

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Edward A. Tiryakian, *For Durkheim: Essays in Historical and Cultural Sociology*. Rethinking Classical Sociology. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009, 378 pp. \$US 99.95 hard-cover (978-0-7546-7155-8)

Robert Bierstedt once irritably remarked that it was “time to re-monstrate with Edward Tiryakian about his extravagant regard for Durkheim ... his enthusiasm for Durkheim needs some restraint.” The specific dispute which exercised Bierstedt aside, we can be grateful that Tiryakian’s enthusiasm was not curbed: the fruit of four decades of research and reflection in and on the Durkheimian tradition is in abundant evidence here.

This is an important volume for several reasons. It collects together useful material on the development and dissemination of Durkheimian sociology: its cultural and intellectual matrix, the *équipe* of brilliant students and colleagues which made it a collective work, and its contributions to cultural analysis in several fields of inquiry. It demonstrates the continuing fruitfulness of a Durkheimian approach to the study of contemporary social and cultural phenomena. It powerfully counteracts tired caricatures of Durkheim as a narrow functionalist, a positivist, and a conservative. Tiryakian is an important “bridge” figure: personally familiar with an earlier generation of Durkheim interpreters including Parsons, Merton, Gurvitch, Dumont, and Bellah, he continues to engage with leading lights of contemporary Durkheim scholarship. Tiryakian’s vast knowledge — much of it first-hand — of a century or more of sociological culture is evident here. However, this volume does more than display erudition. The deliberate choice of title, echoing Althusser’s *For Marx* and Turner’s *For Weber*, signals a commitment to using Durkheimian insights to discern the central issues of the present age.

While, like Tiryakian, I am a Durkheim enthusiast and thereby predisposed to view his project positively, it is precisely his attempt to situate Durkheim in a broad cultural and intellectual context, and in relation to sharp, critical questions about contemporary sociological theory, that I find winning. Durkheim’s mission was to make sociology “central in reframing the twin problem of integration and solidarity in advanced modernity,” and Tiryakian’s ambition is to reframe and rearticulate that mission for a new and different era. This is a welcome aspiration in the

face of intellectual fragmentation and compartmentalization; the reduction of the moral dimension of inquiry to therapeutics, engineering, or activism; and the reduction of religion and the sacred to behavioral objects divorced from questions of enlightenment, critique, transgression, or transfiguration. Tiryakian shows Durkheim's project to have been profoundly moral, though it is hard today to recognize the complex and sometimes disconcerting inflections of terms like "moral" and "sacred" in Durkheim's writings, given the contemporary impoverishment of their meaning.

Part 1: "(Re) Discovering Durkheim," contains seven chapters exploring and situating the development of Durkheim's thinking. The first, "Emile Durkheim's matrix," anchors the book, and, though written thirty years ago, it is still essential reading to understand Durkheim's project as a whole, demonstrating how Durkheim's formative period adumbrated much that remained central to his mature work. Tiryakian's discussion of the major influences on Durkheim's thought, though selective (Fourier, Montesquieu, and Rousseau get short shrift) is intelligent and perceptive, particularly his claim that the influence of Saint-Simon has been unduly eclipsed by that of Comte. Tiryakian also notes the centrality of emotions to Durkheim's understanding of the social. A review of a collection of lesser known Durkheim texts points out how much of Durkheim we still do not fully know. A comparative discussion of Durkheim and Husserl, examinations of Durkheim's complex understanding of social change and the legacy of the French Revolution, and a Durkheimian analysis of the events of September 11, 2001, round out this section. In "Durkheim, Mathiez, and the French Revolution" Tiryakian explores the mutual influence of Durkheim and Albert Mathiez on the idea that revolution and festival can be studied as interconnected "religious" phenomena. The Durkheim/Husserl article might give pause to those who claim Durkheim to be a realist, not a positivist, but Tiryakian's sensitive account of what he calls the antireductionistic "spirit" of positivism does Comte better justice than most, and his discussion of Husserlian phenomenology attends to its broader dimensions, rightly noting an analogous attention to intersubjectivity in Durkheim's later work. My own sense is that the later Durkheim is best understood not as supplementing or replacing an earlier positivism with idealism, *pace* Parsons, but as developing a daring and still poorly understood attempt at a post-Cartesian collective ontology and epistemology, a possibility Tiryakian also appears to entertain. In this section, as throughout the book, Tiryakian emphasizes ideas central to Durkheim's later work on religion, affect, and symbolic classification, such as the de-differentiating impulse at work in "extraordin-

ary” moments of collective effervescence. However, he takes pains to link such ideas to concerns present in some of Durkheim’s earliest work.

Part 2: “Durkheim and Cultural Change” engages directly with topics central to contemporary neo-Durkheimian scholarship. Like the first, this section combines rich historical contextualization with contemporary application. Of particular note are two essays relating Durkheimian sociology to the French cultural *avant garde*: to primitivism in the years prior to the First World War, and subsequently, to surrealism. Tiryakian’s treatment of primitivism is a must-read for anyone interested in the cultural, political, and aesthetic contexts of Durkheimian and post-Durkheimian anthropology and sociology. Tiryakian notes, if all too briefly, the important reinterpretations of the Durkheimian concepts of the sacred and of collective effervescence undertaken by Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois as part of the *Collège de Sociologie* initiative. One wishes that this very useful discussion had been augmented to engage more extensively with their use of Durkheim, Mauss, and Hertz (and also Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud) in a provocative rethinking of myth, war, festival, revolution, cultural politics, and collective violence, given the emphasis this receives in much contemporary neo-Durkheimian literature. Also in Part 2 is a useful collation of Durkheim’s scattered discussions of sexual anomie and social change, including a consideration of his essay on incest (unfortunately available in English only in a terribly flawed translation). Strangely, this otherwise comprehensive chapter does not address one crucial text: Durkheim’s contribution to a discussion on sex education in which he links sex, the sacred, and the modern veneration of the individual. Via discussion of revolutions in Nicaragua, Iran, and Poland, “From Durkheim to Managua: Revolutions as Religious Revivals” considers the Durkheimian concept of collective effervescence in relation to revolutionary politics, and revolutionary politics in relation to religion.

In Part 3: “Durkheim and Weber,” Tiryakian moves outside the Durkheimian tradition, examining the “mutual unawareness of Durkheim and Weber,” exploring some limitations of the Durkheimian perspective, and suggesting “elements in common” shared by Durkheim and Weber. Of particular interest, the article “Neither Marx Nor Durkheim ... Perhaps Weber” suggests that, had Durkheim had the advantage of an American sojourn as Weber did, he might have developed a more nuanced account of anomie, taking into account a uniquely American “moral system,” only seemingly anarchic viewed from outside, with deep, if historically mediated roots in Puritanism. In “Collective Effervescence, Social Change, and Charisma: Durkheim, Weber and 1989,” Tiryakian engages two concepts that cry out for comparative theoretical discussion: Durk-

heim's "collective effervescence" and Weber's "charisma," doing so on the most fruitful of terrains: the "revolutions" that ended the "Soviet world." The book closes with a short but provocative article on the possibility of a synthetic Weberian and Durkheimian macrosociology of the Asian 21st century, adding a dimension to the study of global developments that political economy alone cannot address. Appended at the end of the book is a useful bibliography of Tiryakian's Durkheim-oriented writings.

Given his emphasis on the breadth of the Durkheimian project to understand the moral and religious foundations of social life (and the moral and religious dimensions of social inquiry), Tiryakian does not concentrate on detailed conceptual issues, such as the anthropological validity of Durkheim's definitions of totemism or the sacred. His treatment of the most recent Durkheimian literature could use some judicious rounding-out, but on the whole, this volume displays impressive theoretical sophistication, currency, and depth of understanding, a testament to the author's clarity of focus, despite the breadth and diversity of his learning and of the topics to which he has variously applied it. It does exhibit some unevenness, not surprising in a collection of material written in different contexts and for different purposes over more than thirty years. But the book is a fitting monument to Edward Tiryakian's life work, and more than a retrospective, it is a call for a renewed and a theoretically informed sociology rooted in a tradition of scholarship and engaged with questions of moral and political purpose. It testifies to the continued relevance of the legacy of classical theory to that end. It is essential reading for graduate students working in sociological or cultural theory or political sociology, and for anyone teaching Durkheim to undergraduate or graduate students.

This book is also a delight to read. One hopes Ashgate will release a paperback or electronic edition at a reasonable price. It deserves a better fate than to languish in university library stacks frequented less and less by students unaccustomed to the physical presence of scholarly books.

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