*The Editors of *JASO* are pleased to publish the following article on Durkheim by the late Professor of Social Anthropology in the University of Oxford. This is the tenth article written by E-P that has appeared in *JASO*, six of which - including the article on Durkheim below - have now been printed together with other essays in a new collection published by Faber and Faber. We are grateful to Faber and Faber for their permission to print the article on Durkheim in this form, which has been compiled by André Singer, E-P's research assistant at the time of his death. It is printed here exactly as received from Dr. Singer.

EVANS-PRITCHARD ON DURKHEIM

Professor Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard was in the course of writing A History of Anthropological Thought *when he died in September 1973. This work was based on the lectures he had given in Oxford on those thinkers who most greatly influenced the development of British social anthropology. He was anxious that his work survive him, and it was his request that, in the event of his death, I complete it for publication.*

This article on Durkheim is based on a paper that Evans-Pritchard gave to a seminar organized by Steven Lukes at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1971. It remains Evans-Pritchard's last unpublished serious essay and it goes considerably further in its ethnological criticism than anything he wrote earlier. During the editing of this essay for the volume A History of Anthropological Thought *(just published - in September 1981 - by Faber and Faber) I have incorporated some of Evans-Pritchard's notes from his lectures and some comments from his* Theories of Primitive Religion *in order to round off an incomplete paper. The final result is not what Evans-Pritchard would have written, particularly in the light of Lukes' own work on Durkheim* (Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work, 1913), *but despite its inadequacies it is with some satisfaction that it now appears in* JASO *in the same manner that Evans-Pritchard was following with the other articles that have made up* A History of Anthropological Thought.

André Singer

DURKHEIM (1858-1917)

Certainly among the most potent influences on British anthropological thought were the writings of Emile Durkheim, professor of social science at Bordeaux and later professor of sociology and education in Paris. Apart from the French heritage he received from Montesquieu and Comte, the philosophers Boutroux and Renouvier, and the historian Fustel de Coulanges, he was profoundly influenced in his earlier writings, as is especially evident in his *De la Division*, by Herbert Spencer. We must always remember too that Durkheim, like all of us, was a child of his time - a Frenchman of the Third Republic. France had passed through many vicissitudes, and patriotic Frenchmen keenly felt the need for national moral regeneration. Democracy (including a strong trend towards socialism), secularism, and positive science were the key ideas and ideals of the period. We have also to bear in mind Durkheim's rabbinical background. He played a big part in public life and was a notable propagandist in the 1914-18 war.

In this chapter I am concerned with Durkheim's theory of the origin of religion as presented in *Elementary Forms* in order to draw attention to the very serious inadequacies, from the ethnological point of view, in Durkheim's work.

Durkheim wished to discover the origin of religion; he was not prepared to accept that it was just an illusion as Tylor would have it in his animistic theory, and he found equally unacceptable the naturalistic theory of Müller and others. Religious beliefs correspond to something real; not, it is true, to what the believers think is real - gods, spirits, ghosts, souls; but to society itself or its segments or its individual members symbolized by such concepts. According to Durkheim, the Central Australian aboriginals, being the most primitive people known to us, demonstrate for us religion in its most elementary form, totemism. But though the totemic creatures are sacred, their sacredness is secondary to certain stylized emblematic designs representing them, carved on oblong pieces of wood or polished stone, called *churinga*. It is these objects which represent in symbolic form the sentiment of clan solidarity, and which give to each member of a clan a sense of dependence on that collectivity. They are a sort of clan flag. And these designs, according to Durkheim, are symbols in particular concrete representations of an impersonal force, an essence or vital principle, what he calls the totemic principle; a force which to us would be abstract but for the Australian is concrete. So religion arises out of social life itself, and we see how in Australia it is generated by periodic ceremonies in which members of a clan work themselves into hallucinatory states in which their faith is renewed in the reality of what are in fact only symbolic representations of their own social cohesion.

When Durkheim came to write the *Elementary Forms*, he was already totally committed by his earlier writings to a theory of the origin of religion. What makes one raise one's eyebrows is the fact that though in his essays on totemism and related subjects he shows that he was well conversant with much of the ethnological data on

Australian aboriginals, there is no hint in them of the conclusions reached in the *Elementary Forms*. Whence came the illumination? Could it have been that the Australian data, because of its poverty, gave Durkheim a suitable illustration of a theory already propounded in his mind? I think so. Anyhow, as Van Gennep (1920, *L'Etat actuel du Problème Totémique*, p. 49) says, Durkheim more or less equates 'religion' with 'social and Malinowski (1913, *Folklore*, p. 425) also complains that for Durkheim 'The distinctive characters of social and religious phenomena practically coincide'. So we must say a few words about his general approach to the study of social phenomena.

Very briefly, and therefore perhaps to Durkheim's disadvantage, it is as follows. Man is born an animal organism and his intellectual and moral qualities are not only the creation of society but *are* society in him; and they are traditional (transmissible), general (to all members of his community), and above all obligatory. Religion has these features and is therefore simply another aspect of society. Had Durkheim had any other theory of religion than that which he put forward in his book he would have had to go back on his whole sociological position. It follows that not only are religion and society the same but also the mental categories and society. On this point Goldenweiser (1915, p. 732) complains that in Durkheim's view these categories 'are not merely instituted by society, but they are, in their origin, but different aspects of society. The category of "genus" finds its beginning in the concept of the human group; the rhythm of social life is at the basis of the category of "time"; the space occupied by society is the source of the category of "space"; the first efficient "force" is the collective force of society, bringing in its wake the category of "causality". The category of "totality", finally, can only be of social origin. Society alone completely transcends the individual, rising above all particulars. The concept of totality is but the abstract form of the concept of society: society is the whole which comprises all things, the ultimate class which embraces all other classes.' It has often been said, and with some justification, that Durkheim reified society; so Malinowski (1913, p. 528) in his review of *Elementary Forms* remarks that society is written about by Durkheim as a being endowed with will, aims and desires: 'an entirely metaphysical conception'.

Durkheim claims that totemism is a religion on the grounds, in the first place, that it is sacred, which is for him anything protected and isolated by interdictions, and in the second place that it is a set of beliefs and practices of a social group, a collectivity, what he calls a church. Now, Durkheim can, obviously, define religion by what criteria he pleases - it is then religion to him; and he can start from premises which give him his already formulated conclusions about it, since they are already contained in the definition. But what if others do not accept his criteria? Frazer, for example, at least in his later writings, put totemism in the category of magic and not of religion. Schmidt (1931, p. 115) observes of *Elementary Forms*: 'The question was asked how it was possible not merely to defend the religious character of

totemism, as this book does, but actually to exalt it to the position of the source of all religion, at a time when all other researchers were more and more definitely denying any connection between totemism and religion whatsoever.' And this is what Goldenweiser (1915, p. 725) has to say on the matter: 'Having satisfied himself that all the elements which, according to his conception of religion, constitute a true religion, are present in totemism. Durkheim declares totemism to represent the earliest form of a religion which, while primitive, lacks none of those aspects which a true religion must have. Thus is reached the culminating point of a series of misconceptions of which the first is Durkheim's initial view and definition of religion. For had he given proper weight to the emotional and individual aspects in religion, the aspect which unites religious experiences of all times and places into one psychological continuum, he could never have committed the patent blunder of "discovering" the root of religion in an institution which is relatively limited in its distribution and is, moreover, distinguished by the relatively slight intensity of the religious values comprised in it. In this latter respect totemism cannot compare with either animal worship or ancestor worship, or idolatry, or fetishism, or any of the multifarious forms of worship of nature, spirit, ghost, and god. Several of these forms of religious belief are also more widely diffused than totemism and must be regarded as more primitive, differing from totemism in their independence from any definite form of social organization.'

As is of course well known, neither Durkheim nor his colleagues and pupils had any first-hand knowledge of the primitive peoples they wrote so much about. Unfortunately in this book he was led astray in essential particulars by Robertson Smith: that religion is a clan cult; that the cult is totemic; that the god of the clan is the clan itself divinized; and that totemism is the most primitive form of religion known to us. On all these points, as has been seen, Robertson Smith's assertions could hardly be substantiated by the ethnological facts, either wholly or even in part, and, strangely enough, least of all in the Semitic field in which he was so eminent a scholar.

One of the most serious initial confusions in Durkheim's book is his ambiguous use of the word 'primitive'. In what sense the Central Australians can be called 'primitive' will be touched on later. Here I want to suggest that Durkheim, who was too clever to fall blindly into the trap, tried to safeguard himself by saying that he did not use 'primitive' in a chronological sense but only in a structural sense; this was just a trick, for he was too much under the influence of Herbert Spencer not to equate in his thought the two senses and to seek in what he regarded as the structually most primitive the most primitive in time. But to regard the Central Australians as being more primitive in time than anybody else is meaningless. And to seek in their religion - if it can be so regarded - the origin of religion, a sort of primordium, was a pointless endeavour. In any case the origin of an institution does not explain it, especially when the origin cannot be known! And

what is the evidence that religion originated in totemism, or for that matter in any one particular way rather than in many ways? Durkheim was certainly a sociologistic monist.

I think it is significant that Durkheim was a militant atheist, not just an unbeliever but a propagandist for unbelief. Religion therefore presented a challenge to him. He had to find some sort of explanation of what is a universal phenomenon in both time and space, and could only do so in terms of the sociological metaphysic to which he had irretrievably committed himself. In the light of his standpoint animistic and naturistic explanations of religion could not be accepted, both accounting for religion as one or other form of illusion (though it is difficult to see how society is any more or less objective than a dream or conceptions of the heavenly bodies).

What is totemism? This is a problem Durkheim never faces. It is usual to suppose that it is the association of an animal or plant species, occasionally a class of inanimate objects, with a social group, and typically with an exogamic group or clan. But this is a matter of definition. According to Radcliffe-Brown, totemism is a special form of a phenomenon universal in human society; it arises out of the dependence of hunting and collecting peoples on what they hunt and collect. Being a pseudo-historian, he believed that clan totemism arose from some such general attitude when social segmentation took place. All this is of course speculative nonsense. Then, certainly the totem of the North American Indians, from whom, after all, the word 'totem' is derived, is something very different from what Durkheim is talking about with regard to the Arunta of Central Australia. The African data - Durkheim just ignores what does not fit into his picture - are phenomena so different from what has been recorded about the Arunta that it is difficult to say more than that the same sort of label has got attached to what might appear to be the same but are in important respects quite different. The whole matter is what Van Gennep calls a bit '*touffu*'. Van Gennep lists dozens of theories supposedly explaining totemism (1920, p. 341), including Durkheim's *'Emblématique-Collectiviste (sociologique)'* - he puts him (1920, p. 4) in the broad *'Nominaliste'* class with Herbert Spencer, Andrew Lang and Max Müller.

Goldenweiser (1915, p. 725): 'Nor does Durkheim's discussion of the relative priority of clan totemism carry conviction. Here his facts are strangely inaccurate, for far from it being the case that "individual totemism" never occurs unaccompanied by clan totemism, the facts in North America, the happy hunting-ground of the guardian spirit, bespeak the contrary. Whereas that belief must be regarded as an all but universal aspect of the religion of the American Indian, it has nowhere developed more prolifically than among the tribes of the Plateau area who worship not at the totemic shrine. To regard the belief in guardian spirits, "individual totemism", as an outgrowth of clan totemism is, therefore, an altogether gratuitous hypothesis!'

Durkheim held that one well-controlled experiment is sufficent to establish a law. This is a very dubious assertion with regard

to the natural sciences; with regard to the human sciences it cannot be sustained. Malinowski (1913, p. 530) correctly observes: 'Theories concerning one of the most fundamental aspects of religion cannot be safely based on an analysis of a single tribe, as described in practically a single ethnographical work.' Again (1913, p. 526): 'Nevertheless, to base most far-reaching conclusions upon practically a single instance (the Arunta) seems open to very serious objections.' Goldenweiser (1915, pp. 734-5) likewise comments: 'The selection of Australia as the practically exclusive source of information must be regarded as unfortunate in view of the imperfection of the data. The charge is aggravated through the circumstance that the author regards the case of Australia as typical and tends to generalize from it.' Again (Goldenweiser, 1915, p. 723): 'While the author's rejection of the comparative method deserves hearty endorsement, the motivation of his resolve to present an intensive study of one culture arouses misgivings. For thus, he says, he might discover a law. Applicable as this concept may be in the physical sciences, the hope itself of discovering a law in the study no matter how intensive of *one* historical complex, must be regarded as hazardous.'

In any case, was the experiment well controlled when the ethnographical evidences were so muddled and inadequate as to range between doubtful and unacceptable? Goldenweiser (1915, p. 723) justly says: 'Also from the point of view of the available data must the selection of Australia be regarded as unfortunate, for, in point of ethnography Australia shares with South America the distinction of being our dark continent. A more instructive study in ethnographic method could be written based on the errors committed by Howitt and Spencer and Gillen, as well as Strehlow, our only modern authorities on the tribes from which Durkheim derives all his data.' Durkheim relied almost entirely on what Spencer and Gillen wrote about the Arunta, and as the matters he was discussing largely involved linguistic issues it is pertinent to remark that I can discover no evidence that either of these men were able to speak the native language of the people they wrote about. And here I must quote a statement by Mr. Strehlow the younger (1947, p. xvi), whose knowledge of the Aranda (Arunta) language is unquestionable. He wrote: 'I have sometimes felt that the anthropologists of the past tended to overemphasize the differences between the Australian natives and ourselves; and this, I venture to suggest, has been due largely to the language barrier between them and their informants. Too often traditions and customs were noted down in their barest outlines; and the details were later filled in by the scientists themselves according to their own conception of what the natives' ideas ought to have been on certain subjects. In other words, the parched skeletons brought back from necessarily brief field excursions were often covered with flesh and skin in the private studies of the anthropologists, and then presented to the public as living representatives of Australian natives, voicing suitably primitive sentiments. This earlier "primitivist" attitude of scientists may be illustrated by a condensed paragraph from the introduction

to the account of the well-known Horn Expedition to Central Australia in 1894. Here the scientific attitude to the aboriginals is summed up over Horn's own signature as follows: "The Central Australian aborigine is the living representative of a stone age who still fashions his spear-heads and knives from flint and sandstone and performs the most daring surgical operations with them. His origin and history are lost in the gloomy mists of the past. He has no written records and few oral traditions. In appearance he is a naked hirsute savage, with a type of features occasionally pronouncedly Jewish. He is by nature light-hearted, merry and prone to laughter, a splendid mimic, supple-jointed, with an unerring hand that works in perfect unison with his eye, which is as keen as that of an eagle. He has never been known to wash. He has no private ownership of land, except as regards that which is not over carefully concealed about his person.... Religious belief he has none, but is excessively superstitious, living in constant dread of an Evil Spirit which is supposed to lurk round his camp at night. He has no gratitude except that of the anticipatory order, and is as treacherous as Judas. He has no traditions, and yet continues to practise with scrupulous exactness a number of hideous customs and ceremonies which have been handed from his fathers, and of the origin or reason of which he knows nothing.... After an experience of many years I say without hesitation that he is absolutely untamable.... Verily his moods are as eccentric as the flight of his own boomerang. Thanks to the untiring efforts of the missionary and the stockman, he is being rapidly "civilized" off the face of the earth, and in another hundred years the remaining evidence of his existence will be the fragments of flint which he has fashioned so rudely."'

I have made it clear (Evans-Pritchard, 1965, pp. 64-5) why I think the dichotomy between the 'sacred' and the 'profane' is a false one, and that I have never found it of the slightest value in my field research. Obviously, for dialectical purposes, Durkheim had to make a rigid opposition between the two categories, for if there is to be a 'sacred' there must be a 'profane'; but this is a conceptual, not empirical, antithesis. And are the concepts ours or those of the Australian aboriginals? Malinowski (1913, p. 526) very correctly asks a question: 'A sharp division into things sacred and profane may hold for the Central Australians. But is it universal? I feel by no means persuaded. In reading the detailed monograph by Dr. and Mrs. Seligmann about the Veddas, no such division is suggested as existing among that extremely primitive people. Again, it would be difficult to maintain the existence of such a separation among the Melanesian peoples of whom we have very copious records.' I think that Durkheim was here generalizing from his own Semitic background.

Furthermore, this black and white antithesis does not allow for the grey. This is more or less what Stanner, who claims (1967, p. 225) that Durkheim (1967, p. 229) seriously misunderstood Australian social organization, says about the aboriginals of the north: 'The dichotomy is an over-simplification.' It is 'unusable except at the cost of undue interference with the facts

of observation.' Again (1967, p. 127): 'I have found it impossible to make sense of aboriginal life in terms of Durkheim's well-known dichotomy "the sacred" and "the profane".' Then (p. 109): 'The more closely the category of 'the profane' is studied the less suitable it appears.'

Also, as, according to Durkheim, almost everything among the aboriginals, both people and the natural world in which they live, is sacred in some degree, it is difficult to see what strictly can be called 'profane'. Nor does Durkheim deal adequately with the fact that totems are sacred only to some people and not to others of the same community.

Durkheim was an evolutionary fanatic who wished to explain social phenomena in terms of pseudo-historical origins. Hence arose one of his most serious blunders, a blunder in both logic and method. He held that since the Australian aboriginals were the least technologically developed people in the world, their religion - totemism - must be regarded as the most primitive we have knowledge of. Herein lies a whole string of unsupportable, even stupid, assumptions. In the first place, it cannot be sustained that a simple material culture and bionomic way of life necessarily mean the absence of a highly complex language, mythology, poetry, and so forth. All the evidence is to the contrary. And what then are we to say about peoples just as simple, or even simpler, in their material culture than these Central Australian aboriginals but who are not totemic at all? Why did not totemism blossom from their technologically undeveloped condition? Long ago Van Gennep (1920, p. 49) pointed out that totemism is not found among peoples even lower in the scale of civilization than the Central Australians, e.g., Bushmen, Vedda, Andamanese, the tribes in Central Brazil. I quote Goldenweiser again (1915, p. 723): 'Australia is selected for the primitiveness of its social organization (it is based on the clan!) with which a primitive form of religion may be expected to occur. That at this stage of ethnological knowledge one as competent as Emile Durkheim should regard the mere presence of a clan organization as a sign of primitiveness is strange indeed.'

Durkheim had to accept that beside their totem beliefs the aboriginals about whom he was writing had conceptions of the individual soul and of gods, and he tried to explain them in terms of his general theory. The idea of the soul is nothing more than the totem principle incarnate in each individual, society individualized. There follows a splendid passage by Durkheim; but it must be soberly asked whether, even if we grant some meaning to 'totemic principle', it is possible to establish any general connection between totemism and the idea of the soul. There may indeed often be some such conceptual association among peoples who have totems, but what about the peoples who do not have totems? Since according to Durkheim the *'principe totêmique'* is the sole basis of all religion there is justification in Sidney Hartland's remark that since the idea of the soul is universal the idea of the totem must be too. But totemism is not universal.

As for the gods, or spiritual beings, Durkheim thought that

they must have been totems at one time; and he explained them as idealized representations of the totality of clan totems within a tribe, a totemic synthesis corresponding to the synthesis of clans within a tribe. Durkheim adduces no evidence at all that the gods were once totems; and his structural explanation may indeed be neat, but it is little more than that. P.W. Schmidt (1935, p. 117) was right to observe that the South East Australians, whom he regarded as having an older culture than the Arunta, 'have either no totemism at all to show or only fragments of it, acquired at a later date; what we do find among them is the figure of the Supreme Being, clear, definite, and quite independent of totemism.' And what, we may add, about the many primitive peoples who believe in gods and have no totems?

On this matter I cite a pertinent passage from Lowie (*Primitive Religion*, 1936): 'We shall content ourselves with putting the axe to the root of the theory. It is ethnographically unwarranted to deduce primeval conceptions from Australian conditions. The Australians are not so primitive as, certainly not more primitive in their culture than, the Andaman Islanders, the Semang of the Malay Peninsula, the Paviotso of Nevada. In these sociologically simplest tribes totemism does not occur. Totemism is a widespread but far from universal phenomenon, while the belief in spiritual being is universal; precisely these rudest tribes which have a decisive bearing on the question are non-totemic animists. Hence, the notion of spirit cannot be derived from totemism. Moreover, the totemic ideas of the Australians represent a highly localized product and cannot even be accepted as the earliest form of *totemism*.'

As for the 'totemic principle', this is more or less equated by Durkheim with the mainly Polynesian concept of *mana* and those of *wakan* and *orenda* in North America; and this idea of what was supposed to be some sort of impersonal force analogous to ether or electricity was at the time very fashionable among anthropologists and sociologists (Marett, Hewitt, Vierkandt, Hartland, Preuss, Durkheim himself, and his collaborators Hubert and Mauss). Perhaps in this climate of theory Durkheim could scarcely have avoided some such interpretation but whether this be so or not I think it would be fair to say that all those who have recently concerned themselves with the matter and in the light of what is now known about it would agree that this more or less pseudo-metaphysical interpretation is most misleading; and I would suggest that it is a simple logical deduction which would account for the error of the reporters - namely that any 'virtue' or 'quality' which is found in many persons and things must have an abstract term of reference. Moreover there is a good deal of force in a further objection (Goldenweiser, 1915, p. 727) with regard to Durkheim's identification of the 'totemic principle' with *mana*: 'On reading the pages devoted to this discussion the unprejudiced student soon perceives that the facts supporting Durkheim's contention are altogether wanting. There is no indication that the beliefs underlying totemic religion are generically the same as those

designated by the terms *mana* or *orenda*....' All this, and much more is *aus der Luft gegriffen*.

For Durkheim totemism is a clan religion. Where there are clans there is totemism and where there is totemism there are clans. This is not correct. Van Gennep tells us that in North America we find the Kutchin, the Crow, the Hidatsa, and the Choctaw with exogamic divisions but without totems or totemic names (1920, p. 29). Then Schmidt (1931, p. 113): 'Totemism, with which Freud begins the development of mankind, is not at the beginning. We know a whole series of peoples, ethnologically the oldest, who have neither totemism nor mother-right; the Pygmoids, the Pygmies of Asia and Africa, the South-East Australians, the Ainu, the primitive Eskimos, the Koryaks, the Samoyeds in the extreme north of the globe, the North Central Californians, the primitive Algonkins of North America, the Geztapuya tribes of South America, and the Tierra del Fuegians of the extreme south. Even if Freud's theory were right in itself it would have nothing to do with the origin of religion, morals or society, for the origins of all these lie much further back in pretotemic days, and are utterly different from Freud's phantasies.' We are further informed (Van Gennep, 1920, p. 74) that although the Papuans of New Guinea have clans they are not totemic. As Van Gennep points out there are many other sorts of *unités sociales* which might be expected on Durkheim's reasoning to be totemic but have no totems or emblems or anything corresponding to them.

Apart from the fact that clans and totemism do not necessarily go together, there is the further objection to Durkheim's thesis to which I have alluded in my book (Evans-Pritchard, 1965, pp. 65-6). Among the Australian aboriginals it is the so-called horde, and then the tribe, which are the corporate groups, and not the widely dispersed (again so-called) clans; so if the function of religion is to maintain the solidarity of the groups which most require a sense of unity, then it should be the hordes and (once again, so-called) tribes, and not the clans, that should perform the rites generating effervescence. I am not the first to have raised this objection. It is implied in what Van Gennep has said about *unités sociales*, and it is explicitly stated by Lowie (1936, p. 160): 'In so far as Durkheim does not identify divine society with the crowd, he rather lightly fixes on the sib as the social group that would at the same time loom as the god-like protector and curber. No doubt the individual derives sustenance and protection from his own sib, but that is equally true of his local or tribal group as a whole. Why, then, should the sib alone function as the nascent god? On the other hand, restraint is precisely what one's own sib does not usually exercise, that is left to the other sibs. If by special act of grace we follow Durkheim to his favourite Australian field, special difficulties arise. He insists that the individual acquires his culture from society. But this society from which he acquires it is only in small measure his sib. For example, in a matrilineal Australian tribe a boy belongs indeed to his mother's sib, but his training

in woodcraft is derived from his father, regardless of rules of descent, and his education is completed in the camp that unites all the bachelors, irrespective of kinship. To leap from society as a whole to the individual's own sib seems to be in no way justified by Durkheim's reasoning. We are obliged to conclude that his theory neither explains how the assemblages of the ceremonial season create religious emotion, nor why the sib should be singled out for masked adoration from among all the social units, when it is only one of a series all of which jointly confer on him the blessings of culture and of protection.'

With regard to the emblematic engravings on the *churinga*: the matter is very complicated - it would appear that there is some sort of hierarchy of these relics, some in stone, and some in wood - and I have been unable to find any decisive verdict about their significance in the literature, both old and new. It must suffice therefore by way of comment if I cite Radcliffe-Brown (1929) to the effect that most of the totems are not figured representationally. If this is true, it much weakens Durkheim's contentions.

This brings us to a further query, already indicated in what has gone before: If totemism is the origin of religion, what about those peoples who are not totemic and as far as we know have never been totemic, yet have religious beliefs and practices? Lowie (1936, pp. 157-9) appropriately observes, 'From the ethnological point of view Dr. Goldenweiser pertinently asks whence the nontotemic peoples have derived their religion.' Durkheim proceeds on the assumption, now thoroughly discredited, that the sib (clan) in the typical form of the totemic sib is a universal trait of very rude cultures. As a matter of fact, it has already been shown that the simplest tribes in both the Old World and the New World lack sibs and totems. No such institution occurs among the Andamanese of the Bay of Bengal or the Chukchi of Siberia, nor has it been reported from the Tasmanians, the Congolese Pygmies, or the Bushmen. If it be objected with some plausibility that our knowledge of the three tribes just mentioned is too inadequate to permit negative data to weigh heavily, there is the wholly unobjectionable evidence from the Western Hemisphere, where the sib organization is uniformly absent from all the rudest hunting tribes and in North America is an almost regular accompaniment of horticulture. The Mackenzie River Athabaskans, the Shoshoneans of the Great Basin, the tribes of Washington and Oregon are sibless, while the sedentary Iroquois and Pueblo tribes are organized into sibs with at least totemic names, if not with full-fledged totemism; for, as we cannot resist mentioning incidentally, the sib organization is by no means uniformly linked with totemism. These simple facts had been pointed out by Dr. Swanton some years before the publication of Durkheim's book, but the French sociologist prefers to ignore them and to take for his point of departure a demonstrably false theory of primitive society. In short, then, there are many nontotemic peoples and among them are precisely those of simplest culture. But they all have some sort

of religion! Shall we assume that they only obtained their beliefs and practices by contact with the borrowing from the higher totemic cultures? The assumption is not *a priori* probable, and empirically there is not the slightest proof for it except as respects specific features of religious culture, such as may be borrowed back and forth under favourable conditions. Dr. Ruth Fulton Benedict has recently examined Durkheim's thesis with reference to the North American data, selecting for discussion the relations of totemism to the most persistent of North American religious traits, the guardian-spirit complex. This feature is not only by virtue of its range far older than totemism but also turns out to be highly developed where no traces of totemism have ever been recorded. It is therefore impossible to derive the guardian-spirit belief from totemic conceptions. On the contrary, there is good evidence that in certain regions totemism, which otherwise has a very meagre religious content, 'tends to take its colouring from the guardian-spirit concept, and the high-water marks of a religious attitude towards the totem, which beyond doubt are found on this continent, are intelligible from this fact.' Goldenweiser, attacking Durkheim's whole theory of the origin of categories, says likewise (1915, p. 733): 'The Eskimo, for example, have no clans nor phratries nor a totemic cosmogony (for they have no totems); how then did their mental categories originate, or is the concept of classication foreign to the Eskimo mind?'

Durkheim has himself laid it down that any explanation of a social fact in terms of psychology must be wrong, yet in his theory so majestic and enduring a social phenomenon as religion arises from the emotional effervescence of a crowd. I have certainly not been the first to protest. Malinowski (1913, p. 529) comments: 'We feel a little suspicious of a theory which sees the origins of religion in crowd phenomena.' Again (p. 530): 'In his actual theory he uses throughout individual psychological explanations.' Goldenweiser said (1915): 'Our first objection to the derivation of the sacred from an inner sense of social pressure is a psychological one. That a crowd-psychological situation should have aroused the religious thrill in the constituent individuals, who - *nota bene* - were hitherto unacquainted with religious emotion, does not seem in the least plausible. Neither in primitive nor in modern times do such experiences, *per se*, arouse religious emotions, even though the participating individuals are no longer novices in religion. And, if on occasion such sentiments do arise, they lack the intensity and permanence required to justify Durkheim's hypothesis. If a corroborree differs from an intichiuma, or the social dances of the North American Indians from their religious dances, the difference is not in the social composition but in the presence or absence of pre-existing religious associations. A series of corroborrees does not make an intichiuma; at least, we have no evidence to that effect, and human psychology, as we know it, speaks against it. Durkheim's main error, however, seems to our mind to lie in a misconception of the relation of the individual to the social, as implied in his theory of social control. The theory errs in making the scope of the social on the one hand, too wide, on the other, too narrow. Too wide in so far

as the theory permits individual factors to become altogether obscured, too narrow in so far as the society which figures in the theory is identified with a crowd, and not with a cultural historic group.' Again (Goldenweiser, 1921, p. 371): 'As one reads Durkheim's picturesque description of Australian ceremonies, he realizes that the social setting with which the author deals is one usually designated as crowd-psychological.' And on the same page: 'Notwithstanding the tremendous importance ascribed to it, society for Durkheim is but a sublimated crowd, while the social setting is the crowd-psychological situation. Society as a cultural, historical complex, society as the carrier of tradition, as the legislator judge, as the standard of action, as public opinion; society in all these varied and significant manifestations, which surely are of prime concern to the individual, does not figure in Durkheim's theory.' Then Lowie (1936, p. 160): 'As Goldenweiser trenchantly asks, "Why is it that the gatherings of Indians for secular dances are not transformed into religious occasions if the assembly itself gives rise to sentiments of religion?"' Why indeed! And not only Indian dances but dances anywhere. According to Durkheim the dancing about in Australian ceremonies transforms the individual, but there is no evidence for this. Radcliffe-Brown (*The Andaman Islanders,* 1922, pp. 246 *et seq*) says much the same about Andamanese dancing, but is equally unconvincing.

As we have seen, Durkheim's whole thesis in the *Elementary Forms* has been subjected, and not unfairly, to devastating criticism from several points of view and by those who, for one or other reason, were fully entitled to express an opinion. Van Gennep, Goldenweiser, and Lowie were all widely read in the literature on totemism; and Malinowski was very much at home in the literature on the Australian aboriginals. Time has not come to Durkheim's assistance. In 1920, Van Gennep could write (p. 236): 'If anything can be said with certainty of the belief-systems which have been studied it is that they do *not* symbolize the clan, or any other concrete social entity, or even idealizations of them, although these elements may colour or mediate what is symbolized.' In 1967, Stanner, a recent student of Australian aboriginals (in the north of the continent) concludes (1967, p. 256): 'The sum of evidence sustains three conclusions: (1) If any Australian aborigines lived, as used to be suggested, in a stationary state of society with a static culture, the Murinbata were certainly not among them over any period which it is possible for inquiry to touch. (2) To identify their religion with totemic phenomena would be a mistake. (3) The society was not the real source and object of the religion.' Strehlow (the younger) in his book *Aranda Traditions,* about the people on whose way of life Durkheim based his entire hypothesis, does not even bother to mention him.

We have, I fear, to come down decisively against Durkheim and conclude that he may not in any sense be regarded as a scientist - at the best a philosopher, or I would rather say, a metaphysician. He broke every cardinal rule of critical scholarship, as well as of logic; and in particular in his disregard of

evidence, and especially of those evidences which negated his theory. He only used the comparative method when it suited him. Since he and his colleagues of the *Année* were determined to prove their theories by appeal to what is generally regarded as ethnological data (i.e. writings about primitive peoples) they must be judged accordingly. If you appeal unto Caesar unto Caesar must you go. So, is the final verdict to be Van Gennep's (1920, p. 49), who compares Durkheim's thesis to the best constructions of the Hindu metaphysicians, the Muslim commentators and the Catholic scholastics? Yes. But to it shall be added the silent judgment of an authoritative student of the aboriginals, E. A. Worms, who completely ignores Durkheim in his article on their original religion.

And now we may ask some final questions. We have decided that though he was scornful of others for deriving religion from motor hallucination, that is precisely what he does himself. Then we may ask whether, if the Australians' belief in the existence of spiritual beings and forces is a baseless assumption, may not Durkheim's assumption that these beings do not exist be arbitrary and just as baseless? And, furthermore, I cannot understand why we should applaud Durkheim's mockery of Tylor for deriving religion from an illusion when that is what, to say it again, he does himself. Why are spiritual forms symbolizing social groups any less an illusion than those derived from dreams? We might also ask why these spiritual forms should be assumed to symbolize anything? And that question leads to a final one.

My greatest objection to Durkheim's thesis is that it is highly unscientific. In science one puts forward a hypothesis which, if it is to have any heuristic value, must be experimentally testable, and it must be shown in what way it can be so tested by observation. Now, how do we set about to prove that religious forms are only symbols of social structures, which is what Durkheim is saying? Obviously, this cannot be done for any one society or type of society, which is what Durkheim is trying to do. It can only be done indirectly by use of the comparative method, a method, as I have said before, Durkheim only used when it suited him. If it can be shown that there is some correspondence between types of social structure and types of religious belief and practice, some sort of case might be made for pursuing the inquiry further along the lines of the hypothesis. Radcliffe-Brown, who had a logical, if not an original mind, tried to show this, but his effort was neither scholarly nor convincing (Evans-Pritchard 1965, pp. 73-5). Or one might try to show from historical evidences that when there has been structural change or change in religious faith there has been uniformly some concomitant change in the other. Durkheim did not even attempt to begin to do either.

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