



## The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life

*Émile Durkheim*

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# The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life

Émile Durkheim

## The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life Émile Durkheim

In this 1912 classic, a founder of modern sociology seeks the enduring source of human social identity. Émile Durkheim presents a remarkably accessible examination of animism, naturism, totemism, myth, and ritual. His intriguing views and ultimate conclusion—that the source of religion and morality lies in collective consciousness, rather than in individual minds—remains a topic of debate among sociologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, philosophers, and theologians.

Durkheim edited *L'Année Sociologique*, the first journal of sociology, and was instrumental in establishing the field as a social science. With *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, he explores totemism among Australia's Aborigines, offering the opportunity "to yield an understanding of the religious nature of man, by showing us an essential and permanent aspect of humanity." Durkheim's study focuses on the need and capacity of humans to relate to one another socially, with religion as the core of the moral universe. An excellent introduction to the influential sociologist's ideas, this book continues to speak to new generations about the intriguing origin and nature of religion and society.



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