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## Frenchman, Jew, positivist – reading the *Rules* and mapping Émile Durkheim in Germany<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:**

This article investigates German-speaking scholarship's reception of the programme of scientific sociology that Durkheim presented in *The Rules of Sociological Method*. It highlights intra-European historical dynamics and academic hierarchies. References to national, cultural, disciplinary and theoretical frames of reference are clearly discernible in the ways the *Rules* have been read and Durkheim has been mapped. Firstly, his reception was embedded in a complex geometry of power between two nation-states during a historical period of competitive nationalism. Secondly, it was affected by the way he was perceived within networks of academics who occupied unequal geocultural positions inside and across nation-states. At times, the special location assigned to him as a Jewish intellectual played an important role. Thirdly, his positioning as a positivist within the specific epistemological structuring of sociology is key to understanding how he was perceived east of the Rhine.

## Frenchman, Jew, positivist – reading the *Rules* and mapping Émile Durkheim in Germany

### *Introduction*

In this article, I investigate German-speaking scholarship's reception of the programme of scientific sociology that Émile Durkheim presented in *The Rules of Sociological Method*. My analysis combines a close reading of German scholars' references to Durkheim's chief work with a special attention to the geopolitics of this reception from the time of publication of the *Rules*. References to national, cultural, disciplinary and theoretical frames of reference are clearly discernible in the ways the *Rules* have been read in German academia, a heterogeneous intellectual landscape with a variety of transnational connections over time. The recognition and status accorded to Durkheim have been strongly determined by the location he was assigned in a complex geography including at least three spatialised features, which goes to show that the chosen national and disciplinary framing is not the result of "unconceptualized geographical and disciplinary boundaries" (Secord 2004:656). Firstly, transnational reception of Durkheim was embedded in a complex geometry of power between two nation-states during a historical period when competitive nationalism was at its peak. Secondly, Durkheim's reception was affected by the way he was perceived within relational networks of academics who occupied unequal positions inside and across nation-states. At times, the special location assigned to him as a Jewish intellectual (regarded as "cosmopolitan" as opposed to "national") played an important role. Thirdly, his theoretical positioning as a positivist within the specific epistemological structuring of sociology as an emerging discipline is key to understanding how he was perceived east of the Rhine. The same holds, by the way, for Durkheim himself and his circle, including Mauss and Bouglé, who had spent time in Germany and read German literature. However, Durkheim

downplayed the German influence in his work when he was faced with nationalistic and anti-Semitic accusations of being insufficiently "French" (Lukes, 1981 [1973]; Terrier 2017). This demonstrates the “inescapably collective character of interpretation and the way in which any individual reading is located in the reader’s membership of a community sharing some foundational assumptions and interpretive strategies”. As a consequence, “encounters with any new theory are necessarily domesticated” within given “interpretive communities” (Livingstone 2005:395).

This triple geocultural mapping within the German scholarly community is what my title refers to: as a Frenchman, Jew and positivist, Durkheim possessed a combination of personal attributes that, for a long period of time, was highly unfavourable and prevented him from achieving widespread recognition in German scholarship. This article combines a focus on transnational circulation of ideas with a special attention to the national interpretive community – including its internal debates and tensions – and the effect of national framings in Durkheim’s reception. It is inspired Laurent Jeanpierre's important remark that “nothing guarantees that the mere crossing of viewpoints, cultures or disciplines will automatically be productive. (...) it is important to abandon the theoretical preconception in favour of diversity and of the encounter of differences in order to study concretely the practices of those exchanges and the misunderstandings between scholars who do not meet” (Jeanpierre 2014:5). Furthermore, it is not sufficient to criticise methodological nationalism, nor to take the opposite approach of “applying a programme of ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’ or one or another form of global history” (Jeanpierre 2014:12)<sup>ii</sup>. My aim is to highlight the particular spatial effects in the way the *Rules* have been read in relation to the ways Durkheim has been mapped in Germany. However, beyond my emphasis on national, geocultural and theoretical spaces in knowledge production and circulation, there is a contrary tendency in the background that only becomes apparent from a long-term perspective. Despite all the historical odds stacked against him, Durkheim gradually established a reputation as one of the discipline’s classical founders. But even recent accounts that acknowledge this status

continue to neglect those aspects that have always sat uneasily or conflicted with the German sociological tradition, whether in its interpretative (*verstehende*), Marxist or critical forms (Peter 2013). In particular, German scholars have paid little heed to Durkheim's primary objective of founding a scientific sociology with rules for experimental thinking and causal. I argue that the challenge for historians of social sciences is to acknowledge this tension between, on the one hand, the geopolitical embeddedness of our discipline and, on the other, its relative autonomisation over time.

*The Rules of Sociological Method – Durkheim's chief work*

Studies of Durkheim's reception have been conducted in other countries, for example around the centenary of the *Rules*' publication in 1995 (cf. for France: Berthelot 1995; Borlandi and Muchielli 1995; Cuin 1997; for the UK: Platt 1995; and for Russia: Gofman 1996; Gofman 1997). Regarding his reception in Germany, we find detailed studies on Durkheim's reception by individual scholars, as, for the early period, Marcucci (2017) on Tönnies; Fitz (2017) on Simmel; Terrier (2017), explicitly building on my work, on two key representatives of law, Kelsen and Schmitt. For the later phase, Christ (2017) has worked on Durkheim's reception by Adorno, Debray (2017) on Luhmann and the interview with Hans Joas (Fitz, Marcucci and Joas 2017) on Durkheim's influence in his work. Furthermore, Michael Schmid has published a systematic piece on the reception of *The Division of Labour in Society* in Germany (Schmid 1993). But to the best of my knowledge, there has not yet been any systematic historical study of the reception of his chief work (in which he sets out his programme and methods) in German-language sociology. The present article concentrates exclusively on Durkheim's "manifesto" rather than his other major works. One key reason for this is that German sociology took no notice of these other works until a much later point in time: it would appear that they remained untranslated for too long. Indeed, a first German translation of the *Rules* (which left a lot to be desired from a

linguistic point of view) was published in 1908 (see on this the elaborate analysis in Rol 2017). A second translation was undertaken by René König in 1961. Other texts that would be interesting in terms of the reception history of sociological theory include Durkheim's doctoral dissertation *The Division of Labour in Society* (Durkheim 1893, first German translation 1977); *Suicide* (Durkheim 1955 [1897], first German translation 1973); and *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Durkheim 1991 [1912], first German translation 1981). The latter work was widely read in ethnology/cultural anthropology and established Durkheim as a "(structural) functionalist" in these fields (rather than a "positivist", as in sociology). This classification was particularly influenced by Malinowski's reading of Durkheim (Cf. on this point Stedman Jones 2013). Durkheim's lectures on pedagogy and morality were translated into German at around the same time (e.g. *Erziehung, Moral und Gesellschaft* 1973 [1902-03]). My focus on one particular book corresponds to Secord's (Secord 2004:661) critical observation that "we still regularly write as though people read authors rather than books". Moreover, the study remains confined to sociology; it does not touch on the related disciplines of ethnology, history, economics or political science. Having said this, I follow Terrier's remark that in undertaking this kind of study, we need to historicise the disciplines, since the configuration of academic disciplines changes over time (Terrier 2017:311; see below the selection of a corpus of literature to be analysed).

Émile Durkheim published his *Rules* in Paris in 1895. The work sets out his programme of scientific sociology, in which the methods of experimental reasoning are applied to the study of social phenomena. In the *Rules*, Durkheim describes the methodological and epistemological foundations (which, for reasons of space, are only described briefly here) not just for his own previous and subsequent sociology, but for an entire branch of the discipline. A truly seminal text that legitimises sociology as a discipline in its own right and attempts to set it on a foundation modelled on the natural sciences, with robust demonstrations of proof underpinned by experimental reasoning and causal explanations. Each of the book's six chapters lays out one of the rules necessary for sociological work.

The first chapter defines a “social fact” (*fait social*; rendered, in my view inaccurately, as “*soziologischer Tatbestand*” – a sociological, rather than a social (*sozial*), fact – in the second German translation of 1961) as follows: “A social fact is any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint; or: which is general over the whole of a given society whilst having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations” (Durkheim 1982 [1985]:59). The second chapter considers the rules for the observation of social facts: “The first and most basic rule is *to consider social facts as things*” (Durkheim 1982 [1985]:60), while the subsequent chapters describe rules for, respectively, the distinction of the normal from the pathological; the constitution of social types; the explanation of social facts; and the demonstration of sociological proof. By ascribing to social facts the same externality (*extériorité*) as “things” and the ability to exert a constraint on individuals, Durkheim famously constituted both sociology’s subject matter and its programme at once while also positioning it within the experimental sciences. Berthelot (1995) therefore places him in the Cartesian philosophical tradition, by way of contrast with the “interpretative” approaches that emerged in the German social sciences. The overlapping labels assigning him to separate national and opposing theoretical spaces are reflected in the history of his reception.

In this paper, I explore German reception of Durkheim’s chief work. This reception is broken down according to the periods contemporary German history is typically divided into: late 19th century to 1918; the Weimar Republic; Nazi Germany; and post-WWII (excluding Durkheim’s reception in the sociology of the GDR). A more complete account is given of the reception up until 1945, while for the subsequent period only the most important strands of Durkheim’s reception are covered. This is due to the increasing variety and complexity of German sociology after 1945 (cf. on this point Lepsius 1979 and Weyer 1984) and the fact that this period is more familiar to contemporary readers.

Alongside the specific topic of the *Rules*’ reception, it is also necessary to look more broadly at the genesis and development of German sociology as a discipline, as it is only by doing so that



we can understand the contrary tendencies in the history of Durkheim's reception that were briefly mentioned at the start of this article.

### *I Reception in German sociology until the end of the First World War*

It is worth briefly describing the historical background to Durkheim's early reception, as it set the course for the decades that followed. The German Empire was founded in 1871 following a military victory over France. During this period, Germany's development as a liberal-bourgeois state lagged behind neighbouring countries (Plessner 1959 remains the authoritative source on this). The situation of sociology as a discipline was highly different in both national contexts. While France had a strong sociological orientation, not least because of Durkheim's organizational talent and his consistent efforts to legitimize the craft, Germany hosted a much more complex and eclectic intellectual landscape, in which sociology as *Oppositionswissenschaft* ("oppositional science", Wehler 1972) was often equated with "socialism". Dilthey's division of the natural and human sciences according to their differing modes of understanding played a crucial role in the founding of German sociological programmes. At the same time, the historian Karl Lamprecht introduced Auguste Comte to Germany and attempted to incorporate his sociological theories into historical scholarship (cf. Heckmann and Kröll 1984:32; Jonas 1976). Comte's idea of a "*physique sociale*" appalled Lamprecht's opponents (adherents of "historicism", a movement influenced by idealist philosophy and opposed to the Enlightenment and "Western positivism"), something that also left its mark on the reception of Durkheim's programme. Moreover, they were prepared to concede sociology only a very restricted niche as an "auxiliary science" to history and *Kulturphilosophie* (philosophy of culture). The earliest German attempts to establish a "pure" sociology were also based on a tradition of thought opposed to positivism (cf. Henecka 1990). Ferdinand Tönnies, who did take note of Durkheim (see below), initiated this phase in 1887 with *Community and Society* – a book that Durkheim reviewed in 1889 and whose

concepts he believed needed to be used precisely the other way round: for Durkheim, modernity is the society not of *mechanical* but of *organic* solidarity (Durkheim 1981 [1889]:83f). Tönnies attempted to demarcate the discipline along three fronts: from the dominant social sciences (political science, economics, history); from “Western” positivism; and from historical materialism (which Durkheim also opposed). *Soziologie* (1908) by Georg Simmel (who was also familiar with Durkheim, see below), fit into this perspective: it can be considered the first German *programme* for sociology; the second would be Max Weber’s posthumous compendium *Economy and Society* (1968 [1921]), which made no mention of Durkheim (the reasons for which remain an enduring mystery in the history of science; see below). With the outbreak of the First World War, increasingly vehement anti-French attitudes took hold among the German public, and these attitudes were also backed by German universities (see, e.g., the two volumes entitled “Germany and the world war” in which renowned scholars endorsed the war: Hintze et al. [1915] 1916).

To get a sense for how the *Rules* was received in this early phase of sociology, it seems best to begin by surveying a cross section of German-language sociological texts, without confining ourselves to authors now considered central. This corresponds to the need to “historicise authorial eminence” (Terrier 2017:311). Both for this period and the subsequent ones, I used Käsler’s “Chronologische Liste der Lehrbücher der Soziologie auf dem Gebiet der deutschen Soziologie 1909–1934” (Chronological list of sociology textbooks in the field of German sociology 1909–1934, Käsler 1984) to draw up a representative selection of texts considered important during the period under review. Taking this corpus as my starting point, I then proceeded to a systematic bibliographic research to trace the textual traces left by German reception of the *Rules*. The aim was to arrive at a possibly exhaustive corpus of explicit references for the period until 1945. The silent reception, though certainly important, could not be accounted for, since this requires much more specialised knowledge of the writings and intellectual trajectories of individual authors (see, e.g., Fitzi 2017).

Only a few authors expressly referred to the *Rules* during this period. Barth, who in 1897 attempted to show that history is “concrete sociology”, mentioned the *Rules* and *The Division of Labour in Society* in his overview of literature, and listed Durkheim among authors who had “earned the right to be heard” (Barth 1897). Eleutheropulos (1923 [1904]) mentioned Durkheim alongside Gumpłowicz as an example of an author who had distinguished the “physical”, “mental” [*geistig*] and “social” spheres; for Eleutheropulos, Durkheim’s *Rules* made him a proponent of “organicism”. In *Soziologie und Entwicklungsgeschichte der Menschheit* (Sociology and the history of humanity’s development, 1905), Scherrer described the *Rules* and *The Division of Labour in Society* as “accomplished literature” (*kompetente Literatur*). Spann began his *Gesellschaftslehre* (Social theory, 1930 [1914]) with an “overview of the schools of contemporary social theory”. In the chapter on the proponents of empirical approaches, he categorised the *Rules* as belonging to the “physical–mechanical school”, claiming that Durkheim attempted to observe *faits sociaux* as if they were pre-given things so that he could practise “objective sociology”. Spann, incidentally, translated the expression “things” into the convoluted formulation “causal natural facts of a thingly kind” (*kausale Naturtatsachen dinglicher Art*, Spann 1930 [1914]:17).<sup>iii</sup>

The exchanges between Durkheim and Tönnies seemed more substantial. Durkheim’s 1889 review of Tönnies’ *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* remained “one of the most notorious comments on his work” according to (Marcucci 2017:277). In it, he accused Tönnies of not arriving at a true understanding of society because he based his work on the dialectical method “so dear to the German logician” (quoted in Marcucci 2017:279). In response, in 1898, Tönnies made the only contribution to Durkheim reception from this period that was of any real significance. In his *Jahresbericht über Erscheinungen der Soziologie aus den Jahren 1895 und 1896* (annual report on sociological publications between 1895 and 1896), he briefly reviewed *The Division of Labour in Society* and the *Rules*, considering the latter a “seriously conceived book” (*ernsthaft gedachtes Buch*, Tönnies 1898a:495). Tönnies understood Durkheim’s primary objective and said that Durkheim had helped to distinguish the boundaries between scientific and “rhetorical” sociology:

In a concluding section, the character of the proposed method is summarised: it is intended to make sociology independent of philosophy and put it on its own two feet; to make it objective and elevate it above common curiosity; and to thus give it the esoteric character that befits all science, so that “it will gain in dignity and authority what it will perhaps lose in popularity” (Tönnies 1898a:496).

However, Tönnies was more interested in what Durkheim could bring to the debate about the division of sociology and psychology and the relation between individual and society or individual and collective consciousness. According to Tönnies, it was Durkheim’s recognition that collective consciousness and social life exist independently of individuals that was important. Although Tönnies acknowledged Durkheim’s goal of establishing an independent and objective sociology, he was primarily interested in questions that pertained to his own notion of a “social will”. Hence, he projected his own cognitive interests into the *Rules*, and as a consequence, his understanding of the methodological issues exposed by Durkheim remains quite partial". (Marcucci 2017:280). A glance at Tönnies’s complete works suggests that, overall, he only engaged with Durkheim’s text rather selectively.<sup>iv</sup> Finally, it appears that the exchanges between Tönnies and Durkheim had paradigmatic character for the subsequent understanding of the founding dichotomies between French and German sociologies, in the sense that their "opposition [...] has been largely canonized in the discipline and seen as marking the difference between national traditions" (Marcucci 2017:290).

Hence, until 1918 reception of Durkheim was confined to a handful of references, most of which were linked to attempts to systematise existing tendencies and demonstrated little familiarity with his work. It should also be noted that Tönnies (as, incidentally, did Barth) took part in a colloquium on Durkheim’s conception of sociology and its relation to other social sciences that was organised in London in 1904 by the Sociological Society (cf. Becquemont

1995). Neither of them appear to have brought their impressions from the colloquium into the German debate (at least not to any significant degree). There are various possible reasons for the lack of interest: in terms of its position in academic space, during this period German-language sociology (by contrast with the *école française de sociologie*) was attempting to occupy a more modest place in the system of disciplines rather than disputing terrain. The Durkheimian programme's conception of science (which rejected the dualistic natural/human sciences model) would, of course, have disrupted this order.<sup>v</sup> At a theoretical level, German scholarship's explicit rejection of positivism was a hindrance to the reception of the durkheimian program. Its central demand that social facts be viewed as things could "be legitimately disputed from the vantage point of the German tradition, which was based on the distinction between natural sciences on the one hand and human sciences on the other – for the latter demand that the observer understands the meanings that observed behaviours relate to" (Berthelot 1995:20).

Something that is particularly striking is the omission of Durkheim in two seminal texts: Simmel's *Soziologie* and Weber's *Economy and Society*.

Some pertinent details about Simmel can be found in Otthein Rammstedt's works ((1992)(Rammstedt 1997) or, for the French version, (Rammstedt 1998) as well as in the detailed study of the relationship between the two figures in (Fitzi 2017). The latter takes into account the veiled reception between them as well as a dispute they published in two Italian journals. When Durkheim was searching for a German partner to launch the *Année Sociologique* in 1986, Bouglé, who had studied with both, brought them together. Their cooperation did not last long, however, which is interpreted in the context of the Dreyfus affair, in which Durkheim took sides with the Dreyfusards. While Rammstedt's interpretation is that Durkheim read Simmel as a veiled attack on the Dreyfusards and on Zionism, to the point where he asked Bouglé whether Simmel was indeed a Jew (Rammstedt 1997:446), Fitzi believes Durkheim removed those passages from Simmel that could become the object of an attack by the anti-Dreyfusards, whereas Durkheim, in his ambition to establish sociology as an academic discipline, needed to distance his sociological

endeavour from any political orientation (Fitzzi 2017:295). In any case, it seems unlikely that Simmel was unaware of the *Rules* when he wrote the work in which he set out his own programme. There are probably various reasons why Durkheim is not explicitly mentioned in Simmel's *Soziologie*. Firstly, Durkheim's public rejection of Simmel's formal sociology (2009 [1900]), which dashed his initial hopes of a collaboration; secondly, Simmel's rejection of positivism in the final phase of his work; thirdly, Simmel's interest (given the political context in Germany and at German universities) in not revealing any connections to a French sociologist and proponent of positivist sociology if he wanted to obtain an academic post.

As for Max Weber, scholars such as Edward Tiryakian (1966:330) have attempted to understand "the mutual unawareness of Émile Durkheim and Max Weber". Tiryakian lists several factors: their nationalism, which led to mutual disregard, and their insistence on originality, which forbade them from making reference to each other. Steven Seidman (1977:356) noted two Durkheim references (to *The Division of Labour in Society* and *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*) in Weber's *General Economic History* (1924)– but this was a posthumous compilation that was supplemented by student lecture notes.<sup>vi</sup>

## *II Reception in the sociology of the Weimar Republic*

In the 1920s, German-language sociology developed in a variety of milieus associated with particular universities or prominent figures, though none of them had a coherent programme. Overall, the number of scholars who could be classified as sociologists rose (Lepsius 1981:11). The two leading figures in German sociology, Simmel and Weber, were no longer able to exert a structuring influence during this period. At the start of the Weimar Republic, many theorists accepted their discipline's status as an "auxiliary science". At the same time, a process of systematic institutionalisation began, with the first chairs of sociology appointed at the universities founded after the war. The German Sociological Society (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für*

*Soziologie*) began campaigning for students to be able to obtain a degree in sociology, something that did not happen in France until 1958. From 1928 onwards, the discipline was reinvigorated by a new generation, but during its most productive phase this new generation was overrun by the National Socialists.

Greater awareness of Durkheim can be observed in this period than in the preceding one. Käsler's "Chronologische Liste" includes 26 works from this period, of which eight quoted from the *Rules*, and a further eight mentioned Durkheim or the *Rules*. The *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie* (Vierkandt 1931), which presented a broad cross section of sociology, includes numerous references to him. A number of works were also more specific about Durkheim, such as Bouglé (1925), Oppenheimer (introduction to Gumpłowicz 1926 [1885]), Oppenheimer and Salomon(-Delatour) (1926), Conze (1927), Michaelis (1926/27), Lehmann (1928), Benrubi (1928), König (1931; 1932), Lövenich (1931/32), Marica (1932) and König (1933). In quantitative terms, references to Durkheim increased both absolutely and relatively compared with the preceding period: almost half of the authors in Käsler's "Chronologische Liste" were familiar with him. There were also cross-references to other authors' remarks on Durkheim, which heralded the start of wider-ranging discussion of his ideas in German-language sociology.

Various forms of reception can be distinguished. Firstly, there were references of a very general, sometimes ritual or stereotypical kind in systematic works, histories of sociology, handbooks, textbooks or dictionaries (Dunkmann, Lehmann and Sauermann 1931; Stein 1921; Vierkandt 1923; Vierkandt 1931; Wiese 1971 [1926]). These works reveal that Durkheim had gradually attained the status of a "classic" who it was imperative to mention. Secondly, there were a series of comparable works that, although they too did not focus primarily on Durkheim, made far more detailed references to his work and contained in-depth theoretical discussion of the *Rules*. Examples include Jerusalem (1926) and Benrubi (1928) (though the latter was French rather than German). Others, such as Michaelis (1926/27) and Lehmann (1928), referred to selected elements from the *Rules*.

Oppenheimer's writings from the early 1920s (1964 [1922/23]) and, in particular, the work (1926) he produced in collaboration with his assistant at Frankfurt, Salomon(-Delatour)<sup>vi</sup>, a student of Simmel and Troeltsch, appear as nuanced, relatively positive accounts of Durkheim's work. This was atypical for the period. This finding corresponds to Oppenheimer's particular position as one of the representatives of the "core" of German sociology, alongside Tönnies, Simmel, M. Weber and von Wiese (Käsler 1984). Like Durkheim, Oppenheimer was attempting to find the laws of social life and solutions to the social "crisis". His major work "*System der Soziologie*", published in four volumes between 1922 and 1935, founded a sociology that should integrate economics and that had universalist ambitions in regard to neighbouring disciplines (Lichtblau 2014:129–30). And Oppenheimer clearly had an intellectual horizon broader than the German nation. During the first world war already, he advocated a closer cooperation between Germany and France and even formulated visions of a future European union for economic collaboration (Lichtblau 2014:129). If, as a Jewish émigré, he had not vanished from the memory of German sociology, he might have steered German Durkheim reception in a different direction in the subsequent period (cf. Schmid 1993).

It was not until Marica's doctoral thesis, which he defended in Cologne in 1932, that any scholars looked at the work as a whole. Marica named his late supervisor, Barbat (Babeş-Bolyai University), and the Cologne sociologists Honigsheim and von Wiese as his key influences. Durkheim's reception gradually became more diverse. He was increasingly recognised as a "classic" author, and it was now possible to specialise in Durkheim in the German-speaking world as well.

The most striking thing about the *substance* of the reception is the lack of any reference to the *Rules'* main concerns. Durkheim's project of establishing a scientific sociology was only recognised by a single (French) author, Benrubi, who was also the only one interested in the experimental form of explanation. Durkheim's notion of the constitution of social types was completely absent from German reception. Despite German readers' recognition of Durkheim,



they appear to have ignored his programme and entirely neglected its methodological and epistemological dimension. Again, one possible explanation for this is the fact that his model of the sciences was opposed to the dualistic German one – which would entail that the structuring of the national epistemological space and his positioning within it was decisive. The idea that sociological knowledge could be applied outside the scientific sphere, to which Durkheim gave expression in his distinction of the normal from the pathological or in the notion of “social health”, was largely ignored. This is perhaps surprising, given that these ideas could have been adopted into German sociology from various perspectives: for example, via the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* (Social Policy Association), or else by sociologists linked to National Socialism, to whom the concepts of the Normal and the Pathological might have been of particular interest in connection with “race studies” or theories of “social hygiene”. It is also striking that towards the end of the period Durkheim’s background was increasingly framed in national terms: in line with König’s growing interest in the national academic and scientific context and Marica’s in the historical French context, Durkheim was more and more often classified as a *French* sociologist. In the case of von Wiese, this framing in terms of nationality may be linked to his systematisation of strands of sociology according to country or origin, while in the case of König and Marica, the focus they placed on certain issues raised by the *Rules* suggests they were searching for explanations rooted in specific national qualities. A more structural explanation would be that scholars deliberately dissociated themselves from “Western traditions” while simultaneously elevating the status of the “German tradition”. Given the anti-French polemics in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, this might have been expected to happen earlier. The rejection of “Western ideas” was, we will recall, one hypothesis for the lack of recognition shown to Durkheim before 1918, when any sociologists with anti-French attitudes did not need to dignify this little-known French scholar with a single word. During the Weimar period, the same attitude of rejection may have led German scholars not to ignore French thinkers and their theories, but to frame them in national terms. Even Durkheim’s opponents could no longer avoid

mentioning him, even if when they did so it was to characterise him as a representative of the unpopular French tradition and hence limit the scope of his programme's influence in German sociology. The negative labelling increased with the rise of National Socialism, as can be observed in the work of Marica.

The most-discussed topics included the objectivity of "social facts", "things" and "constraint" (which, in Durkheim's definition, were linked) – often in connection with Durkheim's famous definition of sociology's subject matter; scholars focused exclusively on a handful of sentences torn out of context. Wilhelm Jerusalem (who held "Dürckheim" in high regard and defended him against a number of misunderstandings, cf. his introduction to Lévy-Bruhl 1926 [1910]<sup>viii</sup>) was the only one who agreed with Durkheim's concepts, which he detached from their theoretical context and inserted into his own arguments. Oppenheimer presented critical discussion of Durkheim's ideas, while the authors writing at the end of this period rejected them out of hand. Dunkmann and Marica combined a low opinion of Durkheim's work with the accusation that he neglected the individual and a rejection of Durkheim's (supposed) thesis of social determinism. Most authors did not make the connection between the definition of the *faits sociaux* and the call for an external observation point.

Things were a little more complicated when it came to discussion of *collective consciousness*. Two authors, Oppenheimer and König, noted the lack of clarity in Durkheim's exposition without taking a stance themselves. Jerusalem was in closest agreement with Durkheim on this point. Marica flatly rejected the notion, because he did not accept that individuals were determined by society, as he believed Durkheim had postulated. Authors frequently approximated the concept of collective consciousness to that of will or spirit (*Geist*), or equated them with each other. These attempts to comprehend Durkheim's text using two key concepts drawn from the theoretical context of German idealism and voluntarism provide clear support for the view that situations of textual hybridity always occur in the act of reading: "Books do not stay inside their covers. Once in the head they mingle. The miscegenation of texts is a powerful and

uncontrollably force” (Beer, cited in Livingstone 2005:393). The meaning the *Rules* had for German scholars was definitely “shaped by the other texts and theories and practices they had engaged” (Beer, cited in Livingstone 2005:393) as members of the German scholarly community. All the authors in this period recognised, with varying degrees of reservation, Durkheim’s contribution to distinguishing sociology from psychology, biology, politics and philosophy. The term *Soziologismus* (sociologism) was used with highly varied meanings. It appears to have been introduced into German sociology by Célestin Bouglé and initially functioned as a criterion of classification (Vierkandt 1931; Wiese 1933 [1924 und 1929]; Wiese 1971 [1926]), whereas authors at the end of this period used it disparagingly (Dunkmann et al. 1931; Marica 1932). Oddly, the term “positivism” only occurred rarely. Again, it was initially a criterion of classification (Benrubi 1928; Dunkmann et al. 1931; Wiese 1933 [1924 und 1929]; Wiese 1971 [1926]), before coming to be used as a term of disparagement by Marica (1932).

It is notable that several of the sociologists who contributed to reception of the *Rules* in the period leading up to 1933 were Jewish: Oppenheimer, Salomon(-Delatour), Benrubi and Jerusalem. Käsler (1984:357–85) and König (1971) have written about the question of why so many early German sociologists came from a Jewish background. The fact that a relatively large proportion of Durkheim’s commentators were Jewish must, firstly, be viewed in relation to Käsler’s and König’s observation that Jews were strongly represented throughout German sociology. König, who primarily had the theorists Marx, Simmel, Durkheim and Oppenheimer in mind, presented the following thesis: “The Jew must distance himself in the society that discriminates against him. But this distancing fundamentally decides his affinity with sociological science, for no science is possible without distancing oneself. The Jew’s entire social circumstances automatically bring him into the theoretical situation with respect to social existence” (König 1971:132–33). Torrance (1976:185) developed a similar hypothesis: “We might speculate that sociology and psychoanalysis were alike in appealing to scientifically inclined Jewish intellectuals who needed, within the general external identification with German humanistic

culture, a more intimate oppositional identity through which to achieve, by critical scholarship, a European and hence universal status that would transcend the particularism of the German elite – especially as the latter became increasingly anti-Semitic” (Torrance 1976:195). These hypotheses remained confined to the speculative sphere of “theoretical transnationalism” (Jeanpierre 2014; see esp. his critical discussion of the view that exiled academics and “hybrid” intellectuals have a special epistemic position).

However, the question here concerns more than a general intellectual attitude or epistemic privilege on the part of Jewish sociologists. It is about the reception of a Jewish scholar by Jews in the German-speaking world. Did the fact of being Jewish in any way alter the attitude that these theorists had towards other Jewish authors, in this case towards Durkheim? It would first need to be clarified whether they identified as Jewish and whether they knew that Durkheim was Jewish. Unfortunately, this information is unavailable in the case of Benrubi and Jerusalem. However, it is known that Oppenheimer was an avowed Jew with an interest in global Jewish issues, as is evident in the articles he wrote for Jewish magazines and journals, and in his early engagement with the Zionist movement (a public talk at the 6th Zionist congress held in Basel in 1903, on invitation by Theodor Herzl, owned him wide recognition within the Zionist community Lichtblau 2014:127). He also claimed that the fact of being Jewish strongly influenced his private and professional life. Like Durkheim, he was the son of a rabbi. And Durkheim too, even though he distanced himself from Judaism at a personal level (Strenski 1997), appears to have engaged with the issues facing Jews in France, at the time of the Dreyfus affair, participating in discussions about global Jewish issues (Fenton 1984:15; Mergy 2000:3), or as a member of the *Comité d'étude de la question juive en Russie*, set up by the *Alliance israélite universelle* in 1915 (Bensoussan 2020).

Hence, we can assume that Oppenheimer, as well as his assistant Salomon-Delatour, may have attributed a certain significance to the fact that Durkheim was Jewish. To these personal details we can also add Torrance’s hypothesis of an “oppositional identity”. This identity was manifested

in Oppenheimer's status as an unloved colleague and "liberal socialist" and in his willingness to criticise Hitler at times when his fellow scholars remained silent on the subject.<sup>ix</sup> However, in order to speak of an actual transnational communication network between Jewish intellectuals outside or alongside the networks of national sociological communities, in the sense of practical transnationalism (Jeanpierre 2014), far more precise studies would be required.

Without wanting to put too much weight on my schematisation of the reception process, there does seem to have been a shift in the discussion and appraisal of Durkheim's *Rules* during the period from 1918 to 1933. While at the start of the period the work was temporarily held in high esteem, this admiration gradually gave way to a more critical, negative view. This shift in perception in the sociological community was directly linked to broader geopolitical developments: the image of France, scepticism towards and rejection of "Western positivism", growing repudiation of all non-German traditions and the growth of anti-Semitism and nationalism impacted negatively on Durkheim's reception. For the early phase, Schmid's assessment of the reception of *The Division of Labour in Society* can equally be applied to that of the *Rules*:

I take it that the great variation in German scholars' regard for Durkheim's work was due to the varying interest with which different thinkers were prepared to argue for the form of their own, sometimes not at all firmly established conceptions of sociology. For some of them, in their mainly self-serving and idiosyncratic [*eigensüchtig und eigenwillig*] definition of the situation [...] drawing on a scholar who enjoyed great renown in France might have represented a way to shore up their own projects [*Belange*], while others saw no promise at all in such coalitions. Given such "self-interested" approaches [*"interessierten" Zugriff*] to Durkheim's early work, it will come as no surprise if his reception suffered from one-sidedness, misunderstandings and distortions that can only be cleared away with

difficulty in retrospect; in the present context, there is no possibility of doing so (Schmid 1993:488).

### *III Reception between 1933 and 1945*

Otthein Rammstedt (1986) was one of the first to argue against the view (now generally agreed to be implausible) that all sociology was persecuted by the National-Socialist regime. Instead, in the period from 1933 to 1945 the discipline underwent a process of institutionalisation and professionalisation. Notoriously, many sociologists welcomed the change of power; they regarded it as a sign of a transformation of the “essence” of the German people which meant that sociology (as the science of social reality) would have to change too. At the same time, they refrained from any critical reflection on the “movement”. As is now known, the German Sociological Society actively participated in this realignment. After its 1934 congress (*Soziologentag*) in Jena, it ended its activities. The stance towards non-German theories was unambiguous:

The science of “sociology” has fallen into disrepute in National Socialist Germany, because in the past its name has all too often served as cover either for intellectual posturing [*unwesentliche Geistreichelei*] or incursions of Western thought inimical to the people [*volksfeindliche Einbrüche*]. It has all too often fallen prey to the Western nations’ aggressive doctrine [*Kampflehre*], which under the name of a science faithful to facts asserted the universal validity of West European social experiences and institutions and hence became a weapon for Britain, France and America. It has all too often lent its name to Jewish thought that attempted to argue away the ethno-national necessities of the German people [*dem deutschen Volke seine völkischen Notwendigkeiten wegzureden versuchte*] (Pfeffer 1939:3).

At the same time, many sociologists (including several of note) left the country – 141 in total, according to Wittebur (1991), equivalent to around a third of the discipline’s practitioners. During the 1930s, entire institutes and universities disappeared, including the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. This had consequences, including a narrowing of focus to a handful of topics (such as population growth, migration, forms of settlement; (cf. Lepsius 1981:462). Only a few sociological texts from this period included in Käsler's list made reference to the *Rules* (Wiese 1933 [1924 und 1929]; Ziegenfuß 1935), and a further two made mention of Durkheim (Albrecht and Jurkat 1936; Proesler 1935). Of course, we are talking here about a short period of time during which many sociologists left the discipline due to emigration, censorship and conscription, and in which (after 1939) resources were limited due to the war. Nonetheless, two doctoral theses on Durkheim were written during this period (Günzel 1934; Machhausen 1937).

In the references to the *Rules* during this period, there is a clear concentration on certain topics. The general accounts (Wiese 1933 [1924 und 1929]; Ziegenfuß 1935) undeniably displayed a low opinion of Durkheim, even if von Wiese continued to emphasise his status as a “classic” thinker. They saw Durkheim’s work as essentially rooted in the fact that he was French and Jewish: “a mechanical and rationalistic way of seeing things” (Marica 1932:61), “French rationalist tradition” (Günzel 1934), “old Jewish way of thinking” (Wiese 1933 [1924 und 1929]:19). Also worthy of note is the characterisation of Durkheim as a “representative of a restlessly mechanistic and hence typically Jewish social theory” (*Meyers Lexikon* 1937). The doctoral theses discussed Durkheim at greater length and covered a wider range of topics. Both authors concentrated on “collective consciousness” and comparisons with the “objective spirit”, a notion drawn from the philosophical tradition of German idealism. They accused Durkheim of neglecting the individual and the individual’s capacity to exert a transformative and creative influence on the life of a society. This accusation can be explained by reference to the authors’ positioning in theoretical space. From a position based in *Kulturphilosophie*, Günzel expressed a very sympathetic opinion of Durkheim, mainly because he did not link together his various contradictory arguments and did

not recognise Durkheim's fundamental intentions. It is difficult to assess Machhausen's view of Durkheim and the *Rules*, because his thesis leaves a confused impression. What can be said for sure is that he clung even more relentlessly to the concept of *Geist* than Günzel, and that this distorted his reading of Durkheim. Nonetheless, it is surprising that any sociologists at all wrote their doctoral theses about Durkheim during this period.

The most significant contribution to reception came from an exiled author. In 1938, René König published his *Kritik der historisch-existenzialistischen Soziologie – Ein Beitrag zur Begründung einer objektiven Soziologie* (Critique of historical and existential sociology: A contribution to the creation of an objective sociology) (König 1975 [1938 unpublished]). Due to his mixed German–French family background and studies in Berlin and Paris, König was capable of addressing French literature in his work. During a stay in southern France in 1932/33, König, advised by Vierkandt, Sombart, M. Dessoir and W. Köhler, wrote the manuscript entitled "The 'objective' sociology of Émile Durkheim" with the hope to obtain his *Habilitation*. But a *Habilitation* project on the "reformist socialist and Jew Émile Durkheim" proved impossible in 1933 Germany (Moebius and Nungesser 2014:1). König withdrew to Switzerland in 1937, where he completed his *Habilitation* treatise. His declared goal was to rid sociology of its politicised and ideological aspects. Right from the outset, a rather low opinion of certain strands of German sociology can be detected, especially those that he believed had succumbed to the political developments in Germany, but also other theories (in particular Marxism) that he considered to be ideologically driven. König observed a confrontation between two strands of German sociology: scientism on the one hand and historical and existential sociology on the other, with the latter having prevailed in Germany. One of his aims was to rebut positions that linked Durkheim with *scientism*. Scientism, in König's understanding, is an approach to sociology disconnected from the real world. König's ambition, on the contrary, was to establish Durkheim as a sociological alternative to scientism. The book is divided into two parts: firstly, an analysis and critique of the historical and existential tendency; secondly, an investigation of Durkheim's concept of science. Surprisingly, König only makes a



few references to the *Rules*. The direction from which König approached Durkheimian sociology can only be understood by reference to his ideas of a “moral duty” inherent in every act of cognition and of a “heroic” or “moral” rationalism: in order to defend Durkheim against the accusation of scientism, König showed that Durkheim’s programme was intended to help overcome social crises. For this reason, König concentrated on the works that dealt with the social question more broadly construed: *The Division of Labour in Society*. The *Rules*, meanwhile, he deemed too “scientific”. König did not systematically pursue the aim of developing a methodology that would provide the groundwork for an objective sociology; the result does not correspond with expectations. Although König made a decisive contribution to Durkheim reception, this influence would only make itself felt in German sociology at a later stage. In any case, his *Habilitation* treatise did not present a faithful account of Durkheim’s work. It is only at first glance that the monograph appears to be an attempt to approach Durkheim as an alternative to German sociology. The incoherent impression made by the work as a whole may be due to the fact that between 1933 and 1935, in what we have to interpret as a largely opportunistic choice, König moved towards tendencies in sociology aligned with National Socialism. The *Habilitation* treatise was then intended to be a “groundwork for an ethno-national sociology [*Volkstumssozologie*] aided by Heideggerian fundamental ontology” (Albrecht 2002:166). However, this did not come to pass because König was boycotted by the National Socialists for not being faithful to the party line. He subsequently moved to Zurich and rewrote the work, now attacking historical and existentialist theories too – an aim to which Durkheim lent himself well. König thus combined both his earlier works into a rather incoherent book. On this basis, he went on to become one of the most influential figures in post-1945 Durkheim reception. His early essays on the Durkheim School do not make the same ambivalent impression as his *Habilitation* treatise. This is especially true of “Bilanz der französischen Soziologie um 1930” (“The state of French sociology around 1930”), written at the instigation of Richard Thurnwald, in which König, albeit

with an already observable rejection of theory in favour of positive empirical research, reported knowledgeably on the state of French sociology.

#### *IV Reception in West German sociology after 1945*

For this period, a brief description of the background will suffice. After 1945, sociology became firmly established in German universities, just as it did in other Western industrialised nations. It was subject to three different influences. Firstly, the occupying powers, especially the USA and to a lesser extent France, whose influence extended into the academic world (this influence was evident, for example, in the functionalism that dominated internationally until into the 1960s, as well as in empirical social research). Secondly, the sociologists who had remained in Germany during the Nazi era and retained their university posts after 1945, such as Freyer and Gehlen. Thirdly, the sociologists who returned from exile (König, Horkheimer, Adorno, Plessner). The discipline rose to particular prominence in the wake of the student movement. In terms of Durkheim reception, I limit myself here to a selection of key texts out of a growing body of literature that cannot be dealt with exhaustively anymore, concentrating primarily on two of the three lines of influence described above. Firstly, against the backdrop of the structural functionalism promoted by the occupying powers, many readings of Durkheim followed Parsons's interpretation of his work.<sup>x</sup> Secondly, two returning exiles, König and Adorno, offered readings of Durkheim that proved especially influential.

Prior to Adorno's introduction to the volume *Philosophie und Soziologie*, König was the only German sociologist to engage with Durkheim's legacy; he pursued a career as a specialist in French, Durkheimian sociology. His *Habilitation* treatise defined a picture of Durkheim that pointedly did not emphasise the project of a rationalist sociology, but instead defended Durkheim against the accusation that he was engaged in disconnected, socially disinterested "scientism" by emphasising the French thinker's moral and reformist ambitions. This picture can

be found in the article König wrote to mark Durkheim's centenary (König 1958), in numerous references in the *Fischer-Lexikon Soziologie* (König 1969 [1958]), in the anthology *Emile Durkheim zur Diskussion: Jenseits von Dogmatismus und Skepsis* (König 1978) and in his essay in *Klassikern des soziologischen Denkens* (König 1976), whose title "Emile Durkheim – Der Soziologe als Moralist" (Émile Durkheim – the sociologist as moralist) perfectly encapsulates König's picture of Durkheim. According to König, Durkheim's aim was to change society, "which he interprets as being in a deep crisis" (König 1976:318). König's introduction to the new German translation of the *Rules* also merits comment. In it, he compares Durkheim's *Rules* to Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode* and remarks that "sociology could not get off the ground without Durkheim" (*man [kommt] ohne Durkheim nicht in die Soziologie hinein*) (König 1976 [1895; 1961]:21). This was probably the first time that any German reader acknowledged the work's fundamentally methodological and epistemological character. König once again quickly turned his attention to the connection between, on the one hand, the character of the *faits sociaux* as things and, on the other, the collective consciousness, which (König explains) allows the social to be comprehended as reality *sui generis*. His account thus once again concentrated on topics that had long been familiar in Germany, albeit now in a more nuanced and apposite form. There was also a continued focus on the *moral* dimension – "treating sociological facts like things hence at base means nothing more than that a moral reality should be comprehended using the means of positive science" (König 1976 [1895; 1961]:61).

The only other discussion of Durkheim during the early part of this period appears to have been in Adorno (1980 [1972]). The text is exceptional since Adorno has not written anything on the so-called founding fathers of sociology otherwise. Here, a brief description of Durkheim's "chief methodological work" was followed by an analysis from the perspective of critical theory. Adorno criticised violently in particular the ahistorical and reifying character of a theory that merely purported to be politically neutral, but actually reproduced the status quo<sup>xi</sup>; he also criticised the lack of dialectical insight and Durkheim's "primacy of method". For Adorno,

Durkheim was a typical representative of bourgeois sociology. In *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (Adorno et al. [1969] 1993), Adorno once again criticised Durkheim's fundamental epistemological premises, but without making reference to the *Rules*; he also discussed Durkheim in his lectures on general sociology (Peter 2013). Another work situated in this context is Inge Hofmann's doctoral thesis *Bürgerliches Denken: Zur Soziologie Emile Durkheims* (Bourgeois thought: on Émile Durkheim's sociology), which she defended in Frankfurt in 1971 (Hofmann 1973); while she was a doctoral candidate, Hofmann greatly assisted Adorno in his research on Durkheim.

Alternative, more nuanced perspectives on Durkheim that went beyond the image of him as a positivist on the one hand and a moralist on the other only appeared in German sociology at a late stage. In 1981, the German Sociological Society's "sociological theory" section held a conference on Durkheim, resulting in a collective, broad-ranging reappraisal of his work (cf. Schmid 1993:494). Subsequently, a series of texts were published that went beyond the perspectives that had previously dominated. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), Habermas attempted to overcome the narrowness of purposive rational action ("zweckrationales Handeln"). He incorporated Durkheim into his own theoretical framework, making use in particular of the idea of the moral preconditions of mutual understanding (*Verständigung*): the Durkheimian collective consciousness as the foundation of social norms.<sup>xiii</sup> Habermas regarded Durkheim as his precursor and considered his questions "instructive" (*lehrreich*) (Habermas 1981:179). He was one of very few thinkers to expand on specific Durkheimian ideas.

A few years earlier, Niklas Luhmann had developed his take on Durkheim in explicit opposition to Parsons. Luhmann also engaged with the questions and problems that Durkheim posed – rather than dwelling on Durkheim's solution, and contributed to canonising Durkheim as a "classic":

It makes it difficult to imagine (and we shall not even try to reconstruct) how one might have read Durkheim in 1893. By now, we read him as a classic. This does not mean, however, that we interpret him historically. A theory is “classical” when it furnishes an interconnected set of claims that is no longer convincing in its original form, but that survives as a challenge, desideratum, or problem. The background context of the original formulations, of course, is historical and can be studied as such. What a classical text has to say to later readers, however, lies on the level of theory. In the analysis of classical texts, we must begin with the present state of the discipline – with the current capacity (enhanced in the interim) to draw fine distinctions and with the greater depth and precision of the present-day arrangement of the subject matter. What a classical text was able to accomplish with relatively simple means stands out against the backdrop of altered expectations. The text retains its contemporary relevance so long as its way of posing problems can still be accepted. However, it remains an authoritative standard in an ambivalent sense: from it we can infer *what* must be achieved, but no longer *how* it is to be achieved (Luhmann 1982:3–4).

It is evident that Luhmann was more interested in the *Division of Labour* than in the *Rules*. However, “[...] it is definitely not the classical text as such, but the interpretation made by the renowned sociologist, that is likely to have had agenda-setting effects on following sociological research” (Debray 2017:362). Luhmann shared with Durkheim the problem of imagining “how social order in general is possible” given the “otherness of the other” (Luhmann 1982:5, translation modified). Even if he thought the answer – the solution “morality”, the subordination to a collective consciousness, the formation of abstract “compact concepts” (Luhmann 1982:17) – could no longer be adopted, Luhmann did share Durkheim’s social theoretical premise that building social relations and systems requires a “sort of glue” (Luhmann 1982:11), especially in conditions of increasing differentiation. He also shared the theory of increasing social

complexity that Durkheim developed from this premise, expressing particular admiration for the “elegant design of this theory” (Luhmann 1982:13).<sup>xiii</sup>

In 1983, Hans-Peter Müller published the monograph *Wertkrise und Gesellschaftsreform: Emile Durkheims Schriften zur Politik* (Crisis of value and social reform: Émile Durkheim’s political writings). Taking Durkheim’s programme as a whole, Müller set out to “de-Parsonianise” him. This aim was inspired by the “unsatisfactory state of reception” and the “current consciousness of crisis” (Müller 1983:preface).<sup>xiv</sup> Müller was interested in Durkheim’s moral, normative objective of averting social crises of value by means of social integration, especially the way in which Durkheim combined analysis and praxis. In his introduction, Müller describes the methodological underpinnings of the Durkheimian research programme, such as the *faits sociaux* and other key terms, but pays less attention to the method of experimental reasoning.

A few years later, Hans Joas also made a contribution to Durkheim’s reception. In the appendix to the German translation of the lecture *Pragmatism and Sociology* (1987), Joas discussed similarities and differences between Durkheim and the pragmatism that he favoured (an interest has also been observed in the French context; see Karsenti 2006). By reading the pragmatists, Durkheim, Scheler and others, Joas attempted to elucidate the question of the “emergence of a new morality” (Joas 1992). He noted that even the *Rules*, “certainly the most positivist-flavoured of [Durkheim’s] works”, can be understood as an attempt to initiate a “cure of the pathological through a new morality” (Joas 1992:93). Again, he does not delve further into the *Rules*’ rational–experimental sociology (cf. Joas 1997:87–110), but is in line with the German tradition that perceives Durkheim as a moralist: “First, Parsons shows that with respect to Durkheim one can’t come to terms with the simple concept of positivism and that the picture of Durkheim that is orientated towards his book on *The Rules of Sociological Method* (...) is inadequate. Well, there are many shortcomings of Parsons’ Durkheim interpretation, however, one important point is that his interpretation considers Durkheim as someone who stresses the specific character of norms and values - to speak now in my terminology - or as someone who has recognized two different kinds

of morals, and, so to day, out of the pressure of this problem has gone beyond any simple positivism of the nineteenth century. In this respect, Parsons is really important for my understanding of Durkheim" (Joas in: Fitzi et al. 2017:383–84).

Richard Münch (2002) treated Durkheim as a seminal “classic” thinker alongside Spencer, Marx, Weber, Simmel, Pareto and Mead; he also made an early attempt to synthesise “structural-functional” and “interpretative” sociology (Durkheim, Parsons, Weber) (Münch 1982), though as with Joas – who also focused on a theory of social *action* – the methodology receded into the background.<sup>xv</sup> This is the phase we still find ourselves in: alongside Richard Münch and Wolf Lepenies, Müller and Joas are without a doubt Germany’s best-known authorities on Durkheim, despite him not being one of their primary research interests.

*Conclusion: geopolitical effects and scholarly dynamics pulling in opposite directions*

My analysis of the reception of Durkheim’s *Rules* reveals *two* tendencies. On the one hand, perceptions of Durkheim in Germany have been influenced by his reception in nationally specific historical, political and academic spaces, within which social scientists positioned themselves towards Durkheim as a Frenchman, Jew and positivist. Evidence for this can also be seen by comparing Durkheim’s reception in Germany with his reception in France (cf. e.g. Cuin 1997), Britain (Platt 1995) and Russia (Gofman 1996; Gofman 1997). In particular, the classification and arrangement of existing tendencies and approaches in epistemological and disciplinary spaces have had a considerable influence on readings of the Durkheimian programme, depending how he was categorised and which terms and stereotypes were chosen to describe him.<sup>xvi</sup> The fact that Durkheim was a Frenchman, Jew and positivist can be cited as the main reason why his programme of founding a scientific sociology was initially only addressed very hesitantly in Germany, then given negative connotations and finally reduced or distorted to the aspects that the German debates were preoccupied with. This supports Jeanpierre’s (2014:3)

critical observation that “not everything is transnational”: my analysis of reception of the *Rules* reveals that central elements of his theoretical programme did not enter the transnational circuit and were largely ignored in Germany until very recently.

On the other hand, the long-term perspective reveals an *inner logic of reception processes*: a quantitative and qualitative development from highly general forms of reception towards more specialised studies after the former had given the text a certain authority. Greater engagement between participants also developed over the course of the reception process. The scholarly debate moved further and further away from the original text, yielding either stereotypes or more individual, specialised interpretations that gradually fleshed out the picture of Durkheim. This recognition only became apparent by adopting a long-term perspective and abstracting away from individual texts. It goes beyond conventional attempts by historians of science to situate knowledge empirically and hence always conceive it as “ineluctably local and variable” (Secord 2004:659). In the case of the *Rules*, certain key terms or ideas – the externality of the *faits sociaux*; the relation between the whole and its parts; collective consciousness – have become common knowledge in the sociological community. Above and beyond individual interpretations, a perception gradually emerged of Durkheim as a “classic” and as the founder of a certain way of doing sociology, even if there was a lack of detailed engagement with his programme. This dynamic, which is specific to the scholarly debate, was powerfully shaped by geopolitical factors, and directly entwined with these factors through the ways in which readers positioned themselves and others. However, my in-depth analysis spanning an extended period of time shows that the scholarly debate was not entirely determined by these geopolitical factors, but became increasingly autonomous.

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## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> This paper focuses mainly on Germany throughout various historical periods, but also includes a few other authors who belong to the broader German-speaking scholarly community.

<sup>ii</sup> Translations of works in languages other than English are mine.

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<sup>iii</sup> Spann gave a more detailed account in the 1930 third edition of the book, after learning that Durkheim was famous in France. Nonetheless, his interpretation ran contrary to Durkheim's ideas and had a markedly Germanic slant (he wrote that Durkheim's "social concept of the thing" (*sozialer Dingbegriff*) is of an "essentially mental nature" (*wesentlich seelischer Natur*), Spann 1930 [1914]:17).

<sup>iv</sup> The forthcoming edition of Tönnies's complete works (de Gruyter) should shed more light on this matter. Tönnies also briefly discussed Durkheim in his review of Gabriel Tarde's *Les lois d'imitation* Tönnies 1898b.

<sup>v</sup> There were some thinkers, such as the Vienna sociologists Ratzenhofer and Gumpłowicz, who opposed this tendency in German sociology. However, they did not make reference to Durkheim in their work either. They regarded Comte's, Spencer's and hence also Durkheim's theories as species of biologism and social Darwinism (cf. Knoll et al. 1981).

<sup>vi</sup> On Durkheim's followers' (especially Marcel Mauss and Maurice Halbwachs) relation to Weber, cf. Borlandi and Muchielli 1995 and: "The Durkheimians did not ignore Weber's work, although so far as we know, he ignored theirs. If there has never been a Durkheim-Weber dialogue, there is nevertheless one between the Durkheimians and Weber (...)" Steiner 2011 [2005]:199. Steiner is here citing Raymond Aron, who claimed to have heard from his cousin, Marcel Mauss, that Weber owned a complete edition of *Année Sociologique* that Mauss had personally seen at Weber's home (Steiner 2011 [2005]:199, footnote 5); Steiner also notes that, in a 1936 letter to Roger Bastide, Mauss described Weber as "someone with whom Durkheim (...) and myself had the least contact. Of course, while he [Weber] was happy to borrow from our work, what he did during the war – a time when everything was excusable – gave rise to some irritation" (Steiner 2011 [2005]:199, footnote 6).

<sup>vii</sup> Salomon(-Delatour) completed his doctoral thesis about Simmel in Strasbourg in 1916, and then worked as Oppenheimer's assistant in Frankfurt and Saarbrücken. He was awarded a professorship in 1925. Of "Jewish descent" on his father's side, in 1933 he emigrated to his mother's native France. Between 1934 and 1940, Salomon-Delatour taught at the Sorbonne's *Institut d'études germaniques* and became editor of the journal *Information Economique* Neue Deutsche Biographie 2005. Forced to leave the city in 1941, he fled to the USA, where he worked as a professor at the New School of Social Research in New York and at various other American universities. In 1958, he returned to Frankfurt and was active in various spheres promoting German-French dialogue.

<sup>viii</sup> At this juncture, Jerusalem also offers an explanation for the hesitant Durkheim reception in the German context. According to Jerusalem, due to Durkheim's use of the expression "social things" to emphasise the objectivity of the social, "when reading *Dürkheim's* discussions it is not uncommon to have the impression that he regards the group as something entirely different from, entirely independent of, its members, in short as its own, independent being. This appears utterly incomprehensible, even absurd and nonsensical, to many German thinkers. This unfortunate phrasing is perhaps one of the reasons why *Dürkheim's* works are far less known in Germany than I believe they deserve to be" Jerusalem 1926 [1910]:VIII. On Jerusalem's reception of Durkheim, see (Rol 2017).

<sup>ix</sup> When Sir Edward Eubank, a US American sociologist, interviewed a number of German and Austrian sociologists for research purposes in the summer of 1934, Oppenheimer was the only one of his interviewees who expressed criticisms of Hitler cf. Käsler 1984. At the time of the interview, the inhuman effects of the new political system were taking a heavy toll on Oppenheimer. Despite his financial difficulties and total isolation, he nonetheless believed "They cannot kill the spirit". As a Jew, and also due to political problems, he later fled National Socialist Germany. According to Bernsdorf's dictionary of sociologists Bernsdorf and Knospe 1980 [1959]:421, Oppenheimer was "until his death, a visiting professor in various countries": an incredibly cynical euphemism when one considers that Oppenheimer was aged over 70 when he began a veritable odyssey through Asia and the Americas in search of a place where he could live in safety. He died in the USA in 1940.

<sup>x</sup> "It can be said, I think, that it was the problem of the integration of the social system, of what holds society together, which was the most persistent preoccupation of Durkheim's career." Parsons 1960:118.

<sup>xi</sup> Christ argues that Adorno's rejection of Durkheim was mainly political: "The fact is that Durkheim, at the time of the writing of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, was considered as a sociological thinker of universality, of the collective consciousness that Adorno, for critical reasons, preferred to describe throughout his life with the Hegelian concept of objective spirit. This first reading of Durkheim by Adorno occurred between 1944 and his death in 1969, but in the various criticisms Adorno makes of Durkheim, this first assessment of Durkheimian sociology always emerges. He is guilty of confusing the existing world and universality, or, to put it in a more controversial way, he is guilty of confusing the system of domination of capitalist society, producing a homogenization of the subjects, with social constraint in its moral dimension, producing autonomous individuals" Christ 2017:333.

<sup>xii</sup> On the reception of Durkheim in Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action*, see Bonacker 2002.

<sup>xiii</sup> In the 1980s, Christian Gülich wrote a detailed doctoral thesis at Bielefeld University: *Die Durkheim-Schule und der französische Solidarismus* (The Durkheim School and French solidarism) 1991. Like Luhmann, the thesis concentrates primarily on *The Division of Labour in Society*. Gülich has also investigated the connections between Simmel and Durkheim (cf. Gülich 1992).

<sup>xiv</sup> Matthias König's monograph *Menschenrechte bei Durkheim und Weber: normative Dimensionen des soziologischen Diskurses der Moderne* (Human rights in Durkheim and Weber: normative dimensions of the sociological discourse of modernity) König 2002 also concentrates on the political Durkheim.

<sup>xv</sup> This parallel is striking, despite Joas having accused Münch in 1984 of uncritically adopting Parsons's perspective.

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<sup>xvi</sup> For example, if Durkheim used to be considered too philosophical in Britain Platt 1995, the only explanation is that British scholars placed a strong emphasis on empirical social research.