Durkheim; Primitive Religion

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In the book, ‘The Elementary Forms of Religious Life', Emile Durkheim describes the primitive religion as a source of the foundation on which the society has been formed. He describes the ultimate form of social life in society through the lens of religious beliefs present in that particular society. He establishes significant links between the religious belief system and the societal cores that form the very foundations of the social life in a particular setting. He takes the reader to the primitive era, describing totemism and animism[[1]](#footnote-2). He suggests that before any empirical science came into being the ultimate bases of beliefs and the understanding of the daily occurrences was founded on the religious mythologies. Hence the fundamentals of modern science are based on primitive religious beliefs. Durkheim explains how humans have idealized the symbolic meanings of the objects around them or by giving them soul or hidden meaning. Durkheim's views on religion have narrowed them to a comprehensive recognition of society that unites their consciousness and unites them all together under this umbrella[[2]](#footnote-3). The ideals of primitive religion by Durkheim also project that these notions establish a sense of social order and social connection within groups. Durkheim through his analyses of primitive religion helps identify and analyze the institution of religion and how the authority to command and compliance is held by it. Although Durkheim's theories on the primitive religion have been widely criticized for being overly positivist and that he over exaggerates the role of religion amongst societies. Moreover, the religious interpretations can be efficiently made by ethnographic studies, and since Durkheim did not participate in any such initiative, his findings are collective and cannot be held generalized. In spite of criticism, Durkheim’s picture of primitive religion holds that the religious foundations are deeply rooted in social experience.

# References

Durkheim, Emile. 2001. The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. Oxford University Press.

1. Durkheim, Emile. 2001. The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. Oxford University Press, Page 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Ibid 236 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)