

## Mort Pour La France: Emile Durkheim's Martyr Son André-Armand Durkheim

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### Abstract

This article delves into the life and untimely death of André-Armand Durkheim, son of renowned sociologist Emile Durkheim, within the context of World War I. Born in 1892, André excelled academically, joining the École Normale Supérieure in 1910. Influenced by his father's work, he showed promise in philosophy and linguistics. During World War I, André served as a second lieutenant, suffering injuries in the field. He was later killed in 1915 on the Macedonian Front, succumbing to wounds in a Bulgarian hospital, leaving his potential unfulfilled. Utilizing primary sources such as archival documents, personal correspondence, and war diaries, alongside secondary literature, the study reconstructs André's biography, from his education to his military service and death on the Macedonian front. It examines André's intellectual growth and academic achievements under his father's influence. The research also explores the profound impact of André's death on Emile Durkheim's personal and professional life, particularly its effect on his sociological work and theoretical developments. This interplay between personal loss and intellectual output offers insights into the relationship between personal experiences and academic contributions, highlighting war's social, psychological, and intellectual consequences.

**Keywords:** André, Durkheim, Emile, Davidovo, World War I.

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## 1. Introduction

The First World War (1914-1918) devastated Europe, leaving a profound impact on the lives of millions of people. This tragic era is etched in history not only because of the battles fought but also due to the deep social and psychological scars it inflicted. Among those most profoundly affected was Emile Durkheim. As a French sociologist, Durkheim made significant contributions to the study of social structures, norms, and social integration, playing a pivotal role in establishing sociology as a scientific discipline and in its institutionalization. He devoted much of his career to developing sociological theories, focusing on the functioning of society and the roles individuals play within it. His 1895 publication, *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* (The Rules of Sociological Method), brought him fame and influence, and it remains one of the foundational works in sociology today. Another seminal work from Durkheim's later years is *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (The Elementary Forms of Religious Life), published in 1912. In this work, Durkheim explored the totemic system in Australia, developing a relativistic understanding of religion and positing that its fundamental function is to maintain social order, thus subordinating religion to the service of society. Consequently, French conservatives criticized Durkheim, accusing him of being influenced by the German penchant for systematization and transforming sociology into a religion. However, unlike positivists such as Comte, Durkheim did not convert sociology into a science-religion.

In 1887, Durkheim married Louise Dreyfus (Charle, 1984: 45), and five years later, their second child, André, was born. Although André's life was overshadowed by his father's sociological theories and academic achievements, he attained remarkable success at a young age. After receiving a home education from his father until age ten, André attended some of the best schools in France, where he learned Latin. With the outbreak of the First World War and France's direct involvement in the conflict, a mobilization was declared, and like thousands of other young Frenchmen, André was sent to the front (Borlandi, 2014: 162). The harsh realities of war soon caught up with the Durkheim family. In late 1915, during the Serbian army's retreat against the Bulgarian offensive, André was shot and killed. André's death was not only a devastating loss for his family but also for the intellectual circles of the time and French sociology. This tragic event profoundly affected Durkheim's personal life and academic work, even triggering a sorrowful process that ultimately led to his death.

This article is a biographical study of Emile Durkheim's son, André Durkheim, who died on the front during the First World War. Sources, information, and documents about André are very limited. Kermoal, who provides some details about his death, states: "Between 1914 and 1918, millions of French were dragged into the grief of their losses, but very few left a trace regarding their deaths. Although this topic was pursued, the available sources soon proved insufficient, and only a few fragments of individual fates could be reconstructed by pushing the limits of the sources" (Kermoal, 2012). The writing of this section is the result of a similar process. The information obtained during this process was pieced together like small parts of a puzzle. With these limited resources, the first biographical attempt on André Durkheim has been made. Methodologically, the study is based on primary sources such as archival documents, personal letters between Father Durkheim and André, and the War Diary of the 45th Infantry Regiment. The first section covers André's birth, early life, and education, detailing his achievements at a young age. Following this, the outbreak of the war and André's deployment to the front, his engagements, and injuries are discussed, culminating in his death in present-day North Macedonia. Finally, the impact of André's death on Father Durkheim is examined, exploring how intellectual work is shaped by personal loss and war experiences.

## 2. Early Life and Education: Academic Pursuits And Achievements

In 1887, Durkheim married Louise Dreyfus, and from this marriage, Marie was born a year later, followed by André three years later. Durkheim named his son André, derived from the Greek "anēr" and "Andréas," meaning "brave, manly, and virile". He chose Armand, a Latin-origin name meaning warrior, as a middle name, after André's uncle (Béra, 2012: 32). André-Armand Durkheim was born on September 18, 1892, in the 10th arrondissement of Paris, a cosmopolitan area known for its popularity among locals and tourists ("André Durkheim", n.d.). As the son of the intellectual Emile Durkheim, André developed a passion for reading, questioning, learning, and researching. Even as a child, he read his father's philosophical texts. Emile Durkheim was deeply devoted to his son and dedicated himself to André's education, envisioning him as a more "advanced" version of himself. He did not send André to school until he was ten, opting to educate him at home. As an accomplished pedagogue, Emile Durkheim created a structured schedule that halved the time conventional education would require, making André exceptionally well-prepared. André was exceptionally intelligent, quickly grasping fundamental concepts, learning Latin, and mastering essential elements of algebra and geometry at a young age. Durkheim often expressed amazement at his son's rapid and effortless learning (Fournier 2005: 178). André was particularly fascinated by Lycée Louis-le-Grand, located near their home. Established in 1563, Lycée Louis-le-Grand is considered one of France's most prestigious and oldest high schools, renowned for its rigorous academic training to prepare students for higher education institutions in France (Histoire Du Lycée, n.d.). André was inspired by the many famous figures in French history who graduated from this school. He worked tirelessly day and night to gain admission and had an outstanding high school career. Upon graduating in 1909, he was honored with the Camille Audier Award, and his name was published in the August 5, 1909 edition of *Le Journal* (Les Distributions De Prix, 1909: 6).

Following his prestigious high school graduation, André set his sights on École Normale Supérieure (ENS) for further education. Established in 1794, ENS is one of France's oldest and most elite higher education institutions. Its primary aim is to provide students with a rigorous academic education and foster high levels of intellectual development. ENS graduates are known for garnering immense respect and prestige in France and internationally. André's father, Emile Durkheim, was among its distinguished alumni. Witnessing his father's national and global fame, André aspired to follow in his footsteps, study at the same school, sit in the same classrooms, and ultimately become a great intellectual. With this goal in mind, André worked diligently and was admitted to École Normale Supérieure in 1910. His acceptance at a young age, not yet eighteen, was a significant achievement (Merllié, 2017: 103).

To avoid interrupting his studies, he completed his military service in 1911 before starting university. He finished his service within a year and returned to complete his bachelor's degree in philosophy in 1912 and his master's degree in 1913. His thesis, titled "The Concept of 'Event' in Leibniz," examined Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, a prominent figure in 17th-century modern philosophy and mathematics known for his complex philosophical texts (Lenoir & Villegas, 1959: 872). During his university education, André spent time with socialist groups and joined the socialist student union. Although Emile Durkheim was neither a socialist nor a communist, he was pleased that André engaged with these groups, supporting any intellectual activity that could enrich his son (Maublanc, 2011: 51). In 1914, André passed the agrégation exam, which is required to teach in France, and officially began his teaching career (Merllié, 2017: 103). His primary field was philosophy, but he had a keen interest in linguistics. He studied under Antoine Meillet, a leading figure in linguistics of the time, and served as his assistant (Humphreys, 1971: 172). With the knowledge acquired from his father, André leaned towards sociolinguistics, an approach that combines the structural and social aspects of language. He was particularly interested in how language is used in social contexts and its social, cultural, and

historical implications. However, his mentor Meillet suggested that he focus on topics such as the Greek verb system and tense issues (Bergounioux, 1992: 124). André also attended his father's lectures at the Sorbonne during this period. Emile Durkheim was deeply invested in André's development and even designed a unique series of twenty lectures on Pragmatism exclusively for him (De Vares, 2019: 145). Pragmatism was a relatively new philosophy at the time. Through these lectures, Durkheim aimed to clearly define the relationships, similarities, and differences between Pragmatism and the fundamental ideas of sociology. His goal was to fill a significant intellectual gap for young philosophers of the period, with a particular emphasis on benefiting his son, André (Durkheim, 1983: xi).

### 3. Mobilization, Clashes, And Injuries

Young educator André, who successfully progressed through educational stages, was dedicated to intellectual development when disaster struck the nation. On August 3, 1914, France officially entered the First World War by declaring war on Germany. The chain of events triggered by Austria-Hungary's declaration of war on Serbia, Russia's support for Serbia, and the German Empire's declaration of war on Russia led France into the conflict. The primary reason for France's entry into the war was Germany's invasion of Belgium. France perceived this event as a major threat, and with the rapid advance of the German army, participation in the war became inevitable. On the day war was declared, August 3, 1914, mobilization was announced in France, and all French males, including those recently discharged, were conscripted. André, a twenty-two-year-old young teacher, promptly enlisted and was sent to his unit.

Similarly, André's high school and university classmates were conscripted and sent to the front line. Despite his successful educational background, André donned his uniform as a Second Lieutenant (Sub-Lieutenant) and was assigned to the forefront of the battlefield. The magnitude of the Great War and the shortage of soldiers necessitated many conscripts being assigned to infantry duties. Thus, André was hurriedly dispatched to Argonne.<sup>2</sup> In October 1914, André engaged in fierce combat against German forces in the Argonne Forest. The French launched attacks to break through the German lines and advance, but due to intense German resistance and the challenging forest terrain, the assaults were unsuccessful. Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt.) Durkheim was wounded in this offensive and was hospitalized for treatment at a naval hospital in Brest. André's closest friend, René Maublanc — who later became known as a philosopher and educator — was his comrade from the École Normale Supérieure and also served on the front lines, spending about a year in support roles. André and René maintained continuous correspondence between fronts, sharing their experiences. While recovering from his injuries in Brest, André sent the following letter to René dated November 29, 1914<sup>3</sup>:

*"Dear René,*

*I don't know how to respond to you. Sadly, I must conclude by informing you that I have nothing new or interesting to say. I have been here until late October and eagerly await the order to leave. I believe I will depart early December. The wounds on my wrists and other significant injuries are beginning to heal. [...] Life in the trenches is extremely difficult. Jacques Peudet (6.57) is also here. Everyone is very tired; everyone is in the Argonne forests. The trenches are at a distance of 530 meters. Conditions elsewhere are equally harsh. We are in the trenches. If not in the trenches, we are somewhere in the forests. Blood is always flowing."*

Father Durkheim is understandably restless. In his letter to Mauss dated February 5, 1915, he expressed his thoughts: "We know that speculating on André's fate and his chances on the front-line

<sup>2</sup> Hanna asserts that André first engaged in combat on Belgian soil. However, there is no evidence substantiating this claim. See Hanna, 1996: 59.

<sup>3</sup> Additionally, there exists a handwritten postcard dated January 12-15, 1915, sent from Maublanc to André. The envelope bears a stamp stating "retour à l'envoyeur – le destinataire n'a pu être atteint," indicating "return to sender – addressee could not be reached." See Manuscripts & Fonds Maublanc (2021).

yields nothing. We try to think about it as little as possible, that's all there is to it. There's nothing else to be done" (Abbott, 2019: 20). In his letter, Durkheim's unfamiliar style and shades of fatalism are evident. André was wounded for the second time in February 1915 and was treated at the Hôpital Mixte de Bar-le-Duc military hospital in Bar-le-Duc. In a letter to René from the hospital, he said:

*"Bar le Duc, March 7*

*Dear friend, thank you for the little note that reached me at my hospital bed. Everything is going much better now, but not completely well yet. I started eating normally the day before yesterday. Yesterday, I stood up for a bit, for an hour, an hour and a half. However, I am still not fully recovered; eight days of bed rest still haven't fixed my legs. Guilloux is here and I am weak as a nail. But finally, I can sit down, occasionally stand up. And I think now I must get better. Later, I can prepare my suitcase, wander a bit in the center at noon and strengthen my muscles again. I learned about Constantin's death and today I received the news of Petrus's (from Nevers, who has been here since early October with a gunshot wound to his hip) death. I agree with what you said about Dupuis and it's normal. It's certain that two deaths in German hospitals are quickly reported. Poor Dupuis's condition still hasn't been officially confirmed. They say he was a lieutenant in the 150th division. They say he is thirty years old and he is in the same room as me. They said Denir was wounded in the head from the chapel's explosion. There are still shrapnel pieces in his spine and back. I had never heard Denir's name. I had never heard the name in recent events. I want you to know the fate of Jantin. Yes, dear friend, it would really be impossible for me to poke my nose into philosophy.[...].*

*Goodbye dear friend, with very sincere feelings...*

*From Bar le Duc Hospital"*<sup>4</sup>

Over time, André recovered and was discharged from the hospital, returning to his unit. However, shortly after that, he sustained a third injury and was admitted for treatment in Brest. Father Durkheim also traveled to Brest to visit André. In a letter dated June 1, 1915, addressed to his nephew Marcel Mauss — a French sociologist and anthropologist — Durkheim writes as follows:

*"I went to Brest as I wrote to you. I left on Friday evening and spent Saturday, Sunday, and Monday with André. Aunt did not want to come with me; she thought she could be more useful here. I didn't insist much, I was worried about her tiredness, because we had to travel two nights by train, and two nights in bed. In fact, I slept very badly, and I didn't sleep at all on the way back. I lay down, but I was shaken as never before (...) We took a trip to Morgat and despite my tiredness, I brought back a wonderful view from there. The weather was magnificent. I left André in the best spirits and in good physical condition"* (Kermoal, 2012).

During this period, many French intellectuals engaged in a literary battle against Germany through their writings. Durkheim, in his role as an enlightened sociologist, intervened in the war effort by preparing publications defending France's position in the conflict against Germany. He occasionally held meetings with various intellectuals and parliamentarians such as Marcel Sembat. Sub-Lieutenant André, having quickly recovered, was redeployed to the front where he had been wounded in June 1915. However, one month later, in July 1915, he was wounded for the fourth time and hospitalized in

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<sup>4</sup> Between 1912 and André's death, it is documented that he wrote 24 letters to Maublanc. Recently, these letters, along with manuscripts from 1912-1915 and most in their original envelopes, were auctioned for €900 on September 28, 2021, in Vendôme. The correspondence is entirely handwritten and addressed to René Maublanc. The letters cover various topics, including holiday activities (travels, exhibitions, readings, philosophical studies), a murder case involving a student named Jean Bourget, and letters written from the front lines. (See Manuscripts & Fonds Maublanc (2021)). Additionally, the only known photograph of André, dating back to 1915, was mentioned by his father, Émile Durkheim, in a letter to Mauss, describing bringing back a "wonderful image" from a trip with his son. It is speculated that this photograph was taken during the Morgat trip in May 1915. See Strenski (2008: 17).



Neufchâteau. During this time, French newspapers established a bulletin called "Nos Blessés" (Our Wounded), publishing daily updates on the names and conditions of French soldiers injured on the front lines. André Durkheim's condition was announced in L'Humanité newspaper on July 4, 1915, stating, "André Durkheim is under treatment in Neufchâteau (Vosges). Second Lieutenant, a graduate of École Normale Supérieure, philosophy lecturer" (Nos blessés, 1915: 1). The Durkheim family made efforts to visit André whenever possible, and after his recovery, they took a family trip to Saint-Valéry-en-Caux in August 1915, where one of the rarely known photographs of the Durkheim family was taken.<sup>5</sup> André rejoined his unit shortly after that and continued to serve on different fronts in the East. In a letter dated September 21 sent to his nephew, Durkheim mentions André's letters from the front:

*"We received letters from André, providing us with details about the battles. He has experienced emotions that I will never experience: attacking the enemy with a bayonet, long accustomed to the sounds of bombs. By chance, his helmet stopped a bullet, which he carefully keeps"* (Abbott, 2019: 19).

#### 4. The Deployment to the Thessaloniki Front

Significant military developments were unfolding during this period, which marked the peak of the Great War. Starting in July 1915, the invasion of Serbia by Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Bulgaria was progressing steadily. The combined forces of the 3rd and 11th Austrian-Hungarian Armies from the north and the 1st and 2nd Bulgarian Armies from the west had effectively breached the front consisting of Serbian and Montenegrin troops. The Serbian army was forced into retreat, becoming trapped in Montenegro. In response to these advances, France and Britain opened a new front in the Balkans, centered around Thessaloniki, also known as the Macedonian Front. Another reason for opening this front was to exert pressure on the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans.<sup>6</sup> The *Armée d'Orient* (Eastern Army), under the command of General Maurice Sarrail, began to be formed in September 1915 from units actively engaged in France. These units were swiftly transferred to Thessaloniki. Sub-Lieutenant André's unit—the 8th Infantry Brigade, under the command of Colonel Marquis—was formed by merging the 45th Infantry Regiment with the 148th Infantry Regiment. It was decided that this brigade would be sent to the Macedonian Front. Therefore, the new battlefield where André would soon be engaged was approximately 2,500 kilometers from his hometown of Paris.

Colonel Morel served as the Commander of the Infantry Regiment.<sup>7</sup> The previous regimental commander, Lorillard, concluded his tenure in September 1915, after which Colonel Morel was appointed to lead the regiment from September 1915 to January 1918 (Historique du 45e Régiment d'Infanterie, 2012: 29). After his promotion, Sub-Lieutenant André-Armand Durkheim served as a

<sup>5</sup> In the photograph taken on the beach of Saint-Valéry-en-Caux on August 15, 1915, the family members seated from left to right are Louise Durkheim, Emile Durkheim, Claudette Raphaël, Madame Raphaël (Durkheim's niece), Madeleine Raphaël, and André Durkheim (on the far right). The photograph was taken by Durkheim's daughter, Marie Halphen. See Pickering & Walford (2002: 6).

<sup>6</sup> Initially, the operations on the front did not achieve great success, leading to a prolonged period of static warfare from 1916 to 1918. During this time, major offensives on the front lines were scarce. Harsh terrain, adverse weather conditions, and diseases further compounded the challenges of warfare on the front. Logistics issues also posed serious problems for the Allies and the Central Powers. In September 1918, the Allied Powers launched a major offensive under General Franchet d'Espèrey. As a result of this offensive, Bulgaria suffered heavy losses on the front and was forced to retreat. The success of the offensive culminated on September 29, 1918, with Bulgaria signing the Armistice of Thessaloniki, leading to its withdrawal from the war. This development led to the closure of the Macedonian Front and the end of the war in the Balkans. For detailed information about the Macedonian Front, refer to Türkmen (2015).

<sup>7</sup> The regiment comprised three battalions designated as the 1st, 2nd, and the 3rd Battalion. The 3rd Battalion, under the command of Major Baudouin, stands as the regiment's most formidable battalion, comprising 23 officers. Units intended to achieve decisive outcomes in battle are typically reinforced to a greater extent than others. The 1st and 2nd Battalions comprise four companies, while the 3rd Battalion comprised six. In addition to the four companies, a Marine Infantry Reinforcement Company and a Reconnaissance Company from the 8th Brigade were added.

platoon commander in the 9th Company.<sup>8</sup> A route had been designated for the transfer of units: the battalions would first move by train to Toulouse, then proceed by ship from Toulon to Thessaloniki. Furthermore, a decision was made for the units to advance gradually to Thessaloniki to avoid presenting a single, vulnerable target susceptible to destruction. During this transfer, Father Durkheim did not leave André alone; he accompanied him as far as Toulouse and bade him farewell there. However, he remained deeply unsettled. In letters to his nephew Mauss, he conveyed his awareness of the highly precarious situation in the Balkans (Abbott, 2019: 16). During their farewell, he said to André:

*“What benefit is there in speculating about the outcome? There's nothing else to do but adapt. We will force ourselves to do so, and we will succeed. You are going to the trenches. Take care of yourself. Be cautious! Your attention in this matter should never wane. I have no doubt that you have been trained for this [...] Ah, if only I had not been exposed to this”* (Abbott, 2019: 20).

André's morale is notably high. He perceives even the prospect of war and deployment to another front as an opportunity, excited by the prospect of encountering new places and cultures. Father Durkheim writes the following on this matter:

*“We saw André in excellent spirits: very cheerful, the idea of a journey that would teach him something appealed greatly to him. Did he adopt this attitude for our sake? I don't know. Seeing him like this made us feel good. Initially, the prospect of such a separation was very painful, for both of us. We endured very difficult days. And then, seeing him, as he is now, dispelled the sad images in our minds. We must live on, and we must manage our affairs”* (Abbott, 2019: 21).

Following the father-son farewell, Sub-Lieutenant André-Armand Durkheim's 3rd Battalion departed from Toulouse at 13:00 on October 27th, heading towards Toulon, a port city near Marseille. The train arrived in Toulon at 12:00 on October 28th. Due to necessary preparations, the battalion's transfer to the ship and departure took three days, and it was not until October 31st that the battalion completed boarding the British transport ship *Menominee*. André, standing on the ship's deck in his uniform, took one last look at France, observing the large crowd before him bidding farewell to his unit with tearful eyes and vigorous applause (*“Partant pour La Serbie”*, 2013). Subsequently, Colonel Morel's ship lowered the French flag, the guards stood at attention, and amidst the band playing *La Marseillaise* and *Chant du Départ*, the ship departed from the port at 16:00 (*“Partant pour La Serbie”*, 2013). A great problem faced by the Eastern Army during that period was widespread disease. Sub-Lieutenant André-Armand Durkheim, along with all personnel, was vaccinated against smallpox, typhus, plague, diphtheria, and cholera during the journey. He found himself farther from home than ever before, in unfamiliar waters. On the ship's deck, he watched Corsica pass to his left, followed by Sicily, marveling at the smoke rising from Mount Etna into the sky. They made a brief stop in Malta on November 3rd, then sighted Moudros on November 7th. At 09:30 on November 9th, the ship entered the port of Thessaloniki.

Among all the units disembarking, André's situation and feelings are particularly poignant. André found himself in the homeland of the philosophy he had studied and taught for years. He looked at Thessaloniki with a very different perspective. He saw the dry mountains flowing into the sea, the white villages nestled in valleys, and the small ports glittering with light. Experiencing and living the ancient Hellenic mythology through places like Kythira, Peloponnese, Cyclades, Euboea, Ossa, Pelion,

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<sup>8</sup> His complete designation after that is Sub-Lieutenant André-Armand Durkheim of the 45th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion, 9th Company (Encadrement du Régiment, 2009). Lieutenant Belin, Sub-Lieutenant André-Armand Durkheim, and Lieutenant Fisherman served as the other platoon commanders within the company. Sub-Lieutenant Durkheim's company comprises 208 personnel, including four officers, fourteen non-commissioned officers, nineteen corporals, and 171 privates. Additionally, the company possessed one riding horse and seven mules (Encadrement du Régiment, 2009).

and Olympus, he meticulously followed the steps built on the walls of the Ancient Byzantine castle with white houses. During this time, a large fleet of war and merchant ships is in the port. When the ship stopped, trader boats filled with fruits, cigarettes, wine, and raki surrounded the ship, and some soldiers purchase Samos wine, figs, and cognac (“Arrivée à Salonique”, 2013). The battalion needs to proceed to the Zeitenlik Camp, the main headquarters of the Thessaloniki Front. Zeitenlik Camp was located approximately three kilometers west of Thessaloniki in Greece. Due to its strategic location for access to Thessaloniki and the Balkans, the camp would become a significant military base throughout the war. At the first light of November 10th, the battalion set out for the camp and arrived on the same day. The entire regiment assembled at the camp alongside other battalions. Subsequently, the mission areas were identified, and the battalions were transported by trains to locations such as Drmica, Rives du Vardar (Vardar River), Gjergjeli, and Krivolak.

On November 12th, the 3rd Battalion, to which Sub-Lieutenant André-Armand Durkheim was attached, positioned itself 800 meters east of the confluence of the Grand Route and the Mirzen River, with its companies dispersed throughout the area. The Bulgarian forces launched an attack on November 12th, leading to intense skirmishes that prompted three companies of the battalion to be dispatched in support of Sirkovo and Debriste. There were subsequent daily relocations and regional skirmishes. On November 20th, 1915, while patrolling between Kruzevica and Cicevo, the 12th company of the battalion came under attack by Bulgarian artillery, resulting in the death of three soldiers and injuries to eight others. These were the battalion's first casualties. Sub-Lieutenant André-Armand Durkheim occasionally observed Bulgarian patrols, underscoring the imminent threat of death. Following the attack, the battalion's strength diminished to 818 personnel, comprising seventeen officers and 801 soldiers. On November 21st, André's 9th Company was stationed at the Grandisko bridgehead, situated at the confluence of the Cerna and Vardar rivers. By November 30th, the entire battalion was directed towards Negotin and subsequently to Bistreni. Lieutenant Colonel Morel had been promoted to Colonel, issuing Operation Order No. 37 on December 2nd. According to this order, each battalion would occupy designated areas and arrange their troops accordingly. Under the command of Major Baudouin, the 3rd Battalion continued to defend specific points with two machine gun units.

Upon receiving the order, Baudouin promptly made all necessary arrangements and reported to Colonel Morel. Later, the reconnaissance unit was dispatched between Negotin and Tremnick, and the night of December 2nd brought dense fog, which proved advantageous for the Bulgarian army. They crossed the Crna Reka by swimming and reached Ribarci. The 2nd Bulgarian Army launched a full-scale attack to halt the French advance, blocking the northern direction like an obstacle. An alarm was raised, ordering the Bulgarians back into the water, but the attempt was unsuccessful, prompting a retreat. According to Colonel Morel's withdrawal order, the retreat began gradually in the dark and snowy night. Accordingly, enemy attacks were repelled with the most intense fire, and the area was defended at all costs. Retreat would occur during the secure time and positions designated from dusk until dawn. Columns would advance continuously to avoid blocking critical passages, while companies silently left their trenches, gathered in tunnels, and were reinforced by reserve forces.

Throughout the day, the Bulgarians relentlessly attacked with their most powerful artillery. The war journal of the 45th Infantry Regiment noted that during the retreat, Baudouin's 3rd Battalion was particularly affected, with the heaviest assault directed at the 9th Company under Lieutenant Belin. Sub-Lieutenant André-Armand Durkheim had been promoted to Lieutenant and served as Platoon Commander of the 9th Company. He stood directly in the path of the Bulgarian assault at the front line. The Bulgarians closed in to within meters, becoming visible with bayonets fixed, brown uniforms, and flat caps, shouting and cheering with all their might to intimidate (“Demir-Kapu”, 2013). During extremely dense fog, visibility dropped to fifteen meters, causing Lieutenant Durkheim to lose contact



with his platoon and disappear into the mist. The tally from the retreat on the night of December 2nd recorded three dead, six wounded, and three missing. Among the casualties was Lieutenant Durkheim.

Lieutenant Durkheim, unable to determine his direction in the dense fog, became the target of gunfire from unidentified (French or Bulgarian) units. He was hit multiple times while his unit continued its rapid retreat southward, unable to reach the Lieutenant. As the Bulgarian army advanced, they found Lieutenant Durkheim wounded by several gunshot wounds. Despite his injuries, André was still alive. Recognizing this, Bulgarian soldiers carried him to a makeshift military hospital. Despite the necessary medical interventions, Lieutenant André Durkheim succumbed to his wounds on December 5th, 1915.<sup>9</sup> His death was recorded as '*mort pour la France*'.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, due to the ongoing war, he was buried in the nearest Davidovo Village Cemetery.<sup>11</sup>

### 5. Émile Durkheim's Desperate Search For André: Emotional Journey From Hope To Despair

Communication through letters persisted amidst the turmoil of war on French soil, albeit with difficulty. However, the correspondence between Father Durkheim and his son André, stationed in Thessaloniki, had nearly become impossible. André Durkheim, who had ventured far from home, ceased to send news after October. Using all his political friendships and connections, Father Durkheim attempted to reach his son but received no response. On December 1, 1915, he wrote to Mauss:

*"The situation there is becoming quite worrying. I am currently living in anxiety. Of course, there is not a word on this subject in your letter. Your aunt is behaving wisely. She does not read war news, especially about the East. I wish I could do the same!"* (Kermoal, 2012).

Under pressure from certain politicians and military authorities, a letter about André's situation was sent to the 45th Infantry Regiment dispatched to Thessaloniki. Through the Italian embassy in Bucharest, inquiries about André were made in the region. Édouard Claparède, a renowned Swiss psychologist of the time, used his connections to contact some Bulgarian personalities to gather information about André Durkheim. Meanwhile, Father Durkheim increasingly felt his son slipping away as the days passed. On December 6th, he wrote: *"The reasons for hope are diminishing every day. I will get over it with time. It's horrible. Luckily, I am very busy. I fear idle time. Otherwise, I am not doing badly. I sleep well"* (Abbott, 2019: 22). After a long wait, a letter arrived from Colonel Morel, the regiment commander, on February 15th, 1916. The letter took seventeen days to arrive after the Colonel's letter of January 29th, 1916, marking the first communication in months regarding his son. Durkheim was overcome with great concern, having learned similarly about the death of his close friend and adherent to his school, the sociologist and anthropologist Robert Hertz, on the front lines ten months earlier (Hertz, 2002: 15). In his letter, Colonel Morel reported that the regiment engaged in combat on Bulgarian territory and that Lieutenant André Durkheim participated courageously in battles but has been missing since December.

*"In consideration of the dense fog that makes it nearly impossible to see a man from more than fifteen meters away, it is plausible that he may have gone astray in this challenging terrain and could*

<sup>9</sup> Eulriet (2008: 173) mistakenly states that André passed away in 1916, due to the report of his death reaching them in that year.

<sup>10</sup> "*Mort pour la France*" (en. Died for France) is specifically used to honor the memory of French soldiers or individuals who lost their lives during wartime.

<sup>11</sup> Pickering claims that André's remains were brought from Macedonia and buried in the family cemetery in Montparnasse after the war, based on a letter dated September 15, 1915, which he attributes to Durkheim's friend Xavier Léon. However, research has revealed that Durkheim did not send a letter to Xavier Léon on the mentioned date. Furthermore, André was alive on September 15, 1915. Emile Durkheim received news of André's death on February 24, 1916. Therefore, news of André's death could not have been communicated on September 15, 1915. In addition, a search of the Montparnasse cemetery records mentioned by Pickering did not reveal any name other than Emile Durkheim's (Pickering, 2008: 26).

*have been captured by the enemy. Therefore, I hope Mr. Durkheim, you will have the chance to find your son safe and sound after the war, thus receiving the reward of your patience, efforts, and trust. These remarkable examples strengthen us, all officers and soldiers alike*" (Kermoal, 2012).

Colonel Morel subtly implies the possibility of death regarding the prolonged absence of news by stating, "This silence is worrying." This letter also highlights Emile Durkheim's privileged status in France. Being considered deserving of a long and explanatory letter about his son from a regimental commander is a significant honor in France, where two and a half million men were under arms. Despite his sorrow upon receiving this news of his son's disappearance, Durkheim clung to the possibility that André might still be alive. In a letter to Mauss, he states:

*"Knowing that André fought heroically saves me from the distressing image of a weary and abandoned [lost] child. If, as I fear, he has been killed, he died as an officer fulfilling his duty. I would prefer that"* (Kermoal, 2012).

In previous letters, Father Durkheim expressed concern about his son's health multiple times, fearing that André's fragile constitution might hinder him from acting as a capable soldier. He once referred to André as a "big baby" due to his delirious cries of "mother, mother" during a bout of typhoid fever. Learning that his son fought bravely under his commander comforted him somewhat. Despite being lost, he believed André would somehow manage on his own with his bravery. However, his anxiety increased as days passed without any information on whether André had died or been captured. Using all possible means, he made inquiries to gather any information about André, and finally, on February 24, 1916 (Mergy, 1999: 6), he learned the truth that shattered his world. Lieutenant André Durkheim was fatally wounded by multiple bullets during enemy fire while the unit was withdrawing, and he succumbed to his injuries at a Bulgarian military hospital.

## 6. Discrepancies in André's Grave

The location of Lieutenant André's grave remains a subject lacking consensus in studies. The village of Davidovo, where André's grave purportedly lies, has various spellings such as Давидово, Davidowo, Davidowa, Davidova, and Dautlar, influenced by the different ethnicities residing in the region, including Macedonian, Serbian, and Turkish. This discrepancy has led to misunderstandings in academic and non-academic sources, with some erroneously stating that André died in Bulgaria or Serbia (Kermoal, 2012; "André Durkheim", n.d.). Colonel Morel's letter, indicating that his regiment fought in Bulgarian territory and that André went missing there, has led some researchers to confuse the Davidovo village in Macedonia with those in Bulgaria.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, some sources mention André's death in Serbia at that time, considering the historical absence of Macedonia as a political entity then (Merllié & Durkheim, 1989: 506). Lieutenant André's unit moved into the region to defend against the advancing Bulgarian forces entering Serbian territory. Therefore, the events unfolded, and André fought and died in what was then Serbia. This context is crucial for accurately understanding the historical context and geographical references. However, the place of death should be designated according to current political boundaries. Consequently, André's journey after being dispatched to Thessaloniki

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<sup>12</sup> There are two places named *Davidovo* in Bulgaria: one in the *Kaynardzha* (Kaynarca) region of *Silistra* province and another in *Targovishte* province. The combat mentioned by Colonel Morel, where the 45th Infantry Regiment fought in Bulgarian territory, occurred near the Bulgarian border, approximately 50 km from *Davidovo* village in Macedonia and about 90 km from Thessaloniki, where the regiment was stationed. The *Davidovo* village in *Kaynardzha* is 430 km from the Thessaloniki front, while the one in Targovishte province is 530 km away and closer to the Romanian border, for André's death site to be in one of these Bulgarian villages, a single infantry regiment would have had to defeat the entire Bulgarian army and even Austro-Hungarian forces, occupying nearly all of Bulgaria and advancing to reach the northernmost Davidovo villages—an implausible scenario devoid of historical evidence of such military engagements.

traversed a triangle comprising today's southeastern North Macedonia, southwestern Bulgaria, and northern Thessaloniki.

Kermoal (2012) recently shared some documents from André's military personnel file, providing more accurate information about his place of death and resolving the complexity surrounding Davidovo village. Accordingly, a rough draft map has been drawn to locate André's grave in Davidovo after the war (Kermoal, 2012). The village of Davidovo is situated to the left of the cemetery, while to the right the Vardar River flows in a southerly direction. A bridge over the Vardar River is depicted in the sketch, along with a railway line running parallel to Gevgelija (Gevgeli). The German handwriting<sup>13</sup> on the draft states: "The grave of French Lieutenant André Armand Durkheim is in the cemetery at Davidovo. The grave is in the second row from the entrance, marked by a wooden cross on the left."

As previously mentioned, André Durkheim's military personnel file, located at the Centre Historique des Archives in Vincennes, under the French Ministry of Defense, is the official single source of information.<sup>14</sup> This file covers only the period related to André's death. Aside from official deployment records, there are very few documents concerning André's military history. Marcel Mauss's testimony later corroborated these details. Copies of letters sent to Émile Durkheim notifying him of his son's disappearance and later his death are also housed there. Other letters reveal various efforts made by Father Durkheim between November 1915 and February 1916 to ascertain his son's fate.<sup>15</sup>

## 7. After The Death: Emile Durkheim and Sociology

Father Durkheim conveyed the news of André's death to his nephew Mauss in a letter dated February 25, 1916, one day after receiving the news:

*"Dear Marcel, I am about to give you great sorrow. André died from his wounds. He is buried in a small village called Davidovo. Writing these words pains me. Reading them will pain you as well. We must try to cope..."* (Kermoal, 2012).

For Durkheim, André's loss was profoundly felt. André was more than just a family member; he was Durkheim's intellectual companion and his most esteemed student. In the annual journal of the ENS, where he published an obituary for his son, Durkheim portrayed André as a young man of high moral character, someone who became angered by social injustice and possessed extraordinary intellectual promise (Hanna, 1996: 59). Durkheim wrote:

*"For a long time, I was his only teacher, and I always closely followed his studies. From a very early age, he showed great interest in the research to which I had devoted myself, and it was clear that he would soon become a companion in my work. Our intellectual closeness was thus at its highest possible level"* (Durkheim, 1917: 201-5).

Mauss also reports that Durkheim had placed great hopes in André, seeing him as his son and the brightest student he nurtured (Kermoal, 2012). André's death represents the tragic loss of a highly talented academic at a young age, causing profound devastation to the Durkheim family. Father Durkheim increasingly isolated himself from society and entered a period of academic stagnation. During a time when Durkheim was deeply contemplating the workings of society and the role of individuals within it, he faced a significant personal loss. Over time, his physical and mental health

<sup>13</sup> Given that Austrian and German doctors were known to serve in military hospitals in Bulgaria then, the German note suggests that André was attended to and buried by an Austrian or German doctor.

<sup>14</sup> The file registered under archive code GR 5 YE 120850, titled "Dossier individuel de personnel de DURKHEIM André A.,".

<sup>15</sup> Notably, military authorities initially reported the disappearance of a lieutenant on December 5, 1915, under the name "Durkhel." Subsequent documents reported the death of an individual named "Durkhem," which later matched the details of the missing Lieutenant "Durkhel." On December 18, 1915, a notation confirmed that "Lieutenant Durkheim died." Additionally, the file includes a letter dated January 29, 1916, from Colonel Morel, commander of the 45th Regiment, addressed to Father Durkheim.

began to deteriorate. In a letter dated February 28, 1916, sent to his close friend Xavier Léon, Durkheim expressed his feelings:

*"Above all, do not regret that you could not come [for condolences]. My previous condition was no better than my current one. There was no point in prolonging it. On the contrary, this seven-week ordeal has drained me and taken away my strength unnecessarily. Mrs. Léon mentioned that you wished to see me. Come, my dear friend, when you have something to discuss with me. We will talk as we used to. However, what should be avoided is conversations that could lead us back to things I do not want to dwell on. In such a situation, the best rule is to return to work as soon as possible. It is the only way to prevent obsessions. Right now, I am going through a very busy week. For me, seeing whether I can work hard without putting in much effort was an initial encouragement. I hope to teach my class well tomorrow. There is nothing worse than endless analysis to end your grief. I went too far in the first two days. That's why I asked my friends not to see me at that time because of my situation. I am sure you will agree with me after thinking about it."* (Abbott 2019: 21).

Durkheim eventually stopped enjoying what he did and writing because he always imagined that the biggest fruits of the work would go to his son. In his letters from March 5 and 19: "My name, my influence, everything was to serve him. It was a joy for me to know that everything he could do was my work. Now all this is meaningless" (Abbott, 2019: 22).

This loss inflicted one of the greatest wounds on French Sociology. Sociology, according to Durkheim, is a discipline akin to a family. During that period, intellectual endeavors -exemplified by figures like Max and Marianne Weber- bore their finest fruits within familial studies. Louise de Durkheim significantly contributed to intellectual pursuits. Alongside André, Durkheim's nephews and friends also engaged in sociological work. André notably participated in lectures on Pragmatism. For Durkheim, teaching, organizing, and debating with students and extended family for hours on end gradually made sociology a warm focal point within familial relations (Rawls, 2007: 3). This research group found its expression in Durkheim's journal, *L'Année Sociologique*. This loss profoundly impacted the entire atmosphere of Année, the sole authority of French Sociology at the time. André aimed to continue his father's legacy, specializing in sociology and linguistics to eventually take over Année. Besides André, notable figures from the Année circle, such as Robert Herz, Bianconi, Maxime David, Jean Reynier, and R. Gelly, also perished in the war (Clark, 1973: 207).<sup>16</sup>

The impact of André's death on Durkheim's sociological work has been thoroughly examined by Sociologist Prof.Dr. Andrew Abbott from the University of Chicago in his study "Living One's Theories: Moral Consistency in the Life of Émile Durkheim." In this work, Abbott scrutinizes Durkheim's 750-page correspondence, exploring the relationship between a theorist's theories and their daily life practices and experiences. Abbott demonstrates that Durkheim largely lived by his theories throughout his career, attributing his ethical conduct in professional and personal relationships to his theoretical commitments. However, the death of his son became a significant turning point that disrupted his stable sociological perspectives and theoretical framework, leading. This event led Durkheim to employ stoic, fatalistic, and melancholic expressions in his views. According to Abbott, this experience cannot be accommodated within the Durkheimian system and defies theorization. It disrupted his stable sociological perspectives and theoretical framework (Abbott, 2019).

By April 1916, Durkheim had fallen into a profound depression and was admitted for psychological treatment. He initially benefited from the therapy but by late 1916, his health deteriorated once again. His doctor prescribed rest and sharply reduced mental activity. Consequently, Durkheim

<sup>16</sup> Following mobilization, 342 students of the École Normale Supérieure were called to arms, with 293 sent to the front and 104 losing their lives there (Lukes, 1973: 548). Among the 1911 class of the École Normale Supérieure, which included André, eighteen young men, whose future as the country's leading intellectuals was beyond doubt, perished in the war.



took sick leave and withdrew entirely from university life. During his retirement, he endeavored to remain intellectually active and contributed to the encyclopedia *La Vie Universitaire à Paris*. Although he briefly engaged in academic debates, mental fatigue, and nervous spasms troubled him anew. In May 1916, he suffered a stroke on his right side, losing the use of his hand. Throughout this period, Durkheim's wife Louise continued to support him. Throughout their 30-year marriage, Louise enabled Durkheim to remain free from financial worries and trivial distractions, allowing him to focus on his work. Observing how deeply André's death had affected Durkheim, Louise concealed her grief and remained steadfast. She encouraged him until the end, ensuring he had the most conducive working conditions and even writing his letters after he was paralyzed (Abbott, 2019: 16).

Durkheim expressed that he was exhausted to the point of preferring death over continuing to live (Fournier, 2005: 61). In October 1917, he described himself to his close friend, student, and collaborator, the sociologist Georges Davy, as a living dead man, stating that "he saw events and people through the eyes of someone who had already departed from life" (Davy, 1919: 181). Durkheim passed away on November 15, 1917, twenty-one months after receiving the news of his son André's death. Davy characterized Durkheim as a *victime de la guerre* (victim of war) (Davy, 1919: 181). Nearly all sources on Durkheim's death (Durkheim, 1975; Pickering & Rosati, 2008; Fournier, 2005; Alexander & Smith, 2005; Pickering & Walford, 2002; Alberdi, 2018; Davy, 1919; Durkheim, 2017; Eulriet, 2008; Kermoal, 2012) agree that his grief over his son André's death was a significant factor. Apart from this event, Durkheim had been contending with criticisms for some time due to anti-Semitic sentiments prevalent in France during that period and his role in the Dreyfus Affair. He faced allegations in public opinion, including claims that he was of German origin and taught a "foreign" discipline at the Sorbonne. These anxieties, compounded with sorrow for his son, are evaluated as contributing factors to his premature death. It is known that all of Durkheim's works and notes passed first to his wife and then to his daughter Marie after his wife died in 1926 (Pickering, 2012: 3). Durkheim's nephew, Marcel Mauss, held the sociology chair at the Collège de France at the time of Durkheim's death. While Mauss was not as systematic as Durkheim, focusing more on symbolism as a subconscious activity of the mind, he expanded and transformed sociology through various disciplines, including law, economics, linguistics, ethnology, art history, and history in France (Peyre, 2024). Social anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss also occupied the same chair, integrating reasoning with emotional intensity similar to Durkheim but becoming one of structuralism's foremost advocates, in contrast to Durkheim's approach. Durkheim's influence transcended over time into disciplines beyond the social sciences through Mauss, transforming sociology into a foundational discipline that expanded and reshaped studies in France.

## 8. Conclusion

Born in 1892 in Paris as the son of Emile Durkheim, a foundational figure in sociology, André's story encapsulates both individual bravery and tragedy, serving as a reflection of the era's social and intellectual turmoil. Educated at Lycée Louis-le-Grand after homeschooling until age ten, André excelled academically, graduating with honors in 1909. Following his father's path, André entered École Normale Supérieure in 1910, where he pursued studies in philosophy and linguistics. When World War I broke out in 1914, André enlisted as a second lieutenant in the French Army. He demonstrated bravery on the front lines, including in the Argonne Forest, where he sustained injuries in 1914 and 1915. Despite these challenges, André continued his duties with unwavering courage. His promising academic and intellectual pursuits, shaped by his father's guidance, were abruptly halted by the war, highlighting the indiscriminate nature of conflict and its capacity to disrupt even the most promising lives. In 1915, André's unit was deployed to the Macedonian Front against Bulgaria. Tragically, during a retreat in December 1915, André was fatally wounded by unknown gunfire in dense fog, succumbing to his injuries on December 5, 1915.



The life and death of André-Armand Durkheim offer a poignant intersection between biography, intellectual history, and the sociology of war. This study reconstructs André's trajectory—from a promising student and philosopher influenced by his father's sociological legacy to a young lieutenant whose life was abruptly curtailed on the Macedonian Front. The research has illuminated how André's academic promise, deeply rooted in both philosophical inquiry and sociolinguistic thought, was shaped by his intellectual upbringing and the structured mentorship of Emile Durkheim. Yet, this promising future was extinguished by the catastrophic violence of World War I, rendering André a symbol of both intellectual loss and national sacrifice. Beyond the personal tragedy, the article has also demonstrated how André's death significantly disrupted Emile Durkheim's theoretical consistency and psychological stability. The war, as this case evidences, not only claimed lives but dismantled intellectual genealogies and sociological projects. Durkheim's stoic and fatalistic responses following the death of his son reveal the limits of his own theories when confronted with profound personal loss. His inability to reconcile grief with sociological reasoning underscores the epistemological and emotional fractures that total war inflicted upon the intellectual elite of the early 20th century. Ultimately, this biographical inquiry into André-Armand Durkheim contributes to a broader understanding of how war alters the fabric of intellectual transmission, reconfigures sociological production, and renders deeply personal experiences into historically significant narratives. By reassembling fragmented archival traces, the article reclaims André's story not only as a private loss but also as a collective rupture in French academic life—a loss that echoes the countless unseen consequences of war on the development of human knowledge.

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*The author declares that he has no competing interests.*

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**Ethical Statement**

*It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.*

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