms of Marxism and communism, particularly Soviet communism (see his 'A Sociological Assessment of Bolshevism' in Gane 1992:165–215). It seems certain that Mauss followed the Soviet experience closely because he thought that in some way a key element of Durkheimian sociology was being put to the test. He said, 'the closeness of Durkheim's theory and the practice of the Soviets should be emphasised' (in Gane 1992:172). His critique of the Soviet experience was a bitter one, and was not only based on methodological principles. Mauss also drew out lessons which he expressed in terms of practical principles. Central to Mauss's vision is that 'Durkheim's hypotheses about the moral and economic value of the professional group emerge further confirmed from the Bolshevik test. The Soviets failed because they undermined and destroyed this primordial organisational element' (ibid.:191). But Mauss also goes further than Durkheim and suggests that every social revolution 'will take a national character' (ibid.:187); and as for political practice and law, Mauss concludes that violence does not create and neither does law create, new institutions: 'law does not create, it sanctions' (ibid.:199). The conception of method that comes through this critique of communism is that the Marxists are 'enslaved by the old doctrine: they thought that political power, the law, the decree, so long as it was they who promulgated them, could forge the new society. Profound mistake!' (ibid.:200).

Thus, like Durkheim, Mauss did not believe the new socialist society would be a return to a simpler form, one without a state, without a market and without money (ibid.:188–9). Modern societies do not return to less organisation, or to gift exchange. They become more organised, not less organised. Thus, the whole attempt to use Mauss to provide a theory of a new post-capitalist society based on symbolic exchange would not have been acceptable to Mauss himself. Indeed, in his letters on fascism written at the end of the 1930s he stresses the backward nature of secret sects which structurally could be found in communism and fascism (ibid.:213), and in an extraordinary piece of self-criticism suggested apropos fascism: 'we did not put our minds to

this return of primitivism. We were satisfied with a few allusions to crowd states, when something quite different was at stake' (ibid.:214).

These political observations drawn from Mauss's polemical writings can be compared instructively with those pages that appear on law, politics and the nation in his academic publications. What is clear is that Mauss rarely makes the mistake committed by Bataille of applying the criteria appropriate to segmental and polysegmental societies to those of a quite different, national or organic type, even when it is a question of what he calls 'primitivism'. If, as has been claimed, Durkheim was the principal founder of modern French sociology and can be thought of as its Darwin, and Marcel Mauss, Durkheim's nephew, reconstructed this science in the way that Mendel relates to Darwin – that is, as someone who continues the first steps with important, even decisive, second steps – the intellectual outcome of this tradition is still to be worked out.

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