



Godless Intellectuals?: The Intellectual Pursuit of the Sacred Reinvented

Alexander Tristan Riley

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The Durkheimians have traditionally been understood as positivist, secular thinkers, fully within the Enlightenment project of limitless reason and progress. In a radical revision of this view, this book persuasively argues that the core members of the Durkheimian circle (Durkheim himself, Marcel Mauss, Henri Hubert and Robert Hertz) are significantly more complicated than this. Through his extensive analysis of large volumes of correspondence as well as historical and macro-sociological mappings of the intellectual and social worlds in which the Durkheimian project emerged, the author shows the Durkheimian project to have constituted a quasi-religious quest in ways much deeper than most interpreters have thought. Their fascination, both personal and intellectual, with the sacred is the basis on which the author reconstructs some important components of modern French intellectual history, connecting Durkheimian thought to key representatives of French poststructuralism and postmodernism: Bataille, Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, and Deleuze.

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