FOREWORD

by Talcott Parsons

One of the most important services performed by The Free Press in its brief existence has been to make available to the professional public, through reprint and translation, a whole series of the "classics" of modern social science, especially sociology, which otherwise would be likely to have been seen by only a few rather recondite scholars. The present translation belongs in this already extended series. Its special importance lies in the fact that it brings to those social scientists who have not read most of Durkheim's writings in French, an aspect of his work which is relatively little known to American readers—judging by secondary references to Durkheim—but which figured very prominently in it and in his position in France, namely, his work in the field of education. Durkheim's professorship at the Sorbonne was a professorship of sociology and education, and he lectured in this field for many years. This work undoubtedly had a great deal of influence on the shaping of his general sociological thinking, as well as being an important contribution to the field itself. Dr. Fox and The Free Press are hence to be congratulated in making some of it available to us.*

* The other most important work of Durkheim in this field is L'Educa-
tion morale, a course of lectures given at the Sorbonne in 1902-03, but only published posthumously in 1925 (edited by Paul Faconnet, Paris: F. Alcan).
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As Dr. Fox remarks in his Introduction to the English Translation, in spite of the fact that work done a long generation ago and in another country has many features which seem remote to contemporary Americans, at the same time, many of the things in this set of essays seem surprisingly up to date. Indeed, there is a sense in which in a good many ways we have only recently caught up with the level of both sociological analysis and shrewd observation which Durkheim commanded. There is one major theme of this work on which I would like to make a few comments.

Durkheim, for understandable reasons, came to be known in the social science professions as either the great opponent of psychological interpretations and emphases in general, or as the proponent of an “unsound” psychological doctrine, namely, that of the conscience collective, or as it was most generally known in the English-speaking world, the “group mind.” Polemical attitudes toward the formulae in which Durkheim’s views were expressed have tended to inhibit more penetrating exploration of the actual structure of his thought, and hence to obscure the very positive contributions which Durkheim made precisely to the interrelations of sociology and psychology.

The formulae to which I refer were largely determined by a specific intellectual tradition in which Durkheim worked and by the polemical situation in which he found himself, especially vis-à-vis Tarde. In his critique of Tarde and, for instance, in the critique of psychological interpretations of suicide rates, he was concerned above all to assert the independent significance of the sociological level of analysis as against tendencies to psychological "reductionism." It is only rather recently, if now, that this can be taken for granted even in sociology, and it is by no means securely established in the psychological profession.
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But there is another side to Durkheim's work in this respect, a side which perhaps first clearly emerged in his seminal conception of anomie as first fully developed in *La suicide*. Here already was clearly implied the *internalization* of socio-cultural norms, since he interpreted anomie suicide as resulting from disorganization of the relation of the personality to its internalized moral culture. The theme was considerably farther developed in later work, and culminated in certain parts of *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, notably perhaps in the famous formula, "society exists exclusively within the minds of individuals."

If the special technical sense of the term society in this passage be taken into account, it is clear from this and other evidence that Durkheim must be accorded, with Freud, the credit for what undoubtedly is one of the most fundamental of all psychological discoveries, namely, that of the fact of internalization of culture as part of the structure of the personality itself, not simply as providing an "environment" within which the personality or the organism functioned.

This is to say that Durkheim, by virtue of the path along which his sociological analysis took him, was led deep into psychological theory and made extremely important contributions to it. He cannot fairly be considered simply as the sociologist who opposed psychology, nor as the psychologist of the "unsound group mind," but was the contributor of more than one highly creative idea in psychology which is in the forefront of the development of that field today. Indeed, the relations of the two disciplines are such that he could not, in my opinion, have carried his analysis of social systems as far as he did without becoming deeply involved in the psychology of personality.

The biographical evidence seems to show that his work in education played a critical part in leading him to the in-
sights which made this articulation of psychology and sociology possible. He started in his early theorizing with the twin criteria of "exteriority and constraint" as the hallmarks of social facts. Constraint in the earlier period was interpreted as either the pressure of the non-social environment or external coercion by others. It was in his writings on education that he first stated that there was another possible interpretation, namely, that constraint should be by "moral authority," and this clearly meant through the internalization of norms.

This is the setting in which I think it is relevant to understand the greatest importance of Durkheim's work on education not only for sociology, but for social science more generally. The reader will find many rich insights and suggestions as to the way in which what we now call the process of socialization takes place. His work in this field is a monument to the thesis that no satisfactory theory of education, as of many other social phenomena, can be developed without the contribution at strategically important places of several disciplines, in this case notably both sociology and psychology. Durkheim set a model for the general framework of that collaboration which to this day is one of the best we have.