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The unbearable lightness of being? Reconfiguring the moral underpinnings and sources of ontological security

Derek Bolton (iD)

Security and International Relations, University of Bath, Bath, UK
Author for correspondence: Derek Bolton, E-mail: d.w.bolton@bath.ac.uk

Abstract

While ontological security (OS) studies have gone through a recent evolution, shifting toward psychoanalytic and existential accounts of anxiety, this article argues there remains a deficient engagement with the affective environments within which actors operate. Specifically, focusing on shared emotions/affect allows for a thicker account of the mechanisms of OS – including the constitutive forces underpinning society/societal trust, the role/power of signifiers and narratives, and the basis upon which actors promote social change. Accordingly, it suggests Durkheim's social theory, his broader concept of 'religion' as an affective community constituted by faith in a moral order entwined with the sacred, offers a viable pathway to develop these insights and develop a new basis for the mechanisms of OS. The drive for OS thus becomes reconfigured as an effort to act faithfully toward a dynamic moral order, while ontological insecurity emerges from the unbearable lightness of being experienced within moral disorder. Following Durkheim's preliminary argument on nationalism representing the continuation of religion, we can then revise how/why nations are integral to OS and International Relations. Specifically, we can view foreign policy as informed by debates around how to act faithfully toward the moral order – a process interrelated with revitalization and renewal of the sacred.

Introduction

Scholars are increasingly using ontological security (OS) as a new optic to explore International Relations (IR). Moving from the realist focus on fear, OS theory (OST) builds upon existential anxiety, wherein the awareness of potential 'non-being' leaves individuals with a lingering dread; there is a persistent anxiety about being and sense of Self that might overwhelm us.[1] Early studies, drawing heavily from Anthony Giddens, thus explored how efforts to manage anxiety and

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[1] Giddens 1991, 37; Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017, 19; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020.

maintain a sense of a unified and continuous (individual or collective) Self, influences foreign policy.[2] However, these arguments have recently faced criticisms of a possible conservative status quo bias and a foreclosing of ethical questions and debate,[3] with scholars turning to the existential and psychoanalytic arguments Giddens drew upon, but that became '"flattened" to fit [his] larger theory', to develop a more dynamic account of anxiety.[4] For those ascribing to the psychoanalysis of Lacan,[5] subjects suffer from an inherent 'lack of certainty, stable identity and a full sense of self'. This results in an 'anxiety-driven desire for wholeness' and unending processes of identification with signifiers and narratives.[6] Similarly, more existentialist aligned arguments suggest individuals are inherently anxious about the ontic (existence), moral (guilt and condemnation), and spiritual (meaninglessness) dimensions of being.[7] Accordingly, actors are always trying to *become* ontologically secure.[8] While this often entails managing anxiety to avoid 'drifting into melancholic or psychotic states', it can also require embracing anxiety as a 'spur to action' that allows for change and a more authentic being.[9]

Despite these recent evolutions, this article follows Solomon in arguing their remains a deficient engagement and analysis of the affective contexts and shared emotions within which actors pursue OS.[10] Although recent studies touch upon how rituals can generate flows of emotions and affective entanglements pertinent to OS, these dynamics could be further explored and made more central to how we conceptualize the sources of OS.[11] This article thus sets out to establish the centrality of shared emotions for OS and the implications this has for foreign policy.

Specifically, section one establishes how focusing on emotional/affective contexts can provide a thicker account of the sources of OS by addressing questions around societal trust, the constitution and power of the narratives and signifiers subjects are drawn to – particularly regarding nations (a focal point of OST), and accounting for the basis upon which subjects promote social change. To develop these insights, it suggests OST should adopt a new social theory for basing the mechanisms of OS, one that addresses the place of emotion, tradition, and moral order.

To this end, the second section argues Emile Durkheim's social theory of religion provides a viable pathway for developing and broadening OST by engaging with the affective forces that constitute and renew society. Specifically, Durkheim viewed societies as constituted by faith in a moral order interrelated with conceptions of what is sacred, what is 'set apart and forbidden' – a faith premised upon the (re)awakening of 'the sense of moral support' that accompanies communing with

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[2]Mitzen 2006; Steele 2008; Krolikowski 2008; Berenskoetter and Giegerich 2010; Zarakol 2010; Lupovici 2012; Subotić 2015.

[3]Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020, 240; Kinnvall *et al.* 2018, 253; Browning and Joenniemi 2017; Rossdale 2015.

[4]Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020, 241–42.

[5]Solomon 2014; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2018; Vieira 2018; Cash 2020.

[6]Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020, 245; Vieira 2018, 150.   [7]Rumelili 2020, 260; Browning 2018a, 338.

[8]Berenskötter 2020, 274.

[9]Browning 2018a, 338; Browning 2018b, 247–48; Berenskötter 2020; Rumelili 2021.

[10]Solomon 2018. Emotion and affect are 'intrinsically linked, for affective states are subconscious factors that can frame and influence our more conscious emotional evaluation'. Hutchison and Bleiker 2014, 502.

[11]Steele 2019; Mälksoo 2021. Rumelili 2021, also conceptualizes anxiety as an affective state of society.

the sacred and the rites of the cult, from effervescent gathering.[12] Importantly, this faith not only makes society possible but also leads individuals to transcend themselves, generating strength, warmth, and courage. By starting with Durkheim, it thus becomes possible to establish a so far unexplored mechanism and social theory for OS, wherein the drive for OS becomes reconfigured as an effort to act faithfully within and toward the moral order. However, recognizing the moral order is contingent upon the continuous revitalization of emotion, we find this entails a dynamic process of change as society endeavors to face contemporary challenges – from questioning the status quo, to revivals, renewals, and revolutions in conceptualizations of who we are. In other words, Durkheim's social theory provides a dynamic account of OS, one that allows for an ongoing dialogue around how to live a virtuous life. The implication being ontological *insecurity* should not be only understood in terms of uncertainty and change, but as arising from moral disorder – when the sacred becomes 'polluted' and affective bonds are weakened. This makes questions around the place of emotive forces within contemporary society of the utmost importance to OS.

Accordingly, the third section revises our understanding of the relevance of nations to OS by further pursuing Durkheim's preliminary analysis of nationalism representing the *continuation* of religion and nations as moral communities constituted by faith in conceptions of the sacred. Nations thus comprise an affective reality. While nations are always becoming, this entails returning to the sacred in an ongoing process of national revival – meaning the affective foundations of the nation, and thus OS, often remain intact. However, revitalization might also lead to radical change and the construction of a new community and new conceptualizations of the sacred.

As the fourth section argues, it is these processes of engaging and/or transforming the sacred and moral order that become critical to understanding foreign policy. That is, we can view foreign policy as a socially embedded process wherein actors continuously return to, reinterpret, and renew the sacred to debate what 'acting faithfully' means in terms of the community's conception of the sacred and moral order – debates that inform the struggles over the national interest. Rather than focus on attachment to routines/identity, foreign policy is crucially and inevitably embedded in fundamental problems of virtue ethics – with overriding questions such as what type of nation do we want to become? This provides a new optic for investigating 'emotions as shared, collective phenomena' and theorizing 'the role emotions play in shaping and motivating political communities', thereby bringing OST further in line with the emotional turn in IR.[13]

Anxiety and the sources of OS: toward a social theory

A central question for OS studies is how the drive to manage anxiety 'manifests in social and political behavior',[14] with early research, drawing upon Giddens, focusing on various mechanisms capable of preserving a firm and whole sense of Self. At one level, studies explored *states* as trying to maintain certain routines,[15] preserve

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[12]Durkheim 1995[1912], 364–65, 362–63.
[14]Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020, 246.

[13]Hutchison and Bleiker 2014, 499.
[15]Mitzen 2006; Rumelili 2015.

clear boundaries,[16] and act in accordance with biographical narratives while trying to avoid shameful behavior.[17] Conversely, others focused on how *individuals* seek stable cognitive environments,[18] and a stable and coherent narrative to identify with and become embedded within,[19] with states and nations seen as providing: cognitive and ideational stability[20] and a 'reliable framework for making sense of the world' – and thus a sense of familiarity and 'home'[21]; meaningfulness and 'a symbolic and institutional order'[22]; and a narrative to become embedded within.[23] When these mechanisms become threatened, actors often respond by essentializing group identities, translating anxiety into fear, or strategically employing a group's biographical narrative to maintain perceived consistency.[24]

These arguments have recently been critiqued for their tendency to prioritize 'identity-related stability',[25] with many turning to existentialist and psychoanalytic scholarship to better explore the possibility of revising identities/routines or embracing anxiety to allow for more authentic forms of being.[26] Unfortunately, there has been less development around Solomon's call for focusing upon the cultural and affective contexts actors pursue OS within. This is to the detriment of OST; for example, Solomon demonstrates how circulations of affect among protesters during the Arab Spring generated a collective conscious and sense of security, courage, and resolve despite heightened cognitive uncertainty and instability.[27] Expanding upon Solomon, this section establishes how focusing upon shared emotions/affect strengthens OST by providing a thicker account regarding the sources of OS. Specifically, focusing on affective contexts helps account for the basis of societal trust central to Giddens-inspired readings of OS, the power and role of the narratives and signifiers emphasized by those employing Lacan, and addresses questions of empowerment and authenticity raised by existentialist arguments. To further develop and bring together the role of shared emotion/affect in these three areas, it argues OS studies would benefit from turning to a social theory that engages with the place of shared emotion/affect and, linked to this, tradition and moral order.

Basis of trust and leaps of faith

For many studies rooted in Giddens, trust is fundamental to OS – individuals need to have trust in others and their social and material environment to feel secure.[28] Specifically, Giddens argues 'basic trust', the product of a child's positive relationship with caregivers, provides a 'protective cocoon' that allows for both a stable sense of self-identity and an external world.[29] Early OST recognized basic trust

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[16]Darwich 2016.
[17]Steele 2008; Berenskoetter and Giegerich 2010; Zarakol 2010; Lupovici 2012.
[18]Croft 2012, 221. Mitzen also starts from the individual level 2006, 342.
[19]Kinnvall 2004, 758–59; Marlow 2002; Subotić 2015.   [20]Krolikowski 2018; Marlow 2002.
[21]Skey 2010; Kinnvall 2004; Ejdus 2020.   [22]Huysmans 1998, 241–42; Zarakol 2017.
[23]Berenskoetter 2010, 270; Subotić 2015, 2; Kinnvall 2004, 743; Steele 2008, 20.
[24]Kinnvall 2004; Krolikowski 2008; Croft 2012; Subotić 2015.
[25]Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 32.   [26]Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020.   [27]Solomon 2018.
[28]Giddens 1991, 39, 51. For a discussion see Kinnvall 2004, 746; Mitzen 2006, 346–47; Croft 2012, 222–23; Browning 2018a, 338; Kinnvall 2018, 530; Steele 2019.   [29]Giddens 1991, 40.

as a dichotomous variable linked to the proclivity for reflexivity and change.[30] The ensuing focus on actors' attachment to routines/identity has thus been critiqued for effectively exploring instances where such trust is lacking.[31] What perhaps needs further consideration, however, is how, in the first instance, actors maintain basic trust and an 'emotional acceptance of the reality of the "external world"'.[32]

For Giddens, while anxiety surrounds the 'protective cocoon' of basic trust, it is often managed at the societal level, making the 'rituals of trust and tact in day-to-day life' fundamental to OS.[33] Likewise, many OS studies stress the importance of societal trust[34] and ability of actors to trust 'they can bracket off all sorts of possibilities' and be contained within 'a "cocoon" of trust structures'.[35] However, while discussing this trust as being facilitated by predictability and social routines[36] – as provided, for example, by nations[37] – there is less engagement with the actual constitution of societal trust. To this end, we should recognize that a central question for Giddens is 'How far different cultural settings allow a "faith" in the coherence of everyday life to be achieved'.[38] Accordingly, we can say faith is critical to both societal trust, allowing for society and routines to take hold, and for the formation of the 'contextually relevant criteria' subjects must be recognized as meeting to preserve the self-esteem and confidence required for basic trust.[39] OST should thus engage with the leaps of faith that make societal trust, routines, and the shared criteria for assessing claims of subjectivity possible in the first place.

Arfi begins to speak to this in his call for thinking of attachment to routines and a 'would-be' sense of existential security as premised upon leaps of faith. Specifically, he holds actors can see routines as the means to an end (reflexive attachment) or as a goal in themselves (rigid attachment). In the former, actors, by "taking a critical distance toward routines" performatively create 'the possibility conditions for routines' and thus the anchor for a would-be sense of security. Actors thus performatively produce, simultaneously, security and reflexive attachment to routines. However, there is no guarantee security will be the outcome of critical assessment – it 'is a working assumption'. Likewise, rigid attachment is premised upon a 'faith in the routines as ends in themselves' – a faith the routines will allow for security.[40]

While agreeing subjects are undertaking leaps of faith, some important questions arise from this argument. Arfi notes such leaps are 'not taken consciously; rather, it is embedded in the performance of the very act of getting attached to routines'. But this begs the question of how or why such a leap is made outside of the desire for existential security; that is, actors seem to leap merely in the hopes there is a rope to hang on to. While citing the importance of 'conviction and commitment beyond what either knowledge or belief can offer', we hear little about where this stems from.[41] Instead, we should consider the dynamism of faith; how leaps of

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[30]Mitzen 2006, 350; Steele 2008, 61; Krolikowski 2008.   [31]Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 35.
[32]Giddens 1991, 42.   [33]Ibid, 43, 46–47.   [34]Browning 2018a, 337; Marlow 2002, Steele 2019.
[35]Kinnvall 2004, 746; Mitzen 2006, 346; Croft 2012, 221, 229; Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017, 15–16; Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 35.   [36]For a discussion see Kinnvall 2018, 530.
[37]Marlow 2002; Kinnvall 2004; Skey 2010; Zarakol 2017; Krolikowski 2018.
[38]Giddens 1991, 38.   [39]Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 42.   [40]Arfi 2020, 298–301.
[41]Ibid, 301.

faith are not taken toward the unknown, but something concrete – such as what is 'known' by history/memory and ritual reenactment. For example:

> the object to which…Abraham directed his faith is…something in the future. Jaweh indicated to Abraham his plan for history (Gen.xv.5): and Abraham believed it to be something real, and 'made himself secure' in it. That was his faith.[42]

Likewise, we must consider how shared routines emerge in the first place, why numerous actors might take similar leaps of faith, and how some routines are entwined with 'enveloping forces that shape us before we can even think of choices'.[43] Accordingly, we might, like Giddens, instead draw inspiration from George Simmel. For Simmel the trust required by society,[44] while facilitated by reason, routine, and reflexivity, always requires an emotional component[45]; an 'additional element…most clearly embodied in religious faith'. The implication being society is held together by 'some additional affective, even mystical, "faith" of man in man'.[46] We can thus see societal trust as premised upon a shared faith interrelated with affect – on 'feelings of warmth and affection', as well as shared history and memory.[47]

  To account for how such leaps of faith can be made,[48] Möllering suggests adopting William James' position regarding the right of actors to hold a faith in that 'live enough to tempt our will'. Faith, for James, is derived from experience – it must 'feel right, true, plausible and so on in spite of inconclusive evidence'.[49] While holding 'reason, volition and emotion' were in close contact, James thus prioritizes emotion; because the future (and consequence) is unknowable, there must be an 'affective or emotional displacement of uncertainty'.[50] Therefore, how shared affective environments arise and how intellect, feelings, and will come together becomes of central importance to OST by addressing the leaps of faith required for societal trust – and thus for the routines and shared criteria upon which recognition can be pursued and individuals' protective cocoons maintained.

  Here, recent works establishing a tentative relationship between ritual and OS provide a potential route for developing these insights. Specifically, Mälksoo demonstrates how the ritual features of deterrence are central to understanding 'deterrence as a social practice and an article of faith'. Crucially, rituals generate a social reality and 'affective entanglements' among allied deterrers, which she links to 'increased empathy, trust and solidarity'. Rituals also respect and constitute 'objects as sacred' and stimulate 'collective emotional effervescence' that allows for a sense of unity. This all provides OS by 'actualizing the identity of the collective deterrer actor'.[51] Steele meanwhile examines how soldier reunion videos provide

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[42]Von Rad 1962, 171. [43]Thomas 2000, 5, 93.
[44]Trust being a 'hypothesis certain enough to serve as a basis for practical conduct'. Simmel 1964[1950], 318; Simmel 2004[1990], 179. [45]Möllering 2001, 2006. [46]Simmel 1964[1950], 318.
[47]Mercer 2010, 6; 2014, 526.
[48]Something Giddens does little to develop. Möllering 2006, 111, 118. Indeed, Giddens seems to reverse the proposition of Simmel, writing 'faith almost by definition rests on trust'. Meštrović 2005, 84.
[49]Möllering 2006, 119, 120–21. Durkheim's similar focus on experience, explored below, allows us to move away from James' overly individualistic account. Taylor 2003, 28. [50]Barbalet 2004, 341, 343.
[51]Mälksoo 2021, 58, 67, 59–60.

a source of OS by not only disclosing social routines, but also functioning as a form of 'social occasion' that generate a 'circular flow of feeling among the participants'.[52] Bringing these arguments into conjunction with Simmel, we find OST might explore how rituals generate the affective entanglements that facilitate the leaps of faith required for the constitution of society – leaps of faith made in reference to the concrete objects and ideas at the center of rituals.

A 'Thick' view of signifiers and narratives

Meanwhile, those employing Lacan emphasize how individuals, '"thrown into" a world that is already discursively and symbolically structured', strive to identify with 'socially inscribed signifiers that help generate a social identity and presence in the world'.[53] While hoping such identifications will engender a sense of wholeness, they inevitably become undone by 'dislocatory events'.[54] Specifically, signifiers remain alien – being 'already embedded in pre-existing social understandings, discourses and practices' – and thus unable to capture the subject's being. However, the emotional desire to overcome one's 'lack' leaves subjects 'continuously embracing external identifications'[55] and 'fantasmatic narratives of identification'.[56]

Here two things must be considered: what constitutes the kind of world subjects are thrown into and the signifiers it is populated with, and why do certain signifiers solicit greater attachment than others. Importantly, Kinnvall stresses 'collective emotions…are central in the narrative constitution and consolidation of (collective) identities'. Therefore, we must recognize the imaginations subjects engage in 'involve emotional codes which are culturally inscribed' and that narratives which garner the most support encompass 'the "most widely and deeply held symbolic and emotional codes"'.[57] Equally important is how acquiring the recognition from others crucial to selfhood requires acting in accordance with an existing normative environment.[58] Accordingly, it is argued the role and implication of these existing emotional and normative environments should be made more central when thinking about signifiers and narratives.

Specifically, OST often suggests subjects turn to national signifiers and a 'national fantasy' of homogeneity and stability,[59] with nations supplying 'particularly powerful stories' premised upon essentializing narratives that hold out 'one stable identity',[60] and an alluring appeal of certainty.[61] National narratives are thus seen as offering a sense of community[62] – one rooted in the past and enduring into the future,[63] clearly demarked borders,[64] and stability.[65] However, we must be careful not to focus *only* on narratives, less signifier and signified become fused, wherein 'the nation has no existence outside its imagery and its representations'.[66]

[52]Steele 2019, 327, 333.   [53]Browning 2019, 229–30; Kinnvall 2018, 530–31.
[54]Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 34; Vieira 2018, 149; Browning 2016.
[55]Vieira 2018, 147, 151; Kinnvall and Mitzen 2020, 245; Kinnvall 2018.   [56]Browning 2019, 223.
[57]Kinnvall 2018, 531, 533; Vieira 2018, 150.
[58]Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 41–42; Kinnvall 2018.
[59]Kinnvall *et al.* 2018, 252; Solomon 2014; Browning 2016; Vieira 2018; Rumelili 2021.
[60]Kinnvall 2004, 742, 758.   [61]Rumelili 2020, 2021.   [62]Giddens 1991, 126.
[63]Berenskoetter 2010, 270, Subotić 2015, 2; Steele 2008, 20.   [64]Kinnvall *et al.* 2018, 252.
[65]Skey 2010.   [66]Smith 1999, 166.

This risks being left with an overly light view of nations, as becomes apparent when Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities is extended further in post-modern accounts of nations.[67] Here the nation is conceived as 'ultimately a specious community, one that parades as a collective cure for the modern disease of alienation between state and society, and operates through historical fictions and literary tropes'. However, in focusing upon the nation as a text, as merely the sum of its cultural representations, we get no 'real clue to the origins, power and ubiquity of nations' nor discussion of how nationalists, while certainly engaging in social engineering, are not dealing with 'some *tabula rasa* population' – how to resonate, narrators must often return to the sources.[68] Likewise we risk obscuring or being unable to account for the 'sociological reality of the nation; the bonds of allegiance and belonging which so many people feel' and are willing to sacrifice for, and the cultural resources that 'endow [nations] with a sense of tangible reality'.[69] The implication being we struggle to account for why nations are so appealing and how they address OS concerns, especially since anxiety controlling mechanisms are only effective if:

> their invented nature…[is] forgotten, hidden, or seen as coming out of an extraordinary mind and upheld by respected authorities…they must become part of reality…a being independent of our own volition.[70]

Therefore, OST should place greater emphasis on how (national) signifiers and narratives are endowed with power *because* they draw upon, and are entwined with, an affective reality – how they are constituted by circulations of affect.

Circulations of affect and empowered agents

Finally, existentialist perspectives have raised important questions around agency in OST – specifically around what Berenskoetter terms the anxiety paradox. Here scholars recognize anxiety is often made tolerable through anxiety-controlling mechanisms,[71] and even suggests a propensity to evade anxiety by transforming it into fear and through 'unquestioning obedience to societal expectations and beliefs' – with the power of states partially derived from holding out 'ideological and moral certainty'. However, we can also become 'enticed by anxiety, and embrace unknowability, ambiguity, and possibility'.[72] Therefore, OS is not about merely getting on with life, an inauthentic being, but at times 'requires purposive meaningful engagement with who one wants to be' – allowing for a more authentic being.[73] In this sense, individuals are both drawn to and want to flee from the anxiety that accompanies the possibility which freedom provides; they seek the possibilities associated with freedom and at that moment of emancipation construct a new order.

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[67]Smith 1998, 142.
[68]Smith 1999, 165–66, 170. Giddens' view of nations faces similar problems. Smith 1998, 72.
[69]Smith 1998, 137, N.14.   [70]Berenskötter 2020, 281.   [71]*Ibid*, 279–80.
[72]Rumelili 2020, 260, 268–69; 2021   [73]Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 44.

Berenskoetter argues OS literature's predominating emphasis on aversions to uncertainty constrains agency to the latter half of this paradox: forging new or upholding current anxiety-controlling orders (creative-constitutive agency and muted agency). This leaves the courage to act upon 'the recognition that things can be different' (emancipatory agency) unaccounted for.[74] Yet while recognizing the potential for such agency, 'existentialism, as a normative theory on meaningful and authentic existence, does not explain the conditions under which this radical agency materializes' – nor the directions political projects following a call to authenticity might take.[75] Conversely, returning to Solomon's exploration into circulations of affect, we have reason to consider emancipatory agency as potentially derived from affective atmospheres; for example, the affective atmosphere of the Arab Spring helps explain the courage afforded to protesters and the empowerment required to try and change the prevailing order.[76] The implication being OST should think more about how shared emotions/affective environments can both form the basis of social order and engender societal change.

To summarize, we can strengthen OST by focusing more upon the affective basis of faith and societal trust, the affective normative environment and symbolic codes that endow signifiers and narratives with potential power, and the possibility for circulations of affect to engender emancipatory agency. The problem is modern society is often held, particularly by advocates of modernization theory, as devoid of such faith and normative order given the proposed zero-sum relationship between tradition and modernity.[77] Giddens, for example, writes the increased reflexivity of modernity – 'the routine incorporation of new knowledge or information'[78] – forces society away from traditions, whose 'normative, past-oriented character' is incompatible with such future-oriented reflexivity and results in the erosion of normative structures.[79] Upon review, however, we find reason for adopting a social theory that takes affectively constituted traditions seriously.

Toward an affective social theory

Taking inspiration from calls for IR to further explore the role shared emotions play in shaping and motivating political communities and comprising order,[80] it is argued we start thinking about OS in relation to conceptions of society as constituted by shared faith in a set of traditions and a moral order. Such a move is legitimated by looking at how, in contrast to modernism's overemphasis on cognitive reflexivity,[81] individuals 'acquire information *through* their bodies' and reflexively *and sensually* engage with and experience social structures – with emotional dispositions leaving actors wanting to reproduce or transform these structures.[82] Indeed, reflexivity is 'often *shaped by* learnt emotional responses', with some embodied

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[74]Berenskötter 2020, 279, 282.   [75]Rumelili 2020, 269–70.
[76]Indeed, Heidegger draws upon Aristotle's account of affect 'as a precursor to his own account of human beings as being always already outside of themselves in public moods and so forth'. Cullen 2021, 20.
[77]Randall and Theobald 1998, 35. This also pertains to modernists arguments of nations being segregated from tradition/the sacred. Smith 1998.   [78]Giddens 1991, 243.
[79]Giddens 1991, 116–18, 1990, 38.
[80]Hutchison and Bleiker 2014, 497; Berenskoetter 2010, 276.   [81]Burkitt 2012, 461.
[82]Shilling and Mellor 1996, 5, 2, 7; Shilling 1997a, 738, 742; Hutchison and Bleiker 2014, 504.

dispositions beyond individuals' reflexive control.[83] Likewise, rationality *requires* emotion, with beliefs being the location where 'emotion and cognition meet'.[84]

To this end, we can return to James' position that any social organism is premised upon each member doing 'their own duty' with a trust others will do theirs.[85] In other words, there is faith in a shared moral order – a faith premised upon an affective experience that moves the will. This corresponds with how we often commit ourselves to the institutions of social life 'because they are meaningful to us without this meaning having been discursively explicated' – they are 'morally justified'.[86] Accordingly, moving toward a social theory premised upon affectively constituted moral orders provides an avenue to further establish how emotion, cognition, and reflexivity are entwined.[87] This requires addressing the passions that tempt actors' will; while ideas and philosophies might matter, they are 'secondary to the affective basis of faith'[88] and 'emotional bonds and loyalties'.[89]

While speaking of tradition and moral order might raise questions around agency and reflexivity, we have reason to temper such concerns by appreciating the dynamism of many traditions. Traditions have *always* been reflexively maintained and altered while still upholding normative structures through a process of returning to the sources. Luther thus constructed 'a revised form of Biblical teaching, whilst appealing to the Bible as the unalterable normative focus of Christian belief and practice', while Buddhist traditions have often adapted to local cultural contexts, be it six-century Japan or modern England. Likewise we can examine transformations within contemporary Pentecostalism – the result of a reflexive process by female preachers; while aware of its 'subversive aspects' these preachers were 'expressing a consciousness of the reinforcement of the power of traditional normativity, rather than a sense of the reflexive dissolution of tradition'.[90] Thomas thus highlights how viable, dynamic, types of social traditions are those that creatively deal with conflicting internal claims,[91] while Mellor emphasizes tradition's flexible nature and subjection to radical renewals[92] – all of which occurs in reference to *the future*.[93] Reflexivity and agency are thus not antithetical to a dynamic understanding of tradition and normative/moral structure – which is why traditional and modern institutions often co-exist while modernization can revitalize traditions.[94]

Therefore, we have reason to continue and view society as constituted by a shared faith in a set of traditions and in a moral order, and to take seriously how morality is both hermeneutical, becoming revised through a return to sources, and 'thoroughly sociological, in that it is dependent on collective experiences'.[95] In doing so, it becomes possible to advance OST by developing the role of shared emotions and affective contexts in generating leaps of faith, constituting the power of signifiers/narratives, and empowering agents. It is here Durkheim's more social understanding of religion emerges as a viable avenue for such theorization. To this end, the next two sections explore how Durkheim allows us to

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[83]Shilling 1997a, 746; Mercer 2014, 520; Shilling and Mellor 1996. [84]Mercer 2010, 2.
[85]Möllering 2006, 120. [86]Quéré 2001, XXI–XXIII. [87]Barbalet 2004, 344. [88]*Ibid*, 347.
[89]Kratochwil 2001, 149, 154–56. [90]Mellor 1993, 119–22, 123. [91]Thomas 2000, 827.
[92]Mellor 1993, 118. [93]Glassie 1995, 396. [94]Randall and Theobald 1998, 46; Smith 1996, 576.
[95]Shilling and Mellor 1996, 194–95.

reconfigure the sources of OS generally and reconceptualize the role of nations specifically – thereby setting the preconditions for revising the implications of OS for foreign policy.

'Sacred' sources of OS

For Durkheim, society is 'an organic, spontaneous' community,[96] formed and maintained through the 'embodied intoxication' of its members and the collective sentiments that constitute a moral order.[97] Society thus denotes 'those "collective representations" that express social feelings, beliefs, values and ideals'.[98] Of course, Durkheim is often accused of proffering a 'static, totalizing vision of society' ill-suited to fluidity and social change.[99] However, these views overlook how, by taking society as a research problem, Durkheim appreciated the *contingency* and fragility of society.[100] In order to appreciate this contingency, we must first provide an account of how, for Durkheim, 'religion is a social phenomenon…[and] society is a religious phenomenon'.[101] From here it then become possible to re-configure the sources of OS as entwined with faith in a moral order interrelated with the sacred.

Religion and the affective basis of morality, society, and OS

While Durkheim made important, though not necessarily contradictory,[102] changes to specific arguments over the course of his life,[103] we find a consistent basic project of exploring the 'emotional, symbolic and ideational forces' that constitute society. Durkheim thus held religion as a permanent feature of humanity not because of a Parsonian focus on order, but to account for the 'dynamic, always contingent, processes through which individuals become "social beings"'.[104]

Durkheim's exploration into society centers on the emotional energies that emerge during collective effervesce and that are revitalized through ritual, generating a 'sense of collective purpose'.[105] Key to this analysis is the concept of *homo duplex* – the idea individuals possess 'an individual being that has its basis in the body…and a social being'.[106] Of importance is how, during collective effervescence, individuals are lifted out of egoism by the 'self-transcending experience of social solidarity' and transformed by feelings of well-being and confidence, allowing for an attachment to others that becomes the source of morality for that community.[107] By generating the more stable (compared to individual sense representations) collective representations of social life, individuals are thus able to interact with others and take notice of their needs – to enter a moral world.[108] Collective effervescence thus harnesses 'people's bodily passions to the symbolic order of society'.[109]

Because the emotional force of collective effervescence is felt as being external to the individual, it becomes associated with and symbolized by the sacred, '*things set apart and forbidden*', around which emerges 'a unified system of beliefs and

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[96]Ôno 1996, 80.   [97]Shilling and Mellor 2011, 18; 1998, 195.   [98]Mellor 2002, 18.
[99]*Ibid*, 16, 22–24; Smith and Alexander 2005, 7.   [100]Mellor 2002, 17.   [101]Ôno 1996, 83.
[102]Shilling and Mellor 1998, N.3.
[103]What has been termed a spiritual turn. Alexander 2005, 151.   [104]Mellor 2002, 18–19.
[105]*Ibid*, 19–20; Mellor 1998, 91.   [106]Durkheim 1995, 15–16.
[107]Mellor 1998, 92–93; Fields 1995, xli; Pickering 2009[1984], 337; Tiryakian 2005, 307.
[108]Durkheim 1995[1912], 223, 434–35; Tiryakian 2005, 308.   [109]Shilling 1997b, 209.

practices'. Accordingly, the sacred – the objects, symbols, and myths at the center of rituals – symbolizes not only the totemic principle or god(s) but also society.[110] This also means the sacred is contingent upon a faith – 'a predisposition toward believing that goes in advance of proof' – in the varying beliefs that 'express the nature of sacred things'.[111] For example, Ruhollah Khomeini's return to Iran and Nelson Mandela's release from prison sparked effervescent gatherings wherein they were transformed into the sacred.[112] In isolation, however, the power of sacred objects begins to wane. For this reason, the 'cult', a system of periodic rites and ceremonies, allow the faithful to 'strengthen the bond between them and the sacred'[113] and 'stimulate, channel, or regulate' effervescent vitalism, allowing sacred forces to (re)enter individuals, stimulating awareness of their moral unity and revitalizing their faith.[114]

Therefore, just as 'food is necessary for physical life, so religion and ritual are necessary for social life'.[115] Society requires the moral forces, the unique 'conscience or soul',[116] that emerge from collective effervescence and tempt the will. In other words, we submit to the moral obligations that constitute society not for utilitarian calculations, 'but because of their sacred quality',[117] with the justification for religious practices being 'their invisible influences over consciousness and in their manner of affecting our states of mind'.[118] Durkheim, like James, thus focuses on experience in facilitating faith in the sacred and moral order,[119] with the emotional energy of collective effervescence providing the pre-conscious 'constitution of the inner nature of society'.[120] Therefore, this can provide a new optic for thinking about the sources of OS by further establishing the intersection of affect, moral order, and OS.

Reconfiguring the sources of OS

Starting with the religious basis of society leads us to rethink existing mechanisms of OS by shifting our focus toward shared faith in conceptions of the sacred. First, we find the sacred allows for the profane – the mundane, 'gray monotony' of day-to-day life.[121] We can equate this to Giddens' discussion on the routinized manner with which we undertake daily, and even more consequential, activity.[122] Such routinization requires a shared world within which we know how to act, with collective concepts functioning as the 'basic material of logical thought'.[123] This is why cognition and rationality 'cannot simply be opposed to collective emotion, since they are created and nurtured through it'.[124] Therefore, we can see shared faith in conceptions of the sacred as constituting the collective representations that allow for objectivity and routine[125] (facilitating reflexivity) and for the shared criteria upon which recognition can be pursued (enabling confidence and self-esteem). Second, we can view tradition and religion as pertinent to OS not just because of the allure of certainty,[126] but because they represent the crystallization

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[110]Durkheim 1995[1912], 44, 208. [111]*Ibid*, 364, 35, 34. [112]Sullivan 2018, 16.
[113]Durkheim 1995[1912], 60. [114]Mellor 1998, 96–97; Ōno 1996, 80.
[115]Pickering 2009[1984], 358. [116]Mitchell 1931, 89–90. [117]Mellor 1998, 93–94.
[118]Durkheim 1995[1912], 364. [119]Barbalet 2004. [120]Mellor 1998, 96. [121]Mitchell 1931, 91.
[122]Giddens 1991, 113. [123]Durkheim 1995, 434. [124]Shilling and Mellor 1998, 203.
[125]Cladis 1992, 75. [126]Rumelili 2021.

of emotional energies, embodied by the sacred, that allow for collective ideals and a moral order – for the symbolic and emotional codes actors draw upon. The implication being signifiers and narratives solicit attachment when they successfully harness this collective intoxication and 'concrete reality of experience'; when they express a sacred quality.

Congruently, Durkheim's proposed relationship between faith, moral order and feelings of strength, courage, and wellbeing allows us to reconfigure the sources of ontological (in)security more broadly. Again, for Durkheim we submit to moral orders because they express a sacred quality. This in turn provides individuals an external force that limits an insatiability that would otherwise become 'a source of torment'; it lifts us above ourselves.[127] Consequently, it is from society, from our 'intellectual and moral culture', that we derive 'the best part' of ourselves. And it is when we are in in moral unison that we have 'confidence, courage and boldness in action'.[128] Durkheim thus speaks to the essence of OS:

> The man who is with his god, Durkheim emphasized, has 'a certain confidence, an ardor for life, an enthusiasm that he does not experience in ordinary times. He has more power to resist the hardships of existence'.[129]

Such strength thus requires the gods (society) is represented in the mind, which requires the gods being 'believed in with a collective faith'.[130] This is why, for Durkheim, 'faith above all is warmth, life, enthusiasm'.[131] It is because:

> society can exist only in and by means of individual minds, it must enter into us and become organized within us. That force thus becomes an integral part of our being and, by the same stroke, uplifts it and brings it to maturity.[132]

Therefore, it is during collective effervescence individuals feel most assured and 'morally strengthened'. While this cannot be 'a continuing experience', the ability to recall these moments through ritual and sacred objects allows this state to be recaptured – allows for 'revivification'.[133] The inverse is *anomie*. Durkheim links anomie to *règle* – a moral formula of what should be done, and *dérèglement* – a 'state of being *déréglé*, no longer regular'; to 'dissolute conduct' or 'moral disorder'. *Anomie* then is 'the secular equivalent of sin', a 'derangement or disarrangement of collective representations' – a form of sacrilege of the sacred. It pertains to a '"departure out of religion" and "disordering"'.[134] It is the unbearable lightness of being. However, because such 'confused agitation cannot last forever', individuals eventually come to experience 'creative effervescence during which new ideals will again spring forth'.[135]

From this perspective, ontological *insecurity* is understood as entwined with *anomie* – with moral disorder that generates a 'painful state or condition felt by individuals as well as by society'.[136] In other words, ontological insecurity is derived

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[127]Durkheim 2005[1897], 208.   [128]Durkheim 1995[1912], 351, 213.   [129]Jones 1986, 597.
[130]*Ibid.*   [131]Durkheim 1995[1912], 427.   [132]*Ibid*, 211.   [133]Pickering 2009[1984], 385, 389.
[134]Meštrović and Brown 1985, 85, 83.   [135]Durkheim 1995[1912], 429.
[136]Meštrović and Brown 1985, 81.

from the weakening of the community's affective bonds and the erosion of, or confusion around, moral boundaries[137]; to the profanation/pollution of what is held sacred. Key to OS then is the ongoing efforts to act faithfully within and toward the moral order – to uphold the tenets of the moral order and purity of the sacred.

Critically, this does not imply conservatism. Instead, we must recognize moral orders are subject to processes of revitalization that can facilitate critical engagement and a desire for, potentially radical, change. The implication being *anomie* might emerge because of a failure to change. This helps develop the sentiment of more existentialist OS scholars that 'merely getting on' is not enough for a fulfilling life; for an authentic being.[138] Specifically, by following Durkheim and Heidegger's embrace of Aristotle's position that ethical virtue 'cannot be taught…one must be habituated to act in certain ways', we find that taking a meaningful stand and living well requires engaging with an affective moral order.[139] Therefore, while OS often requires creativity and change in the pursuit of a more authentic being, we must appreciate these are socially embedded processes – there is no '"view from nowhere"'.[140] Reflexivity then is not just about ensuring stability and order, but asking ethical questions about a virtuous life, about living faithfully in the world – questions critical to, and interrelated with, the moral order's revitalization.

Contingency, contention, and change

For Durkheim, society is premised upon a 'fiery furnace' and the contingent revitalization of emotions,[141] meaning social order is merely '"currents of opinion" more or less solidified'.[142] The implication being fluctuations can emerge in individuals' emotional attachment, with 'insufficient involvement' generating *anomie*.[143] We also find the nature of revitalization allows for change. Take for example media events deploying symbolic gestures that transform a ceremony (e.g. the Watergate hearings) into something 'subjunctive' – when society 'enacts its professed objectives, reiterates its own principles'. This is often accompanied by a critical re-evaluation of the status quo as the sacred 'confronts daily political practice with the norm it is supposed to embody' – a process that can lead to the norm being redefined. Therefore, while often resulting in an updating of consensus, it is a consensus formed through change.[144] Similarly, Durkheim recognized that because individual's sensory existence can result in egoistical and socialized passions, there is always a risk sensuality 'spills over', escaping 'the realm of "already existing" society'.[145] More recent scholarship also discusses how liminality, 'that which falls in the cracks of social structure', means behavior can emerge that appears meaningless to society, thereby raising the possibility of alternative meaning systems and 'liminal battle'.[146] Certain ceremonies also allow for liminality. For example, in 'conquest' ceremonies, established rules or natural laws are seen as needing reformulating following technological breakthroughs or 'in the name of

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[137]Meštrović and Lorenzo 2008, 183.
[138]Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 43; Browning 2018a, 340, 2016.   [139]Cullen 2021, 19–20.
[140]Thomas 2000, 826.   [141]Shilling 1997b, 205; Tiryakian 1988b, 393.   [142]Alexander 2005, 142.
[143]Ling 2014; Shilling and Mellor 2011, 22.   [144]Dayan and Katz 1988, 167, 181.
[145]Shilling 1997b, 206.   [146]Rothenbuhler 1988, 68–69.

a higher ethical norm' (e.g. the first moon landing or Sadat's visit to Jerusalem), allowing for 'new ways of seeing' and new hopes.[147]

This all allows for a view of consensus as always in a process of being (re)produced – where society must periodically contemplate the moral order and question the status quo vis-à-vis the sacred. Accordingly, while there is always a degree of latent anxiety over if our behavior is right, is moral, this anxiety is also critical to the continued vitality of the moral order and community, and thus to feelings of empowerment. Common faith then 'does not require fatalistic uniformity' but can allow for (depending on the content of faith) varying degrees of conflict and pluralism,[148] with shifts in public opinion revising what demands communal respect.[149] Indeed Durkheim held competing ideals emerge in every society,[150] and that 'challenging rules based on progress is healthy and vital' while too strong social integration is pathogenic.[151] To discuss living a virtuous life thus often entails creatively engaging with the affective reality of the moral order in the hope of moving toward a more authentic being – a process that revitalizes the moral order and thus OS.

Of course, affective energy can also become revitalized in ways engendering more revolutionary change, with collective effervescence facilitating the emergence of *new* collective ideals and transforming what was previously profane into something sacred, generating new beginnings.[152] For Durkheim, such creativity usually emerges when 'great collective shock' generates increased interaction and effervescent gatherings. Revolutionary change is thus premised upon a 'heroism born out of enthusiasm' that transforms revolutionaries 'into a charismatic community, transforms, ultimately, social structure into agency'.[153] In this way it becomes possible to connect OS with moments individuals 'reject the intuitional structure and arrangements that reproduce the world'.[154] Specifically, Durkheim's creative and re-creative effervescent assembly allows us to address the anxiety paradox outlined above – as evinced by his discussion of the French Revolution.

Re-creative effervescent assembly appears the norm, given they help maintain a community's vitality. By contrast, in creative effervescent assemblies the outcome is uncertain – such as the Night of the Dupes when noblemen renounced their feudal rights.[155] Within such gathering, individuals disregard extant moral norms, becoming 'stirred by passions so intense that they can be satisfied only by violent and extreme acts'.[156] During these times of 'openness and awareness of infinite possibility comes venture and originality', allowing for new ideals and ideas to take hold.[157] We can thus see the emancipatory agency required for revolutionary change as premised upon this affective atmosphere; the group senses its quest for change is 'morally right and just', and that new ideals 'can indeed be realized'.[158] Simultaneously, out of these assemblies emerges a new moral order, with new rituals, sacred images/objects, and myths – as occurred in Revolutionary France.[159] Of course the revolutionary religion might struggle to unify or

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[147]Dayan and Katz 1988, 169–70, 181.   [148]Cladis 1992, 79–80, 81.
[149]Durkheim 1995[1912], 210, 215.   [150]*Ibid*, 425.   [151]Meštrović and Brown 1985, 92.
[152]Mellor 1998, 90; Tiryakian 1988a, 44–45.   [153]Tiryakian 1995, 272–74.   [154]*Ibid*, 270.
[155]Pickering 2009[1984], 387.   [156]Durkheim 1995[1912], 213.   [157]Pickering 2009[1984], 386.
[158]Tiryakian 1988a, 50; Pickering 2009[1984], 397.   [159]Durkheim 1995[1912], 215–16.

encompass the whole of the previous society, making the sacred an 'arena for conflict' and violence.[160] Moreover, we must recognize Durkheim's ambivalence regarding what form revolution takes – it can lead to 'both sublime and savage moments'.[161]

Therefore, recognizing processes of revitalization allows us to better account for how OS requires creatively engaging the affective reality of the moral order and how this can produce degrees of societal change. While this contingent nature of moral order led Durkheim to fear devitalization, he was also moved by the French Revolution's demonstration of how new religions can form.[162] Indeed, Durkheim saw no difference between the national commemorations of forbearers forging 'a new moral charter' and Christians celebrating the dates of Christ's life.[163]

This makes Durkheim's preliminary argument of nationalism representing the *continuation* of religion, and subsequent analysis by scholars like Mitchel, Hayes, and Smith regarding the 'secondary' difference between religion and nationalism given 'at the heart of both are the cult and the faith', of particular importance to our understanding of OS in the contemporary era.[164] The next section thus builds upon these formulations so as to re-envision the relationship between nations/ nationalism and OS.

Nationalism as a 'religion' and nations as affective communities

Michell and Hayes were some of the earliest scholars to draw upon Durkheim's observation of nationalism as a form of religion, viewing the role of nations as primarily spiritual and 'its driving force' as 'collective *faith*…in its mission and destiny'.[165] Accordingly, they conceptualized nations as 'the product of customs, traditions and beliefs',[166] and as possessing religious sentimentality and rituals, for example: national flags and anthems, funerals and celebrations of rulers/heroes, parades and processions, and 'holy' days and 'temples' – areas imbued with national significance.[167] Indeed, many national ceremonies (e.g. parades, re-enactments, gatherings, holidays) correspond with Durkheim's discussion of the commemorative rites that bring individuals closer to the 'object of [their] cult', recalling the past through 'a "veritable dramatic representation"' and through festivities, 'merry-making and games'.[168] Nations also have a national 'theology' derived from the writings, words, and deeds of national heroes.[169] The strongest indication of nationalism's religious role, however, is the extent individuals sacrifice for the flag and how, much like mediaeval Christians, they 'distinguish between various kinds of unbelievers, and treat them accordingly'. Similarly, while we are quick to accept the faulty wisdom of *individuals*, faith often prevents us from 'doubting the Providential guidance' of the nation writ large.[170]

More recently, Smith has emphasized nations as distinct cultural and moral communities built upon existing myths, values, and traditions.[171] Taking a position

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[160]Hunt 1988, 31, 39.   [161]Mellor 1998, 90; Shilling and Mellor 1998, 205; Hunt 1988, 26.
[162]Tiryakian 1988b, 379–80.   [163]Durkheim 1995[1912], 429.   [164]Smith 2003, 28.
[165]Hayes 1926, 105–06.   [166]Mitchell 1931, 96–97.   [167]Hayes 1926, 106–09.
[168]Pickering 2009[1984], 332, 334.   [169]Hayes 1926, 110.   [170]*Ibid*, 115–17.
[171]Smith 2002, 16, 1998, 76, 1991, 25.

imbued with Durkheim, Smith argues religion 'in the broad sense remains at the heart of any community',[172] with nations referring to 'a *felt and lived* community'.[173] Smith pulls more explicitly from Durkheim in *Chosen Peoples*, wherein he explores nationalism as a 'political religion surrogate', a 'belief system whose object is the nation conceived as a sacred communion'.[174] Paramount is the 'cult of authenticity', which functions in the same manner as holiness, and makes that which is authentic to the nation sacred.[175] This is generally derived from social and cultural traditions, heroic figures of the nation's past who exemplify 'the best of the community's traditions',[176] and perceived Golden Ages – ages of 'virtue, heroism, beauty, learning, holiness, power and wealth'.[177] This provides the tangible boundaries of a homeland, generates a sense of continuity among the descendants of these heroes, instills a sense of dignity, and presents a set of values that embody the destiny the collective must work toward so as to fully 'realize their "inner being"'.[178]

Therefore, following Durkheim's preliminary analysis, we can view nations as affective communities constituted by faith in a (contingent) moral order interrelated with conceptions of the sacred. This allows us to deepen our understanding of the relationship between nations and OS. Specifically, we can appreciate that while nations are always becoming, and comprise competing discourses, this often entails a return to and renewal of the sacred in an ongoing process of revival, revival not meaning a 'desire of self to be united with God' but for a 'solidarity with society' – with the nation.[179] However, we can also recognize revitalization might lead to radical change. Turning to Ross' work on circulations of affect and recent scholarship exploring the intersection of nationalism with Jeffrey Alexander's Durkheim-inspired cultural sociology allows us to further examine these twin dynamics.

National becoming: return, renewal, and reconstruction of the sacred

Drawing inspiration from collective effervescence, Ross conceives circulations of affect, the 'conscious and unconscious exchanges of emotion within a social environment', as derived from established and repetitive 'interaction rituals' (e.g. memorialization rituals or commemorative events) and 'convergent emotional experiences' derived from attending national monuments/museums or that are attached to collective memories. In this way the sentiments derived from widely shared rituals 'crystallize into the deeply held commitments we hold as members of a society'. Conversely, circulations of affect emerging from more impromptu social gatherings can foster 'resistance and change', creating new combinations between emotion and objects, signs, and actors – eroding existing identities and giving 'urgency to others'.[180] However, this creativity is a socially embedded process. Actors cannot 'magically step outside prevailing social structures' but can creatively select and mix 'already-existing emotions and emotional phenomena'.[181]

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[172]Smith 1983, 29–30.   [173]Smith 1998, 77.   [174]Smith 2003, 17–18.   [175]*Ibid*, 32–33, 38.
[176]*Ibid*, 66; Durkheim 1995[1912], 352.   [177]Smith 1996, 583–85.   [178]Smith 1997, 48–52.
[179]Tiryakian 1988a, 50–51.   [180]Ross 2013, 1, 31, 39–40, 59.
[181]*Ibid*, 46; Smith 1998, 36–38, 115, 129; Liu and Hilton 2005, 54.

Therefore, we must take seriously how nations comprise an affective reality and form 'part of the background to everyday life'.[182] The implication being we should not think of nationalism as something individuals *turn* to for contending with the insecurity of modernity[183]; nationalist propaganda 'or the ritual and pageantry of mass ceremonies' only resonate for a public 'already attuned to both propaganda and ceremonial'.[184] Instead, we should focus on how individuals creatively return to the sources to try and work out how to act faithfully toward a moral order – developing a range of more/less compelling (nationalist) projects aimed at moving toward a more authentic being.[185] This entails a process of: rediscovery of an 'authentic communal "ethno-history"'; reinterpretation to make current aspirations 'appear authentic'; and regeneration – tapping into members 'collective emotions, inspiring them with moral fervour…to reform and renew the community'.[186] Therefore, while nations are always becoming, this entails reengaging with the affective reality of the sacred and moral order – processes that often revitalize the nation.[187] While this can result in conservative projects, it can also generate revolutionary ones, as evinced by postcolonial liberation movements' 'return to the sources'. Not to an 'immutable state of Being' but to a compilation of 'intelligible and still vital indigenous practices that are always subject to innovation',[188] allowing subjects to work toward a new future.[189] The recent incorporation of cultural sociology with Smith's ethnosymbolism help demonstrates these dynamics.[190]

For one, we find social performances are integral to a subgroup's relative success in having their message resonate emotionally and psychologically within a nation; that is, their ability to draw upon 'shared culture and make use of their access to social power and available communication technologies'.[191] Consequently, interpretations of the nation only resonate when they draw upon pertinent cultural resources that enjoy 'a level of autonomy, parameters and internal logics that structure how it is used'. Moroccan nationalists, for example, only garnered widespread support by re-purposing the existing power of the traditional Latif prayer and the 'symbolic means of production' (such as Mosques).[192] Similarly, while carrier groups promote narratives strategically deploying cultural traumas, these narratives must be 'authentically resonant with a mass public' – evinced, for example, by efforts to employ the traumas of Gandhi's assassination and partition to support India's secular state.[193] None of this is to deny how nationalism is often exclusionary, particularly toward the subaltern, or fosters inequalities – for example due to how nations are gendered.[194] However, not only has the subaltern asserted agency in postcolonial nationalist movements and periodically shaped nationalism,[195] we must also recognize how civil repair often entails a return to the sources – as seen with the American Civil Rights movement[196] or how women 'draw on the

[182]Skey 2010, 721; Smith 2009, 13–14.   [183]Kinnvall 2004; Rumelili 2021.   [184]Smith 1998, 130.
[185]Smith 1999, 179–81.   [186]*Ibid*, 177–78.   [187]Hutchinson 2005; Smith 1999, 88, 259–60.
[188]Parry 1998, 47; Hastings 1997, 149.
[189]Doran 2019, 105; Glassie 1995, 396; Smith 1998, 129, 1999, 65–68, 192–94.
[190]Woods and Debs 2013.   [191]*Ibid*, 610.   [192]Wyrtzen 2013, 619, 616.
[193]Debs 2013, 637, 646.
[194]Smith 1998, 207–08; Kinnvall 2017; Walby 1992; Delehanty and Steele 2009.
[195]Parry 2004, 20; Doran 2019, 102; Loomba 2005, 187; Walby 1992, 84–85.
[196]Woods and Debs 2013.

cultural resources available to them' with change 'built upon foundations which remain'.[197] The implication being suppression or exclusion can often be challenged as part of an effort to better act faithfully toward the moral order, though power disparities certainly grant some interpretations more leverage.[198]

Congruently, change might entail overthrowing the existing normative order, as seen with creative effervescent assemblies. This is particularly true when the 'holders of rational-bureaucratic or of traditional organizations' have lost the charisma that legitimates their positions,[199] as seen with the 1970/80s revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua and concessions by the Polish government.[200] Such revolutions might entail a return to the sources and renewal, as seen by efforts in East European nations in 1989 to dig 'deep into seemingly buried cultural capital to restore or revivify collective symbols'.[201] Conversely, they can lead to larger breaks. For example, the execution of the King, the embodiment of the sacred in France, led revolutionaries to identify with a new female figure of Liberty, which was to become the 'semiological center of the new society'.[202] Again, however, we are unable to provide any assurance what form this new community takes – the same processes were behind 4 August 1789 in France and February 1933 in Berlin.[203]

Therefore, rather than focusing on OS in relation to national narratives, we must also appreciate nations cannot be reduced to 'a printed text',[204] and that while competing narratives will emerge, as they do within most dynamic moral orders, members often remain unified by the affective reverence of the sacred. They continue to experience a force that is an 'integral part of our being' yet felt to be embodied in sacred objects, such as flags and material/built environments.[205] Accordingly, even if we can only 'enumerate disconnected fragments of the way our community organizes its feasts, its rituals of mating, its initiation ceremonies',[206] we should not forget such practices are integral to the emotional essence of nations. Again, this is not to say revitalization always supports the extent moral order and the sacred – it can also generate revolutionary change and radically new moral orders.

These twin processes become critical to our understanding of foreign policy. On the one hand, the ongoing return to and renewal of the sacred informs debates over the national interest and foreign policy. Congruently, creative effervescent assemblies might compel individuals to usher in revolutionary change, tearing down current moral orders and, in the process, forging new ones – with potential implications for the constituent actors of the international system.

OS and the sacred in foreign policy

Reconfiguring the sources of OS leads us to focus on how foreign policy is interrelated with the affective forces that both constitute the basis of society and usher forth radical change. We can thus view foreign policy as developed by socially embedded actors engaged in debates over how best to act faithfully within and

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[197]Loomba 2005, 191, 198; Walby 1992, 91.   [198]Hutchison and Bleiker 2014, 508.
[199]Luke 1987, 116–17.   [200]Tiryakian 1988a.   [201]Tiryakian 1995, 276.   [202]Hunt 1988, 36.
[203]Tiryakian 2005, 309.   [204]Smith 1999, 100, Ch. 6.
[205]Durkheim 1995[1912], 209, 211, 222; Smith 1998, 137; Ejdus 2020, 27–28.
[206]Solomon 2014, 677; Vieira 2018.

toward a moral order interrelated with the sacred – as entwined with ethical questions about living a virtuous and morally meaningful life. Again, this is a dynamic process that can generate change in line with the renewal and rejuvenation of the moral order. At times, however, emotional energies can be revitalized in ways introducing revolutionary change, with implications for the international system.

We find some evidence of the former in existing OS studies. Steele, for example, discusses the ethical and moral arguments that emerged around British intervention into the American Civil War,[207] while Krolikowski shows the importance of the Chinese state maintaining a relatively stable normative framework,[208] and Vieira demonstrates how members of the Non-Aligned-Movement 'creatively readapted' foundational principles in response to changing circumstances 'while sustaining the validity of its original formative values'.[209] Berenskoetter and Subotic likewise hold national narratives are fundamentally normative, setting out what the nation 'ought to be' and visions of utopia/dystopia,[210] while Ejdus reveals policymakers construct policies in reference to places imbued with a sacred quality (e.g. Serbian views of Kosovo).[211]

Building upon these insights, in conjunction with the reconfiguration of the sources of OS, leads to a more dynamic view of decision-making by emphasizing the interplay of affect, reflexivity, and ethical questions and hermeneutics regarding what makes a virtuous life. In short, we find the development of the national interest is entwined with problems of virtue-ethics, with questions of what kind of people, what kind of nation, we want to become under present circumstances.[212] This brings us closer to Aron's view of the national interest as informed by considerations of force *as well as* values and morals – for 'What life does not serve a higher goal? What good is security accompanied by mediocrity?' – the implication being what is perceived as '"at stake" cannot be designated by a single concept, valid for all civilizations at all periods'.[213] However, it also allows for a revised understanding of the intersubjective nature of the national interest by focusing upon discourse *and* affect[214] – on how the national interest is constructed in parallel with the moral order and as such is both hermeneutical, being revised though narratives returning to the sources, and sociological in that it is dependent upon an affective reality. Policy selection and debate thus occur in reference to how segments of the population draw upon the affective reality of the nation – how they selectively retrieve and reinterpret social traditions and myths, connect them to the present, and envision the future, compiling narratives establishing what behavior is legitimate, what values are prized, what is worth sacrificing for.[215]

Within this we find it is the continued faith in a dynamic moral order interrelated with the sacred that provides the foundation of agency, allowing actors to make the assessments around future feelings 'central to making a rational choice'.[216] As Durkheim writes:

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[207]Steele 2008, 85–91.   [208]Krolikowski 2018.   [209]Vieira 2016, 295, 304.
[210]Subotić 2015, 3; Berenskoetter 2014.   [211]Ejdus 2020, 29.   [212]Thomas 2005, 237–39.
[213]Aron 2017(1966), 598, 284.
[214]On the construction of the national interest see Weldes 1996.
[215]While Golden Ages enable present needs, they *also* establish guidelines for the present and future. Smith 1997, 58.   [216]Mercer 2010, 12.

faith is above all a spur to action…Science is fragmentary and incomplete… but life – that cannot wait. Theories whose calling is to make people live and make them act, must therefore rush ahead of science and complete it prematurely.[217]

Therefore, it is faith in a moral order that provides the grounds upon which actors can determine, and strive toward, the 'good'. While there is always uncertainty and doubt, given we cannot be certain how we will feel in the future, coupled with the fact there will always be dissenters,[218] this does not erode the desire nor effort to pursue the good. Indeed, such processes are critical to the maintenance of religion, to the life of the 'gods' (society); and it is 'because the gods are in a state of dependence on the thought of man that man can believe his help to be efficacious'[219] – leading actors to make variety of sacrifices on the 'gods' behalf. What matters then is how agents (elites and ordinary members)[220] might reinterpret tradition and myths in a more/less conservative, or even 'masculine'/'feminine', manner[221] – might embrace more/less 'hot' forms of nationalism.[222] Browning's work on the Charlie Hebdo attack is illustrative here. For many, 'being en terrasse' became a way to engage in virtuous behavior and France's 'core values', thereby renewing the nation's vitality.[223] Indeed Browning's discussion of the 'emotional contagion' that accompanied exclamations of 'Je suis Charlie' and the ritual of being 'en terrasse' seemingly describes collective effervescence.[224] For others, however, this was seemingly not enough as they turned to a more hot form of nationalism juxtaposed to a Muslim-Other.

Of importance then is *how* individuals interpret faithful behavior toward the moral order. Domestically, this provides a new lens for thinking about the appeal of populism as not just holding out certainty,[225] but involved in a form of revitalization – one that might prove appealing during times of moral ambiguity and devitalization. Internationally, it provides a lens for thinking about national interpretations as being in a dialectic relationship with the international order. That is, these interpretations are both influenced by the order (e.g. conforming to overcome stigmatization[226]) and influence the order (e.g. investing in institutions with those 'friends' who hold a similar vision of order[227]). Importantly, the latter holds open the potential for varying degrees of contestation over international norms and values (e.g. competing values between EU nations and Russia[228]), indicating the political and contingent nature of international order.[229] It thus helps to conceive the international system as homogenous, where there are similar regimes and 'time-tested rules or customs', or heterogenous, where 'states are organised according to different principles and appeal to contradictory values',[230] and international politics as both a 'social behavior', with actors often recognizing international norms and 'each other's humanity', and 'anti-social' behavior, 'as force

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[217]Durkheim 1995[1912], 432–33.   [218]Mercer 2010, 13.   [219]Durkheim 1995[1912], 349–51.
[220]Innes 2017.   [221]Delehanty and Steele 2009, 535; Kinnvall 2017, 95, 98–99.   [222]Paasi 2016.
[223]Browning 2018b, 252, 256.   [224]Mitchell 1931, 99.
[225]Rumelili 2021; Steele and Homolar 2019.   [226]Zarakol 2010; Vieira 2018.
[227]Berenskoetter and Giegerich 2010; Vieira 2016.   [228]Akchurina and Della Sala 2018.
[229]This resonates with the English School view of international law and international order as premised upon international society.   [230]Cesa 2009, 182.

decides the issue in case of conflict and constitutes the basis of what treaties might confirm as the norm'.[231]

Accordingly, a central feature of the relations between nations is how they recognize/deny each other's mythical claims, reinforce/oppose espoused values, and enhance/hinder efforts to act faithfully; in short, how international politics can respect or 'desecrate' what nations hold sacred.[232] The former can lead to friendship, becoming the basis for intensified cooperation – for example the Non-Aligned Movement or extended deterrence communities.[233] Conversely, the latter can lead to animosity.[234] Therefore, we need not expect others accept a nation's interpretation of moral order/the sacred. For example, while a nation might hold something sacred (e.g. Russian views of Ukraine) this does not mean others must accept such claims, let alone an interpretation regarding how best to preserve the sacred (e.g. invading Ukraine). Such opposition can be leveled in reference to that nation's own 'sources' – framing the nation as pursuing or legitimating behavior incongruent with its professed values and/or conceptualization of the good. Likewise, opposition can be leveled in reference to the nation's avowed traits and designations that are the result of international intersubjective processes, for example being 'European', 'modern', or 'democratic', as well as in reference to what international society has come to hold as acceptable.[235] However, such appeals will prove less effective within a more heterogenous system – meaning opposition might then have to rely on force.

Therefore, this allows us to further develop a *via media* to the exogenous–endogenous debate within OST.[236] Specifically, we can say that while outsiders can try to influence internal debates over moral behavior,[237] they will often face difficulties as passionate members of the targeted nation might undertake 'interpretations that may seem strange or incorrect or even self-defeating'.[238] Therefore, when efforts to act faithfully are challenged or constrained by others,[239] when a nation's actions are flagged as incongruent with its professed moral order,[240] and when a nation's distinctiveness is eroded or stigmatized,[241] nations are faced with the crisis of determining how to act considering these challenges. During such moments members of the nation must come together to:

> see what is best to do. But by the very fact of being assembled, they comfort one another…The shared faith comes to life again quite naturally…the sacred things regains strength sufficient to withstand the inward or external causes that tended to weaken it.[242]

It is this continued faith and feelings of strength that explains why actors need not pathologically cling to established routines or an essentialized identity but can instead be creative and change[243]; for how they have the confidence necessary to 'step back, employ alternative channels of articulation and opt for some other

[231]Aron 2017(1966), 579.   [232]Bolton 2021b.   [233]Vieira 2016; Mälksoo 2021.   [234]Bolton 2021b.
[235]Subotić 2015, 7.   [236]Zarakol 2010.   [237]Bolton 2021a, 131.
[238]Mercer 2010, 24; Durkheim 1995[1912], 365–66.
[239]Steele 2008; Lupovici 2012; Subotić 2015; Ejdus 2020.
[240]Delehanty and Steele 2009; Steele 2010.   [241]Darwich 2016; Zarakol 2010; Vieira 2018.
[242]Durkheim 1995[1912], 350.   [243]Ross 2013, 76.

identity'.[244] Equally, however, this can lead actors to feel their behavior legitimate, providing the confidence to stay the course. Such determinations occur within an existing affective environment. For example, emotions triggered in Americans by 9/11 'intersected with pre-existing emotional symbols, memories, and beliefs', which in turn became the backdrop for giving meaning to the event and 'speculating on which responses were feasible and just'.[245] Therefore, while crisis might provide an opportunity to change established routines or relationships,[246] actors must *also* believe such change is faithful to the moral order. Thus changes in Spain's foreign policy following the Madrid bombings was interwoven with the process through which normative expectations, cultural memories, and moral commitments led Spaniards to turn their anger on the government, whose support of the Iraq War was seen as the moral lapse responsible for the attacks.[247] Foreign policy change thus becomes linked to how debates over what acting faithfully entails influences perceived priorities, preferred methods, level of commitment, observed roles, and perceived threats.[248]

This links into how certain periods enjoy more consensus around moral orders than others. Rapid change generally unravels unity, with factions employing 'competing modes of myth-making'. Over time these often begin to merge and become 'more unified at the level of history and culture'.[249] However, when interpretations of tradition and subsequent visions for the future become antithetical, inter-communal conflict can erupt.[250] Regarding foreign policy, this multiplicity can impact, for example, what is perceived as a threat to the sacred or what is required for acting faithfully, with the potential for varying interpretations possibly leaving some anxious over the selected course of action[251] – or to policy paralysis due to insurmountable disagreement.[252] Domestically this has implications for inclusivity regarding the national community; for who has power and who is made to feel more/less 'at home', more/less secure.[253] This also establishes how tradition can be reinterpreted to either close down borders, as seen in populist movements, or open up new spaces, as evinced by the Maori in New Zealand.[254] The implication being that some might be 'differentially enthusiastic about "the" ostensible ethnic/national project'.[255]

Likewise, there is always the potential revitalization engenders more revolutionary change, including to the religious system itself (e.g. the introduction of nationalism). Building upon Zarakol's exploration of historical fluctuations regarding which intuitions function as OS providers, we can say that changes to which institutions are viewed as the legitimate guardians of the sacred, or to the religious system itself, profoundly impacts how we conceptualize the international system,[256] further reinforcing the contingency of any international order. This includes the actors we see as constituting the system and the extent to which we can speak of a shared set of common norms and understandings, to international society. Again, we thus need to think about the international system not only in terms of

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[244]Browning and Joenniemi 2017, 44, 39.   [245]Ross 2013, 71–72.
[246]Rumelili 2015; Browning and Joenniemi 2017.   [247]Ross 2013, 89–90.   [248]Hermann 1990.
[249]Smith 1999, 86, 88; Liu and Hilton 2005.   [250]Glassie 1995, 397; Hunt 1988.
[251]Delehanty and Steele 2009, 531–32; Browning 2018a.   [252]Lupovici 2012.
[253]Smith 1999, Ch. 7; Skey 2010; Huysmans 1998; Croft and Vaughan-Williams 2017; Krolikowski 2018.
[254]Steele and Homolar 2019; Liu and Hilton 2005, 548.   [255]Walby 1992, 84.   [256]Zarakol 2017.

power, but also ideals and values (homogeneous–heterogeneous). Perceived differences over religious systems (e.g. nationalism) and proper guardians of the sacred (e.g. nation-states), or regarding the values espoused by institutionalized guardians, will subsequently lead to a more heterogeneous, and potentially more unstable, system given the heighted prospect for misunderstanding, non/misrecognition, and incompatibility.[257]

Conclusions

This article has argued that shared emotions/affect are vital to OS and that Durkheim's view of society as interrelated with processes of revitalization allows us to both develop and expand how we understand the sources of OS. First, Durkheim's conceptualization of the (re)vitalization of society helps us account for the collective emotions required for the leaps of faith underscoring societal trust and that constitute the normative environment and symbolic codes that signifiers and narratives pull from. Likewise, such revitalization accounts for varying degrees of change – including moments of emancipatory agency. Second, Durkheim allows us to expand how we perceive the sources of OS by shifting focus to how the sacred and the moral order gives meaning to members of society and facilitates feelings of warmth and strength. Accordingly, OS becomes understood in relation to this religious sensibility and how actors strive to act faithfully within and toward a dynamic moral order interrelated with the sacred, with processes of revitalization allowing for varying degrees of social and political change. This is why nations, constituted by faith in shared conceptualizations of what is sacred and a dynamic moral order, are of such importance to OS in the contemporary era.[258]

Overall, the article thus points to the need to appreciate how the sacred remains central to politics – to the debates about who we are and where we are going and thus to the types of relations we pursue. This means IR theory needs to take seriously how the foundations of moral communities (e.g. nations) are (re)conceptualized through processes of revitalization that can lead to more conservative and transformative foreign policies, how various institutions (e.g. nation-states) are deemed as safeguarding the sacred, and how the guardians of various moral communities preserve or desecrate each other's values and sacred foundations. Accordingly, we can view foreign policy as imbued with some of the core questions of virtue ethics – for the question what kind of community we are, or want to be, in the world dynamically links morality, virtue ethics, identity, the nation, and the sacred. In other words, foreign policy is informed by how actors strive to act faithfully toward a conception of moral order – a process that entails a return, reengagement, and renewal of the sacred.

From this perspective, it is faith in the moral order and conception of what is sacred that provides the continued strength and agency required for adapting to a nation's ever-changing geo-political situation. What these adaptations look like

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[257]Bolton 2021b.

[258]Foundations that more cosmopolitan groupings might find hard to replicate. Smith 1999, Ch. 9, 2009, Ch. 5.

is, in turn, interrelated to how interpretations of faithful behavior within the moral order can be more/less conservative. Such interpretations in turn influence the relations between nations as they recognize/deny each other's mythical claims, reinforce/oppose the values each espouse, and enhance/hinder efforts to act faithfully – in other words, the extent to which they allow the sacred to remain intact. Of course, we must also recognize processes of revitalization can lead to radical change and formulations of a new moral order and ideals. That is, it can potentially revise the religious system (nationalism) and/or the institutionalized guardians of the sacred (nation-states), thereby altering how we envision the constituent parts of the international system. To this end, conceptualizing OS in relation to moral orders interrelated with the sacred provides a new optic through which to account for the dynamism of foreign policy and the contingent nature of the international system and international order.

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