

Durkheim's Ghost: The Century after His Death: France, Germany, Turkey

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Abstract

The essay is a kind of social science fiction meant to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Emile Durkheim's death in 1917. Durkheim's ghost, therefore, is used to imagine how his thinking would have dealt with the actual premodern and modern histories of France, Germany, and Turkey. .

Keywords

Durkheim • Treaty of Versailles • Collective representations • Ottoman Empire • Byzantium • Republic of Turkey

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Emile Durkheim² died on 15 November 1917 just when Europe's Great War was getting worse. He died of despair over the death of his son, André, who was killed in the war.

1917 was also the year of the beginning of the revolutions that ended Czarist Russia as well as the year in which the Americans entered the fight against Germany. Not quite two years later, on 28 June 1919, the disastrously punitive Treaty of Versailles assured that the Great War ending Europe's liberal nineteenth century would, in historical fact, turn out to have been a latter-day Thirty Years War. It threatened the very interstate system the Treaty of Westphalia inaugurated in 1648 to end the original Thirty Years' War. As time would tell, Hitler, in particular among the German people, was so obsessed by the disgracing wounds inflicted by Versailles that when France capitulated on 22 June 1940 he humbled the French by demanding that the Armistice be signed at *Compiègne* in the very train car in which Germany had been forced to capitulate on 11 November 1918. Then too when the Americans entered that grand but not-so-great war it would not turn out to be—as the American President Woodard Wilson had naively hoped—the war to end all wars. Anything but! On the contrary, the short twentieth century from the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand 28 June 1914 to the end of the Cold War with Mikhail Gorbachev's resignation on 25 December 1991 would be riddled by wars that grew more violent as they became ever more local.

Now, a full century since the war that killed Durkheim and so countless many others, the killing and violence continues at, if anything, a faster pace. He would not be happy. But, also, Durkheim might not be surprised that his noble ideas did so little social good. A differential diagnosis of Durkheim's cause of death would have to include not just the stroke and the anomic despair at the loss of his son, but also the deeply sad failure of his life's work to save France from the modern world.

What, specifically, would Durkheim have thought of the century following 1917? He had only lived 59 years, of which the last few, after 1914, he devoted to France. Had it not been for André's death, it might have been just as likely that he would have worked himself to death in national defense efforts and a strenuous schedule of teaching and lecturing. Through those terrible years he somehow remained cautiously optimistic (Lukes, 1975, pp. 547–555). But why, while still among the living, might Durkheim have been optimistic? Little in his personal or social time encouraged the notion that the very social disorder he meant to heal could be or would be healed. Then too he would surely have been deeply discouraged, to say the least, by the disaster that arose not more than a decade after his death.

2 This article consists of two parts. The first section that was previously published in *Soziopolis* is cited in the special issue of Durkheim with the permission of the author and *Soziopolis*. The author wrote the second section as a continuation of the first section for the *Istanbul University Journal of Sociology*. The first section of the manuscript is also available at the following link: <https://soziopolis.de/erinnern/jubilaen/artikel/durkheims-ghost/>

It is well known that Durkheim was born in rural Épinal to a long line of rabbis. What he could not have known is that the Jewish village of his birth was not far from the border with what would become Nazi Germany. Had Durkheim remained in Épinal to become a rabbi in the tradition of his father's fathers he very possibly would not have survived. He was, if nothing else, more than ready to go against the grain. Still, having left for the modern, secular world, had he lived to learn of *Kristallnacht* (9-10 November, 1938 when he would have been 71 years old), Durkheim would have understood more about the Nazi pseudo-religious cult that led to Hitler's "Jewish Problem." In truth, any prescient sociological study during the early years of the Nazi cult would have had to have been Durkheimian. (A Weberian study of the kind would likely not have been able to manage Hitler's attempt to fuse Weber's many spheres into a singular Aryan nation-state.)

Still, it is far from clear (to me at least) how much, if at all, Durkheim suffered from his ethnic identity. He of course joined Émile Zola in defending Captain Alfred Dreyfus (and was married to Louise Dreyfus who must have been related at a remove to Alfred). France today, as it was then, still experiences a virulent strain of anti-semitic violence, as do many other so-called modern societies. Anti-semitism and its rabid affines had not gone away in 2017, even if they are hidden under the cloak of post- (or, better, ill-) liberal politics. Whatever may have been Durkheim's personal struggles, there can be little doubt as to what he would have thought of the Nazi regime that was ever more severe an assault on a nation's social bond than the secularization that so troubled him in modernizing France.

Apart from the founding of scientific sociology, Durkheim devoted his life to saving France from the chaos he associated with the decline of religion as the moral glue holding together the splintering parts of a secular social order. In this respect, he shared, in his way, a version of Max Weber's belief that modernization, whatever its benefits, was an iron cage of rationality because it left scant room for the charismatic moment (of which the religious prophet was Weber's exemplar). By the comparison, the key passage in Durkheim's opening salvo on egoistic suicide in *Suicide* introduces a little remarked upon irony of modern religious life which must have had its origin in his childhood experiences in a Jewish family in Épinal. The irony is in the fact that Jewish people were among the most highly literate of modern people, yet they enjoyed a strong coefficient of preservation against suicide. Durkheim's idea was that education is individuating because (in a notion quite similar to Weber's thinking on the matter) learning breaks the bond with the traditional religious society, for which he takes Catholicism as the prime example. Protestants were more highly educated than Catholics, yet they suffered from a morbidly feeble immunity to egoistic suicide.

Hence, Durkheim's implied question: If among Protestants education induces a higher social suicide rate, how could it be that, of the three major European religious groups in that day, Jews were more immune to suicide than even Catholics who were protected by the social solidarity of a then very traditional religious community? The answer was that Jewish people, notwithstanding their supposedly individuating learning, were a persecuted minority which required a strong communal solidarity for defensive purposes. "The Jew, therefore, seeks to learn, not in order to replace his collective prejudices by reflective thought, but merely to be better armed for the struggle (Durkheim, 1951, p. 168)." Or, to rephrase in Weber's terms, Catholics then were subject to traditionalism and Protestants were the ideal type of the modern rational ethic. Thus, it is possible that Durkheim, were he to have used Weberian terminology, might have said that Jewish people were an ideal type of the after-modern person. It is only partly right to put "after-modern" in Durkheim's mouth because he showed little direct interest in the political economy of the modern world in Europe. As a consequence, Durkheim would have been far less likely than Weber—not to mention Marx—to consider that the actual history of the Protestant modern ethic has been the story of the nightmares Capitalism (whatever its benefits) has visited on those it exploits. One can only hope for an after-modern culture able to learn, as Durkheim's Jews are said to have, from a solidarity derived from a long history of persecution.

This being so, and granting that Durkheim died before he could have seen what came to pass after 1917, we can wonder still more what he would have made of Hitler's slaughter of so many Jews. From a moral point of view he would have been, needless to say, horrified. Still, from a scientific point of view, as a student of culture and its workings, Durkheim would have well understood how the Holocaust after *Kristallnacht* came to be. Hitler's culture of Aryan supremacy was the very antithesis of the healing moral culture Durkheim had hoped France's secular educational system might create. Hence another irony associated with Durkheim's thinking. As much or more than Weber, the son of rabbis upon rabbis became the interpreter of the role of religion in societies, traditional and modern. But also, Durkheim carefully argued in *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* that religion was in the very inner workings of knowledge as inherent and necessary to social life itself. In this, Durkheim turned Marx on *his* head (though not in a Hegelian or even a Kantian sort of way). Alvin W. Gouldner once said in reference to Marx's *Camera Obscura* that the figure of speech was brilliant except for the fact that Marx had no way to account for cameraman. Durkheim, by contrast (and in spite of his thin theory of the individual), argued precisely that culture is anything but obscure because culture provides the only picture of the social world in which all social individuals are the picture-takers.

In this respect, Durkheim would have taken interest, perhaps pleasure, in the writings of the German critical theorists of culture whose very purpose was, in significant

degree, a response to the sad fate of Germany under the National Socialists. Durkheim would have well appreciated such works as Horkheimer's and Adorno's 1944-45 essay, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," for its critique of the deep structure of mass culture. Hitler's nationalism was, in effect, a forerunner of the mass culture that came to be so influential after 1945. Curiously, Durkheim might well have agreed both with their ideas on the industrialization of mass culture *and* their famous essay's critique of Enlightenment. But, Durkheim would have certainly held a more restrained attitude toward the German Enlightenment even though his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* in 1912 was a direct assault on Kant's mental categories of understanding from which issued the ideas of knowledge as based on a synthetic *a priori* and of the categorical imperative to act as though one's actions pertain to, and sustain, the moral order of social life.

Similarly, Durkheim would have been skeptical of the very idea of mass culture insofar as the expression has come down over the years as dismissive of any culture that might be appreciated by those not among the cultural elite. Yet, he did put forth a theory of mass culture in the more generous sense of a widely, perhaps universally, shared culture necessary not just to knowledge but also to the moral order that made social life possible in the first place. If Durkheim had somehow lived into the early 1940s (when he would have been just over 80 years old), even he—the most provincial of French intellectuals—would likely have reached out to the German critical theorists in exile in the United States. Had he done so, he might have been a more critical sociologist, as perhaps Horkheimer and Adorno might have come to a more robust appreciation of aspects of mass culture—and especially of cinema and jazz, if not television and all the other subsequent technomedia. Still one of early critical theory's heirs, Herbert Marcuse, was the first to describe in the plain language of *One Dimensional Man* (1964) how the newer mass cultural technomedia destroys the basic human genius for critical thinking. However mystified Durkheim surely would have been by televisual media, Marcuse's critique would have caught his eye.

Then too, one could well wonder what Durkheim would have thought of the state of global affairs after the end of the thirty years war in 1945? The first, and all-too-easy answer, is that it is likely that he would have been puzzled for more reasons than his by then extreme age. The confusion would not have had to do with Europe's post-war efforts to reconstruct its infrastructures, social institutions, and democratic cultures. Even if (improbably) Durkheim would have enjoyed another good decade of life to see the results in France, he would have relished the necessity of the reconstruction. Still, since Claude Lévi-Strauss lived to 101 years, it might not have been impossible that Durkheim could have, in principle, lived long enough to see the sensational effect of Pierre Bourdieu's 1964 *Les héritiers: les étudiants et la culture* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979) on the restructuring of France's university system. Durkheim would

have been delighted, one assumes, that Bourdieu's own Durkheimian disposition had the effect it had in and on French culture.

Durkheim's ghost would have certainly taken pleasure at Lévi-Strauss' *Collège de France Leçon Inaugurale* (Lévi-Strauss, 1967) on 5 January 1960. The Chair of Social Anthropology was created in 1958. Lévi-Strauss took the occasion of his appointment to it to acknowledge the year of Durkheim's birth a century earlier in 1858. The most striking aspect of that 1960 lecture was the way Lévi-Strauss claimed Durkheim as the inspiration for his own studies of culture. Not only that, but Lévi-Strauss honored Durkheim's nephew, Marcel Mauss who had previously held the *Collège* chair in Sociology. This of course was part of a general affirmation of Durkheim's *equipe* including Maurice Halbwachs as well as Mauss. Halbwachs is often considered more of a philosopher, yet his writings on collective memory are directly in the lineage of Durkheim's collective representations to Lévi-Strauss' structural anthropology. Mauss was much more of a cultural ethnographer and, with Durkheim, the author of *De quelques formes primitives de classification* (Durkheim, 1967) which, in 1903, set down not only the basic principles of Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* in 1912, while also securing a footing for Durkheimian sociology's primitive notion of what today some would call comparative social research.

As a result, had Durkheim been alive to hear Lévi-Strauss' tribute to him he might have given thought to the limitations of his own sociologies of knowledge and culture. Whatever he carried forth from his 1903 essay with Mauss, after 1945 Durkheim might have realized that he had been too absorbed in a sociology *for* France. It is at least possible that he would have had to rethink his basic principles as, in the wake of its liberation from Nazi occupation, France had to rethink itself. I have long thought (Lemert, 2006) that, beyond the limitations of his scheme, even of his more famous concept, *anomie*, Durkheim's most enduring concept is *collective representations* in *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* in 1912. There, and in Ferdinand de Saussure's courses in general linguistics³ (offered in Geneva at about the same time, 1906-1911), are found the formal principles of the structuralism that earned Lévi-Strauss his chair in the *Collège de France*. Structural anthropology was but one line among the variety of structuralisms that, immediately after the war, rivaled Sartre's existentialism for the attentions of the Parisian intellectual elite. Structuralism won, if one can put it this way, because France—having been the victim of the Nazi effort to steal and otherwise destroy its political and artistic cultures—had to rethink itself as a whole. France, like Germany (but unlike Britain and the United States), very much needed a stronger program for understanding its national culture.

3 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Fontana/Collins, 1977) is a transcription of Saussure's lectures, published in 1916.

Many (especially careless American readers) thought of the structuralisms (including so-called post-structuralism) as some sort of off-beat, even absurdist, digression. The structuralist moment in France was, in fact, part of a necessary rethinking of France's place in the world. The long, sorry reign of Gaullist politics was part of that rethinking. On the other hand, the Parisian literary elite stood firm as a culture of resistance (in spite of its, to some, excessively elegant *normalien* discourse). Still, as time went by, even a few Anglophone clear-thinkers begrudgingly took to heart some of the writings of France's public *vedettes* from Lévi-Strauss to Foucault, Derrida, Bourdieu—even the tragic Louis Althusser. It would be silly to suppose that Durkheim was behind all this. But he did contribute to the deep structural background of these movements by his habit of always taking a structural attitude toward culture, especially French national culture. Had it been possible that, after Versailles in 1919, for some version of Weimar culture to survive, perhaps Germany would have been able to stand up to the National Socialists. But the Versailles Treaty that Hitler so hated saw to it that what Weimar might have been would not survive to put a brake in his insanity. After 1933 many of the artists and intellectuals of Weimar culture were in exile.

Hence, also, another irony associated with Durkheim and his ghost. There is no reason to believe that his strong program for national education could have saved secular France from Hitler. But there is reason to consider that certain of Durkheim's core ideas would endure, not as ghosts, but as social scientific and cultural ideas that would contribute to the many attempts to come to terms with what we now think of as global realities. The Cold War from 1946 to 1991 would have made some sense to Durkheim, if only because it so obviously set two very different, post-national collective representations of societal cultures against each other. The West's over-determined attachment to its various and vague ideologies of a righteous democracy was to a considerable degree a shadow of Soviet and Maoist global ideologies. Mao's cultural revolution of the 1960s was not all that different culturally from the Red Scare in the 1950s in the United States. Mao's was vastly more violent, but on both sides lives were ruined, literally, for no good reason.

Just after the collapse of the Cold War in 1991, technomedia of many kinds contributed to what we now call globalization—a truly global reality of economic, political, as well as cultural change that has plunged national societies into a state of uncertainty. There are, it hardly needs to be said, lingering and palpable differences among American, British, German, and French national cultures—not to mention among other of the 195 entities considered as independent countries. Still, as soon as one crosses into any of these, they will recognize very familiar manners and institutions, if only Starbucks or Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Where the line between sameness and difference among national cultures now lies is hard to say. Such a world as ours after 2017 would have made the urban social conflict that so worried Durkheim more than a century ago seem like child's play. Yet, down to the 100th anniversary of his death in 2017, Durkheim's ghost would find a haven in any attempt to think, even to understand, the whole of social things—or, more to the Durkheimian point, to gather those social facts that would permit amelioration of our anomic world order.

Then again⁴, the story of Durkheim's after-life in this world could have been different. What if Durkheim's beloved son had not been killed on the Eastern Front of what the West called the Great War? Had he not grieved so deeply for André, Durkheim might not have died in 1917. One can never know of course, but without the terrible pain only a father feels following a son's death, he might have survived and spent his considerable energy on France's agony—then not just its war, but also the crisis he believed France faced in a world without a healing moral bond. What if also, after 1921, he might have felt himself free enough to travel?

If one can imagine Durkheim traveling, it is all but certain that he would not have gone on holiday to the South of France to lie on the beach after a long mid-day *déjeuner* with wine. More likely Durkheim would have ventured abroad where something sociologically interesting was happening. If so, he might well have thought of Turkey. Perhaps also—in this fantasy of Durkheim's ghostly after life—he would have paid poignant attention to Gallipoli as a great battle in the East of the West's Great War. Then, after 23 April 1920, the first steps toward Mustafa Kemal's Republic of Turkey would have been of unique sociological interest to Durkheim. That fact alone might well have caused him to plan a trip to Istanbul, if not Ankara—at least because it would have been a more direct and comfortable journey by the Orient Express from Paris. But also because, especially then, because Istanbul was, as still it is, the Turkish city where monuments to the long history of premodern and traditional religions was still in evidence.

If Durkheim were to have disembarked in Istanbul on any given day, perhaps in 1922, when the Republic of Turkey was well formed, he would have been drawn to the fact that Turkey under Mustafa Kemal (not yet Atatürk) was at the time engaged in precisely the kind of social and political reform he had imagined for France. In Turkey, as foreigners may not remember, the long declining Ottoman Empire, in spite of a brief revival in 1908, collapsed after the Great War ended. Then Ankara became the capital of the Republic. Istanbul, however, had been the capital of the Islamic Ottoman Empire since 1453 when Mehmed II, the Conqueror, led the overthrow

4 This section is written by Lemert for the *Istanbul University Journal of Sociology*.

of Greek Orthodox Constantinople. Mehmed's diplomatic genius lay in forging an agreement that assured the Orthodox Church autonomy in exchange for granting state authority to the Ottoman Empire—an accord signified by Mehmed's having assumed the ridiculous titular name *Caesar Romanus*.

The Roman/Byzantine Empire held sway improbably from 330 to 1453—with a brief interlude from 1204 to 1261 created by the fervor of the Roman Catholic Crusades. Byzantium was, thus, the Greek Orthodox center of what remained of Roman Christianity after the fall of Rome in 410. Durkheim—had he prepared for the journey he could not make—would surely have been impressed by the fact that the Byzantine Empire endured more than a millennium as the global center of Christianity. Then too, if we were to extend this prehistory to include the Ottoman period from 1453 to 1920, once Durkheim might have disembarked in Istanbul he would have probably come to the ever more sociological realization that for the better part of two millennia one or another global religion was a force in the deep history of the Turkey.

France, by contrast, could be said to have had something of a similar history—but only if Gaul under Roman rule is taken to be embryonic France unified to a degree under the Frankish King, Clovis I, in 481. If, however, the Frankish period is taken to be the origin of the modern France Durkheim knew, then its prehistory is wildly different from even the Frankish period that came to be a dominant force in Gaul by conquest and a succession of minor kingdoms and cultures. The Salians, Chamavi, Frisians, Ripuarians, and Merovingians followed one after the other until the Frankish but Christian Carolingians consolidated a vague sort of religious social order. Then too, there is a body of French opinion that France owes its beginnings to Vercingétorix who in 52 BC led a Celtic revolt against the Romans occupying Gaul. Soon after, Caesar “crushed the rebellion with extraordinary savagery.” The very idea that the 52 BC rebellion could be considered the origin of France seems to be very French—elegantly imaginative if factually rickety.

Where Turkey was continuously religious from its prehistory after 330 AD late in the Roman period, France was a melange of what some still call barbarian tribes with a variety of cultic values of which even Gaul under Charlemagne (742-814)—that is: Charles the Great, King of the Franks, then of the Lombards—who like his predecessors served the papacy in order to serve his and Gaul's own independent interests. Charles the Great—often thought of as the Father of Europe—melded a collection of ethnic cultures into the so-called Holy Roman Empire in 800. Charlemagne's kingdom was, at best, a pretense for a political, only vaguely religious, accord with Pope Leo III in which the Carolingians agreed to protect the papacy from its political rivals. In due course, after 900, the Holy Roman Empire fell under the spell of the Byzantium. If Charles the Great deserves recognition as the Father of Europe it may be due him

only because his alleged Empire came to the beginning of its end with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 where the Holy Roman Empire was chief among the signatories who agreed to respect the autonomy of political entities in Europe, thus creating the modern, secular nation-state.

This sketch of the history line along which modern Europe was fashioned out of a vaguely religious Holy Roman Empire suggests just how different the religious history of Durkheim's France was from that of the Roman-Byzantine Empire. The definitive end of Charlemagne's Empire came, ironically, in the aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789. And here we come back to our *what-if* fantasy of Durkheim's life after death.

Durkheim was nothing if not preoccupied with France and its fate. Yes, he drew ethnographical and numeric as well as philosophical data from sources as distant and different as Hebrew and Hindu Laws, suicides in Württemberg and Saxon, totemic cultures among the Wotjobaluk in Australia and the Sioux in North America, and the philosophical ideas of Immanuel Kant in Königsberg. Yet, most, if not all, of what he did led to a program of discovering the underlying causes of the troubles of modern life—failed laws, suicides, loss of the moral bond religion traditionally provided. Hence, the irony that the social scientific prophet of education in the culture of France could be the moral glue that might hold its conflict-ridden society together. The irony of it all is that, unlike Turkey, France's deep history was anything but one of a continuous moral order arising from a coherent religious order. Again it seems that Durkheim was writing out of his childhood experience in Épinal the small traditional, Jewish village of his birth—not exactly the pervasive religious order his theory supposed France had lost in his day. The France he experienced upon entering the *École Normale Supérieure* in 1879 was quite unlike the Jewish schuls his rabbinical father and his father's fathers guided for generations. ENS then as now was sternly competitive. Students were meant to succeed intellectually even when only the special few can lead a given class. Their reading was not of scriptures except in the sense of that philosophy in particular is worshipped among the Parisian literati. Durkheim's sense of a national moral crisis may have been shaped as much by his personal experience as by the anti-clerical measures of France's 1789 revolution.

If Durkheim had disembarked the Orient Express in Istanbul, perhaps in 1922, he would have surely been impressed right off his first morning upon hearing the Islamic calls to prayer which, even without amplification, would have drifted across the Bosphorous. He might also, on the first day, walked about to find the city's then still most famous architectural wonder, the *Ayasofya* in the *Fatih* district of Istanbul. In our time this miracle of human inspiration and art is the *Ayasofya Müzesi*—a secularized museum since 1935. But on Durkheim's imaginary visit to Istanbul early

in the 1920s he might have seen in the *Ayasofya* a surprising confirmation of his theory of the importance of religion in creating a social bond. *Ayasofya* had been the Eastern Orthodox Cathedral of Constantinople from the earliest days of Christian presence in the region Turkey would come to dominate under the Ottomans. Then in 1453 Mehmed the Conqueror had the Christian cathedral converted into the *Ayasofya*, the religious center of his Empire. It was the same building, ordained in time to serve two gods.

Even more, Durkheim would have been at least interested in the historical fact that the bouleversements of the Ottoman rise to power in 1453 seemed to have been a near letter-perfect confirmation of his idea that traditional religion—as opposed to any given religion—had served as the moral glue that held traditional societies together. This was a disposition formed it would seem by Durkheim's Jewish childhood in Épinal. Still, on this central point of his thinking, it is too bad that he hadn't known Max Weber better. Not long after Durkheim's writings on the *anomie* in *Suicide* (1897), Weber offered his own theory of the prehistory of modern urban societies in his stunning *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-05). When Durkheim published *Suicide*, Weber was still in the throes of the depression provoked by disputes with his father that seem to have led to Max Weber Sr's death in 1897. Given the differences between German and French intellectual life in the day, it would have been somewhat more likely that Weber, had he not been suffering so, would have discovered Durkheim's book.

Even in the early period of *L'Année Sociologique* (1896-1924) in which Durkheim's group was reviewing sociologies outside France, Weber could have taught his French peer about the effects of modern economics on the religious sphere. For whatever reason, Durkheim seems not to have taken seriously the then looming reality that the rational instrumental ethic of capitalism is not only destructive of traditional values but leads to an entirely different social order in which economic values dominate. It is likely that his attitude on the modern world was fixed by his obvious optimism as to the positive values of the organic division of labor as opposed to the mechanical solidarity:

...[Mechanical] solidarity does not link men with the same force as the division of labor, and that, moreover, it leaves outside its scope the major part of phenomena actually social, it will become still more evident that social solidarity tends to become exclusively organic. It is the division of labor which, more and more, fills the role that was formerly filled by the *common conscience*. It is the principle bond of social aggregates of higher types.

This was Durkheim in 1893 launching his career with the *The Division of Labor in Society*. But was he not creating a double-bind for himself? If the modern “higher-type” of organic solidarity provides a place for “phenomena actually social” by its social division of labor, then what is to be made of the early appearance of *conscience collective* in this text?

It is worth noting that Steven Lukes makes the important point that here Durkheim is revising by inversion Ferdinand Toennies's famous *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* dichotomy in which community is distinguished from society. Weber is known to have been of like mind with Toennies whose dichotomy is somewhere in the deep background of Weber's systematic formulation of traditional versus modern authorities. Likewise, Durkheim's knowledge of Toennies was likely to have been at work when the French sociologist was staking out new intellectual territory. In any case, the trouble Durkheim made for himself in the reversal of the German concepts is already evident in *The Division of Social Labor*. If organic solidarity is the higher, more modern division of labor then why does it seem to lack the conceptual sense of community captured by the German term *gemeinschaft*? If, as both Toennies and Weber thought (in different ways), traditional societies are more *gemeinschaftliche* than modern *gesellschaftliche* societies, then how could it be, as Durkheim thought, that the traditional is the instance of mechanical solidarity in which their communal order is so severely mechanical, and not (as he also thought) imbued with a viable collective consciousness while being organically dispersed among its socially divided social labors—or, as Weber called them, the spheres of the modern world. Hence, the not so obvious complications of Durkheim's *The Division of Social Labor* contributed to a contradiction in his subsequent concerns in *Suicide* with respect to the *anomic* aspects of the modern world. If *anomie* arose from a collective consciousness that was too feeble to ward off the deadly effects of the modern urban societies, then what is to be made of the proposed higher social values of the organic division of social labor?

Thus, if Durkheim's ghost had embodied itself as a Durkheim who survived death in 1917, a visit to Istanbul in 1922 might well have relieved the confusion he not only created for himself but which also would likely have caused him to rethink his last great book. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* in 1912 was as close as Durkheim came to writing something like an all but pure theory of knowledge. In this one respect his thinking was closer to the comparably theoretical *Division of Social Labor in 1893*, than to *Suicide* in 1897 and *Primitive Classifications* in 1903. Of course, theory for Durkheim was never pure theory (if there is such a thing). Still the richly empirical *Primitive Classifications* was the opening salvo that led, a decade later, to *Elementary Forms* in 1912 in which the organizing concept is the *collective representations* typical of elementary religions which, he thought, served as something of a model, if not the precursor of the ideal modern society.

Collective representations are the result of an immense co-operation, which stretches out not only into space but into time as well; to make them, a multitude of minds have associated, united, and combined their ideas and sentiments; for them, long generations have accumulated their experience and their knowledge.

This from the beginning of *Elementary Forms* and repeated at the end of the book in his famous summary statement of *collective representations*: “The nature of the concept, thus defined, bespeaks its origin. If it is common to all, it is the work of community.” Yet, this brilliant book betrays its title. Religious life, when all is said and done, is no more than the traditional basis of social life—thus the elementary form not of religion but of human knowledge, thus of culture and society itself.

It is possible that the Great War of 1914, coming just two years after Durkheim's optimistic *Elementary Forms*, might have shaken his intellectual assumptions as much as it seems to have disturbed his emotional and moral commitments. At the least, had André not been killed and had Emile survived to experience the short-lived triumph imposed on Germany in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, Durkheim almost surely would have understood the reasons why John Maynard Keynes quit the British delegation that signed the vengeful treaty of 1919. Thus it is also possible that he could have gone to Istanbul for any number of reasons of which one, as I suggested, might have been to study the effects of the long enduring social role of traditional religions. Another, of course, would have been, as I have also said, to study the facts and features of the then burgeoning democratic republic. Then too, after realizing the potential for disaster in the flawed Treaty of 1919, he might have come to Istanbul, away from familiar intellectual territory, to reflect on the contradictions in his life's work.

If indeed he had taken the Orient Express to get away to dig deeper, he would surely have known enough to be intrigued by Mustafa Kemal's vision for a secularizing Turkey bent upon entering the modern world of Western Europe. As time then went by, the Republic of Turkey would in fact become its own version of democratic republic Durkheim had never experienced in France. France's 1789 Revolution was so structurally and morally flawed that whatever one thinks of the civilizing purposes that from time to time peeked out from its blanket of blood, French history in the 1800s until Durkheim's time was at best a still-born democracy shrouded by unrelenting conflict. In a certain sense one could say that Durkheim's complaint ought not to have been directed at French society so much as French politics.

Had Durkheim's ghost been patient enough to hover about well into the twentieth century to the decades after the Second World War it might have seen a better world. In the decades after recovering from the ruins of war, Europe formed itself into a union of people and politics. Such a political, even social, phenomenon would have surely moved Durkheim's ghost to report back beyond the grave in Épinal that a societal miracle had occurred. Beginning with the Treaty of Rome in 1958, the European Union fashioned a relatively stable accord of eventually 28 member nations that could be viewed as the fulfillment of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. In 1959, the year after its founding, the EU entered into membership negotiations with Turkey. In 2018

those negotiations were stalled in light of President Recep Erdoğan's abandonment of modern Turkey's secular democratic ideals. Just the same, the Republic of Turkey would not have drawn so close to the rest of Europe had not Kemal Atatürk succeeded in fashioning a secularized Turkey—a nation with blemishes like all others but also one able from time to time to grow a robust economy and a modern state that served the EU's strategic interests in the Middle East.

Of course, the EU states had to be secure enough in their own values to look beyond the fact that, late Ottoman Turkey even as it was drifting toward a secular democracy, was responsible for the genocide of Turkish Armenians. Today, it might be objected that this was in Turkey's distant past. Yet, unlike Germany's attempt to remember so as not to forget Hitler's holocaust, modern Turkey does not recognize its holocaust that killed so many and sent others seeking refuge in Syria. In 2004 Turkey's most globally respected writer, Orhan Pamuk, was indicted for violating the specious Article 301 of the Penal Code making it a crime to insult the Republic. Pamuk's insult was that he had denounced his government's role in the violence done against both Armenians and Kurds. The charges were dropped in 2006 after world-wide protest led by the EU.

Then too, in our day, as before, more than a few EU member states have condoned, even approved, attitudes toward immigrants that, as in the United States after 2016, are at least racist and at worst inclined toward something like fascism.

Democracy is a hard game to play. It commits sins against its own high principle and nowhere more so than in the United States which has long had a preposterously high regard for its values while suffering the moral dilemma of having been a nation of slave holders, that also killed and removed its aboriginal people, put Japanese citizens in confinement camps during WWII, and most recently after 2018 incarcerated immigrants while splitting apart their families. This is my country and, as the saying goes, I love it—but love (if that is the word) always runs up against terrible truths of its own making. Durkheim, it would seem, loved the France of his day. He devoted his considerable intellectual powers to explaining its situation and seeking a way out of its dilemmas. Had he survived the war that killed him, he would have been at first excited then disappointed (to say the least) by what his ghost would have learned not just about Turkey but about most, if not all, modern democratic societies.

Yet, in our day, the world with all its blemishes (a far too innocent term) needs hopeful, perhaps gentle, souls like Durkheim. On that what he brought from Épinal could be broadcast to and, even, inscribed on this wider world! Perhaps our children will figure out how this can come to pass.⁵

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5 The views are those of the author and not the editors of the *Istanbul University Journal of Sociology*.

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