The Journal of Educational Thought, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1977) 213-223

ABSTRACT

While Emile Durkheim is well known as an important theorist in the development of modern sociology, it is noted that few sociologists and even fewer educators recognize his significant contribution to the sociology of education. This paper provides a brief historical framework which, it is argued had a great influence upon Durkheim's thinking regarding the relationship of education to society. His major theories of education are discussed under three major groupings — education developing as a social process, education's function in the socialization of the young, and education in the development of morality. Durkheim's practical applications of sociological theory to education remain timely for today's educational process.

GRACE M. BARNES**

Emile Durkheim's Contribution to the Sociology of Education*

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) is unquestionably one of the most important theorists in the development of modern sociology, yet few English-speaking sociologists seem to be familiar with his works on education; and to most educators, Emile Durkheim is virtually unknown.[1] This is ironical since Durkheim was not only an educator himself but he taught pedagogy per se for thirty years of his life in addition to, and along with, his teaching of sociology.[2]

Durkheim wanted always to speak as a scientist and as a sociologist in his attempts to analyze education in its relationships to the total social system of which it was a part. Further, throughout his studies he made it clear that he wanted to apply his scientific methods to relevant, practical problems. Thus, the fundamental themes that run through Durkheim's major sociological works such as the relation between religion and science and the nature of the social bond are also present in his works on education; and it is reasonable to assume that the subjects he discussed and the manner in which he formulated his theories were influenced by the social climate of France at the end of the 19th century and indeed from its historical development dating from the periods of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. In addition, Durkheim's lectures addressed to educators were stimulated by actual difficulties and circumstances that the school system in France was confronted with at the time.

It might be argued that the debate with regard to education in France was but the manifestation of the all-encompassing social struggle between Church and State, religion and secularization. During the Ancien Régime society was conceived of as being of divine creation with the social order contained within it being ordained by God. Thus, in keeping with this conception, every person

---

* Acknowledgments — My thanks to Dr. Morris Fried for his stimulating comments and to Audrey Topinko for preparing the manuscript.

**Grace M. Barnes is Research Scientist with the Research Institute on Alcoholism New York State Department of Mental Hygiene.

[1]Indeed, Durkheim's *Education and Sociology* was not published in English until 1956, and *Moral Education* appeared only in 1961, while two volumes of *L'Evolution Pedagogique en France* are still not translated into English.

[2]Paul Fauconnet, *Introduction to the Original Edition of Education and Sociology*. By E. Durkheim (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956), p. 27.

received the level of education according to his position in society. The French Revolutionaries substituted the idea of a 'man-made' society for a 'God-given' society. Man, through the use of his reason, was thought to be able to create the social order appropriate to his needs. Education could make the individual of greater value to society and contribute to the progress of the community at large.

It was then the period of the French Revolution which saw the emergence of the official proclamation, for the first time in France, of "the right to education as an essential right of all individuals and the Nation's duty to instruct all its citizens. These principles were totally new in the school situation of that period."[3] Interwoven with these new revolutionary ideas toward the nature of society and education was the growing importance of the spirit of secularization. However, ideals of state-controlled education and equality of educational opportunity, which came to the foreground during the French Revolutionary Period, were not to be fully realized until the Third Republic (1872-1940), the period in which Durkheim taught and formulated his theories of education and society.

With the era of Napoleon Bonaparte, the Church was allowed to play a significant role in education because religion was seen as a way of furthering Imperial policies. The Church's task was to inculcate obedience to the Emperor as divinely appointed. Napoleon's policies on education have been summed up:

> The Revolution has seen the State as a teacher, a schoolmaster; Napoleon conceives the State as an indoctrinator, the headmaster; the Revolution had envisaged public education as a duty of the State to its citizens; Napoleon sees in it above all the interest of the State and that of the Sovereign.[4]

During the Restoration, the Bourbons continued to keep education in the autocratic tradition of Napoleon, but the influence of the Church grew stronger. The Revolution of 1848 frightened the ruling powers into again strengthening the position of the Catholics because the Church represented stability.

With the coming of the Third Republic (1872-1940), controversies between the Catholics and the Republicans became more bitter. The Republicans represented the renewal of the Revolutionary ideals of democracy and secularism. The laws which were enacted in this period made the French primary education system 'free, compulsory, and secular.'

Durkheim lived and worked in these days of the Third Republic when democracy, secularism, and science were the banners being waved, but these ideals were not free from serious controversy from opposing groups. To Durkheim, as to many of the other "free-thinking" Republicans, traditional religion no longer met the needs of this more modern society, yet new bases of solidarity would have to be found. Durkheim, for one, saw science and its methods as the tools to guide societal reform and the development of a new secularized morality.

Education as a Social Process

Throughout Durkheim's works there is the notion that each society has its own economic, political, moral, and religious system appropriate and specific to its social structure. Such is likewise the case with education. Each society has its own particular system of education suitable unto itself.

---

[3]W. R. Fraser, *Education and Society in Modern France* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1963), pp. 5-6.

[4]W. D. Halls, *Society, Schools and Progress in France* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1965), p. 19.

> There is no man who can make a society have, at a given moment, a system of education other than that which is implied in its structure . . . Educational practices are not phenomena that are isolated from one another; rather, for a given society, they are bound up in the same system all the parts of which contribute toward the same end: it is the system of education suitable to this country and to this time. Each people has its own, as it has its own moral, religious, economic system, etc.[5]

Durkheim is opposed to views of those who would stress the one universal goal of education as being ultimate development and betterment of the individual.

> For Kant as for Mill, for Herbert as for Spencer, the object of education would be above all to realize, in each individual, but carrying them to their highest point of perfection, the attributes distinctive of the human species in general. They stated as a truism that there is one education and one alone, which, to the exclusion of any other, is suitable for all men indiscriminately, whatever may be the historical and social conditions on which they depend — and it is this abstract and unique ideal that the theorists of education propose to determine.[6]

To Durkheim this concept of an ideal education which applies to all men everywhere finds no support upon examining history, for he argues that education has varied greatly in time and from place to place.

> In Athens, they sought to form cultivated souls . . . capable of enjoying beauty and the joys of pure speculation; in Rome, they wanted above all to become men of action, devoted to military glory, indifferent to letters and the arts. In the Middle Ages, education was above all Christian; in the Renaissance, it assumes a more lay and literary character; today science tends to assume the place in education formerly occupied by the arts.[7]

Education has varied in each epoch, Durkheim argues, because each society has to have the system of education that corresponds to its needs and reflects the customs and beliefs of the common life.

Even in actual classroom methods, Durkheim argues that it is to the collective ideas and sentiments of a particular society that education responds.

> When society is oriented in an individualistic direction all the educational procedures which can have the effect of doing violence to the individual, of ignoring his inner spontaneity, will seem intolerable and will be disapproved. By contrast, when . . . it feels the need of imposing on everyone a more rigorous conformity, everything that can provoke excessive initiative of the intelligence will be proscribed . . . It is not as a consequence of psychological discoveries that the Renaissance opposed a whole set of new methods to those that the Middle Ages had practiced. But it is because, as a result of the changes that had come about in the structure of European societies, a new conception of man and of his place in the world emerged.[8]

Through his discussion of education as determined by society, it is noteworthy that Durkheim is applying his scientific methods of sociology to study the social phenomenon, education. He has stated that to speak of an ideal education which is not linked to the conditions of the time would be to speak of education as having no reality in itself; and indeed, Durkheim sees education as being composed of real social facts. Therefore, these facts as described in his *Rules of Sociological Method* provide the basis for potential scientific study.

> . . . there is no reason for education not to become the object of an inquiry which might satisfy these conditions (i.e. scientific objectivity) and which, consequently, presents all the characteristics of a science. Indeed, education, as practiced in a given society and considered at a given moment of its evolution, is a totality of practices, of ways of doing things, of customs which constitute perfectly defined

---

[5]Emile Durkheim, *Education and Sociology* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956), pp. 94-95.

[6]Ibid., p. 115.

[7]Ibid., p. 64.

[8]Ibid., p. 132.

> facts and which have the same reality as other social facts. They are not . . . more or less arbitrary and artificial contrivances which owe their existence only to the capricious influence of indeterminate wills. They constitute, on the contrary, real social institutions.[9]

Furthermore, the method Durkheim advocates to study these social facts relating to the educational process is largely an historical observation approach.

> Historical investigation of the formation and development of systems of education reveals that they depend upon religion, political organization, the degree of development of science, the state of industry, etc. If they are considered apart from all these historic causes, they become incomprehensible.[10]

Education as a Socialization Process

As society itself conditions the educational system, so it is, in turn that society for Durkheim becomes the object or the goal of education. Each society has its own conception of certain common factors that the ideal man should possess and thus the focus of its particular educational system is this ideal. Historical observation then leads to the following definition:

> Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states that are demanded by him by both the political society as a whole and the special milieux for which he is specifically destined . . . education consists of a methodical socialization of the young generation.[11]

Within this definition, Durkheim realizes there are two aspects of providing the essential conditions of the existence of society. The first aspect Durkheim notes is that education varies according to the social milieux within society, i.e., education is different depending on social class or locality. Durkheim surely heard the 'moral conscience' of his time which advocated equality of educational opportunity for he says, "It is evident that the education of our children should not depend upon the chance of their having been born here or there, of some parents rather than others."[12] However, he argues that even if this ideal were to be achieved, education would still not be uniform. The main thesis of his work *The Division of Labor in Society,* namely, the growing differentiation of civilized nations, is related to education, for education will necessarily vary according to one's occupational specialty and function in society.

> Even though the career of each child would, in large part, no longer be predetermined by a blind heredity, occupational specialization would not fail to result in a great pedagogical diversity. Each occupation, indeed, constitutes a milieu sui generis which requires particular aptitudes and specialized knowledge, in which certain ideas, certain practices, certain modes of viewing things, prevail; and as the child must be prepared for the function he will be called upon to fulfill, education, beyond a certain age, can no longer remain the same for all those to whom it applies. That is why we see it, in all civilized countries, tending more and more to become diversified and specialized.[13]

However important these specialized educations are, they do not comprise all of education for these various types must have a common base. Thus we come to the second aspect implicit in Durkheim's definition of education, that of fixing within each individual the essential elements of the collective life.

> There is no people among whom there is not a certain number of ideas, sentiments and practices which education must inculcate in all children indiscriminately, to

---

[9]Ibid., p. 94.
[10]Ibid., p. 66.
[11]Ibid., p. 71.
[12]Ibid., p. 68.
[13]Ibid., p. 68.

> whatever social category they belong . . . In the course of our history, there has been established a whole set of ideas on human nature, on the respective importance of our different faculties, on right and duty, on society, on the individual, on progress, on science, on art, etc. which are the very basis of our national spirit; all education, that of the rich as well as that of the poor, that which leads to professional careers as well as that which prepares for industrial functions, has as its object to fix them in our minds.[14]

Such is the twofold nature of education, for society could not continue to exist without a certain homogeneity; yet without a certain diversity, there could be no cooperation. Thus, education of which Durkheim speaks socializes the child for the collective life while preparing him for a special role in society.

Durkheim develops what we have come to call the nature/nurture controversy by describing the individual and social beings which are part of each person.

> In each of us, it may be said, there exist two beings which, while inseparable except by abstraction, remain distinct. One is made up of all the mental states that apply only to ourselves and to the events of our personal lives: this is what might be called the individual being. The other is a system of ideas, sentiments and practices which express in us, not our personality, but the group or different groups of which we are a part; these are religious beliefs, moral beliefs and practices, national or professional traditions, collective opinions of every kind. Their totality forms the social being. To constitute this being in each of us is the end of education.[15]

It is further argued that this social being does not develop spontaneously; that is, there is nothing inborn in one's nature which predisposes him to serve these collective ends.

> Now, if one leaves aside the vague and indefinite tendencies which can be attributed to heredity, the child, on entering life, brings to it only his nature as an individual. Society finds itself, with each new generation, faced with a tabula rasa, very nearly, on which it must build anew. To the egoistic and asocial being that has just been born it must, as rapidly as possible, add another, capable of leading a moral and social life. Such is the work of education and you can readily see its great importance . . . It creates in man a new being.[16]

Social life then is too complex to be transmitted from generation to generation by heredity. This transmission is carried out through the educational process. Durkheim acknowledges the concept that some hold which regards education as only assisting in the development of nature itself. But Durkheim argues that education answers social needs above all else.

> They do not have, by themselves, the instinctive appetite for science that has often and arbitrarily been attributed to them. They desire science only to the extent that experience has taught them they cannot do without it . . . [Man] has known the thirst for knowledge only when society has awakened it in him, and society has done this only when it has felt the need of it.[17]

The argument against Durkheim's thesis is one still waged today, namely, that if society is always moulding the individual according to its needs, then the individual is ever subjugating his nature and giving up his personal freedom. This submission might imply something very negative to some, but not so to Durkheim.

> . . . for the new being that collective influence, through education, thus builds up in each of us, represents what is best in us. Man is man, in fact, only because he lives in society . . . It is society, indeed, that draws us out of ourselves, that obliges us to reckon with other interests than our own, it is society that has taught

---

[14]Ibid., pp. 69-70.
[15]Ibid., pp. 71-72.
[16]Ibid., p. 72.
[17]Ibid., p. 74.

> us to control our passions, our instincts, to prescribe law for them, to restrain ourselves, to deprive ourselves, to sacrifice ourselves, to subordinate our personal ends to higher ends.[18]
>
> Liberty and authority have sometimes been opposed, as if these two factors of education contradicted and limited each other. But this opposition is factitious . . . Liberty is the daughter of authority properly understood. For to be free is not to do what one pleases; it is to be master of oneself, it is to know how to act with reason and to do one's duty.[19]

The criticism that Durkheim loses sight of the individual can be further countered (or supported, depending on one's view) by examining the roles he saw for psychology versus sociology in education. Durkheim was a sociologist first and foremost; however, he did make a great contribution to the collaboration between psychology and sociology. He saw an important function for the science of the individual; psychology could determine the means of educational practice while sociology must determine the ends.

> Only the history of education and of pedagogy allows for the determination of the ends that education should pursue at any given time. But as for the means necessary to the realization of these ends, it is psychology that must be consulted . . . We shall know all the better how to shape the moral sensibility of the pupils in one or the other direction when we shall have more complete and more precise notions about the totality of phenomena that are called tendencies, habits, desires, emotions, etc., of the divers conditions on which they depend, and of the form that they take in the child . . . Now it is up to psychology, and more specifically, child psychology, to resolve these questions . . . And since no method can be applied in the same fashion to different children, it is psychology, too, that should help us to cope with the diversity of intelligence and character.[20]

Thus, Durkheim does not deny individual achievement or the role of psychology in education, yet it is clear where his emphasis lies. "Man is man only because he lives in society" and since "education is an eminently social thing in its origins and in its functions . . ., pedagogy depends on sociology more closely than on any other science."[21]

Many of Durkheim's thoughts are relevant to modern American education, yet some would argue that they are contrary to fundamental beliefs about the principal goals of education. Thus, Durkheim does not place primary emphasis on realizing one's individual potential, while the American educational system has been built almost totally on the ideal, 'Let each become all he is capable of being.' Perhaps there has been too little regard for what society "needs" each to become for the collective good. For example, in the recent past it seems that along with the slogan of each becoming all he was capable of being, there was a corollary that a college education was a desirable necessity for all. College became the symbol of personal success and future happiness. Technical and vocational education (symbolically located in the basement of most high schools) were reserved only for the "slowest" of the students. Of course, the late 1960's and 1970's were witness to the masses of "liberally educated" college graduates who flooded society's labor market and found that they hadn't been trained for any useful 'function' that society was willing to reward; also, the supply of trained educators far exceeded the demand. Perhaps we are slowly realizing that at the same time an individual is realizing his potential, that person must also pursue a career that realistically keeps the needs of present day society in mind.

We still have a long way to go to remove the stigma of vocational education being somehow an inferior type of pursuit. Whether we are being prepared to

---

[18]Ibid., p. 76.
[19]Ibid., pp. 89-90.
[20]Ibid., pp. 111-112.
[21]Ibid., p. 114.

work in the factory or the university, the Durkheimian argument would be that our tasks are equally as important by the very fact that we are each doing our part and contributing to a necessary function within society. Our educational system could well use a few more goals stressing not only the development of the "individual being" but also pointing out the importance of the "social being" that Durkheim formulated so well.

Thus, Durkheim, in developing his thesis on the goal of education to socialize the young, acknowledged the development of the individual, but this was not his main emphasis. Likewise, Durkheim did not develop the ideas of inequality of educational opportunity as a function of the social structure which today's educational sociologists find very important. This is perhaps so because Durkheim seemed to be looking for a way of establishing social order in that French society which had undergone so much stress and class conflict for better than a century. His goal was, above all else, to achieve social solidarity, the concept which is further developed in his discussions of moral education.

Moral Education

As described earlier, the ideals of the Third Republic in France were inclined toward secularism as evidenced by laws that were gradually bringing about a separation between Church and State. Thus, Durkheim saw the development of a secular morality as the way to achieve moral integration and social unity for the overall good of the French society of his day. Durkheim implies the time relevance of his work by saying, ". . . our aim is not to formulate moral education for man in general, but for men of our time in this country."[22] As education is a social process, similarly, Durkheim sees the morality of each society as related to its social structure and therefore differing through time and space.

Durkheim, with his firm conviction in the power of reason and science, was confident that a rational moral education was possible; however, he did not believe that education could be made secular by simply removing every religious element without then finding something to function in its place.

> Of course, if religious symbols were simply overlaid upon moral reality, there would be nothing to do but lift them off,[23] thus finding in a state of purity and isolation a self-sufficient rational morality. But the fact is that these two systems of beliefs and practices have been too inextricably bound together in history. . . . Consequently, if, in rationalizing morality in moral education, one confines himself to withdrawal from moral discipline everything that is religious without replacing it, one almost inevitably runs the danger of withdrawing at the same time all elements that are properly moral.[24]

Therefore, Durkheim sought to discover the rational substitutes for those religious ideas that served to carry out the moral order. Once Durkheim has established the elements of morality, he then shows how these elements can be used in developing morality in the child. For Durkheim, the source of all moral authority was to be society, for "we are moral beings only to the extent that we are social beings."[25] And just as Durkheim saw the educational process having as its primary function the socialization of the child, so, too, Durkheim saw the school as the appropriate agent for moral education.

---

[22]Emile Durkheim, *Moral Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1961), p. 3.

[23]Perhaps Durkheim is referring to the symbolic act in 1879 of removing the crucifix from classrooms.

[24]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[25]Ibid., p. 64.

The theoretical development of Durkheim's three elements of morality (i.e., the spirit of discipline, attachment to social groups, and autonomy or self-determination) has its practical counterpart within the education process. For Durkheim, the concepts of regularity and authority unite to form the spirit of discipline. "Morality is a totality of definite rules; it is like so many molds with limiting boundaries, into which we must pour our behavior."[26] These rules live and operate around the individual, which compel him to act in a regular and habitual fashion. Within the conception of rules, there is not only the idea of regularity but also the idea of authority. Authority for Durkheim is:

> . . . that influence which imposes upon us all the moral power that we acknowledge as superior to us. Because of this influence, we act in prescribed ways, not because the required conduct is attractive to us, not because we are so inclined by some predisposition either innate or acquired, but because there is some compelling influence in the authority dictating it.[27]

Through moral education, the development of discipline encourages the individual to control his desires and set realistic goals for himself in keeping with his abilities. Here again we find one of Durkheim's recurrent themes of restraining and controlling individual passions in the interest of society; and this is, in turn, the means of individual happiness and freedom.

> Discipline is thus useful, not only in the interest of society and as the indispensable means without which regular cooperation would be impossible, but for the welfare of the individual himself. By means of discipline we learn the control of desire without which man could not achieve happiness. . . . The rule, because it teaches us to restrain and master ourselves, is a means of emancipation and of freedom.[28]

Although Durkheim acknowledges the family's role in the child's preparation for moral life, the family, for Durkheim, is still quite inadequate for the development of the spirit of discipline. The relationships in the family, while giving way to the child's first feelings of solidarity, are largely based on emotion and not subject to any impersonal regulation. The child must come to respect rules and learn to do his duty, and this, according to Durkheim, is best carried out by the school.

> In fact, there is a whole system of rules in the school that predetermine the child's conduct. He must come to class regularly, he must arrive at a specified time and with an appropriate bearing and attitude. He must not disrupt things in class. He must have learned his lessons, done his homework, and have done so reasonably well, etc. There are, therefore, a host of obligations that the child is required to shoulder. Together they constitute the discipline of the school. . . . It is by respecting the school rules that the child learns to respect rules in general, that he develops the habit of self-control . . . It is a first initiation into the austerity of duty.[29]

Durkheim may seem overly strict and authoritarian according to our modern educational thinking; yet one always senses in Durkheim's theory the notions of justice and fairness in striving for that transcendent ideal. Discipline in the classroom is not, for Durkheim, simply a method for the teacher to keep order or a way to make the child work; it is, above all, an instrument for developing morality. Thus, Durkheim did not feel every aspect of behavior should be regulated (as was being attempted in many of the private schools of the time).

> In a word, some behavior is independent of moral considerations . . . It is not necessary that children's attitudes, their bearing, the way they walk or recite their lessons, the way they word their written work or keep their notebooks, etc. be

---

[26]Ibid., p. 26.

[27]Ibid., p. 29.

[28]Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[29]Ibid., pp. 148-149.

> predetermined with great prevision. For a discipline so extended is . . . contrary to the interests of real discipline . . . for two reasons. First, the child sees in such requirements only detestable or absurd procedures aimed at constraining and annoying him — which compromises the authority of the rule in his eyes. On the other hand, if he submits passively and without resistance, he becomes accustomed to doing nothing except upon somebody's order — which destroys all initiative in him . . . a pattern of regulation so encompassing could not fail to have the most unfortunate influence on the child's morality. If it did not make a rebel, it would make a morally impoverished person of him.[30]

The child then must come to obey the rules willingly and only then is his compliance truly moral. The moral authority implicit in the rule must be worthy of respect. This feeling is developed in the child by the teacher, according to Durkheim, who "radiates authority." However, Durkheim makes it clear that this authority is not from the fear the teacher instills in students or from his own superior intelligence, but it is instead from the mission he is called to carry out.

> [The teacher] must believe, not . . . in the superior quality of his intelligence or will, but in his task and the greatness of that task . . . Just as the priest is the interpreter of God, he [the teacher] is the interpreter of the great moral ideas of his time and country . . . In this authority, which derives from a quite impersonal source, nothing of arrogance, vanity, or pedantry must enter. It is entirely brought about through the teacher's respect for his role or, if one may put it this way, for his ministry. This respect is transmitted through word and gesture from his mind to that of the child, where it is imprinted.[31]

Thus, Durkheim sees the role of the teacher as a primary factor in developing the spirit of discipline in the child. This is a serious business to Durkheim, yet, at the same time, he is concerned about human kindness and sensitivity to the child.

> . . . if the child must be introduced to the sober things of life, we must never lose sight of the fact that it is only a matter of an initiation, a first introduction, and that the child is not a man and should be handled in accordance with his nature as a child. The teacher's authority should then be tempered with benevolence so that firmness never degenerates into boorishness or harshness.[32]

With regard to punishment, Durkheim's methods are again humane and certainly enlightened for the period in which he lived. Durkheim was totally against all forms of corporal punishment. "In beating, in brutality of all kinds, there is something we find repugnant, something that revolts our conscience — in a word something immoral."[33] For Durkheim, "one of the chief aims of moral education is to inspire in the child a feeling for the dignity of man,"[34] and certainly, corporal punishment would be considered a direct offense to this idea. Therefore, the essence of punishment, for Durkheim, is not to inflict suffering on the individual but for the person to receive the disapproval and blame of the social group, that is, to reaffirm the respect and maintain the authority of the rules.

Durkheim does not develop his own concept of anomie in relation to the educational process. The underlying assumption in his theories of moral education is the almost complete internalization of the rules. It can be argued that in our educational process today, there has been a breakdown in authority and discipline, and therefore, mere disapproval of some act will not necessarily have the desired effect of strengthening the norms. Although this concept of

---

[30]Ibid., p. 153.
[31]Ibid., pp. 154-155.
[32]Ibid., p. 160.
[33]Ibid., p. 183.
[34]Ibid., p. 183.

anomie is not fully discussed in Durkheim's works on education, he is by no means oblivious to it. Thus, he notes that punishment applied beyond a certain degree no longer has any effect.

> All punishment, once applied, loses a part of its influence by the very fact of its application . . . This feeling of moral sensitivity that stands guard against misdeed is one of the most delicate of sentiments. It is not strong, it is not completely itself, it lacks its full power of influence except among those for whom it has lost nothing of its original purity. We often say that the first offence always leads to others. This is because, once we have felt it, we are less sensitive to this shame. Punishment has this very great limitation of clashing with one of the chief resources of moral life, and thus reducing its own efficacy in the future. It retains all of its force only when it simply constitutes a threat.[35]

Further, Durkheim shows disapproval of a specific practice which has been continued in some of our present day schools.

> It sometimes happens that in order to carry out the punishment under the supervision of the teacher, all the delinquent students from one or several classes are brought together to perform the extra work required of them. I take a dim view of the usefulness of this practice, which, although authorized and in common use in school systems of almost all countries, nevertheless presents some serious disadvantages. It is always bad to bring together, to put intimately in contact with one another, persons of middling morality . . . There always prevails a latent spirit of disorder and rebellion.[36]

On the opposite side, Durkheim notes there are sanctions relating to school morality characterized by the reward system in the schools. For example, "good grades, ranks, prizes, and class honors are actually reserved for the most intelligent students rather than for the most upright and sensitive consciences."[37]

> But there is reason to believe that prestige may attach too exclusively, in school life, to intellectual merit and that a greater share should be accorded moral value. To do this it is not necessary to add new tests and papers to those we already have, or to add new prizes to our list of honors. It would be enough for the teacher to attach more importance to those qualities that in current practice evidently are too often treated as a secondary thing. The affection and friendship that he evidences for the hard working student, whose efforts do not bring the same success as do those of his better-endowed fellow students, would be a balance that, today, is wrongly twisted and disturbed.[38]

The second element of morality is the need for attachment to social groups. This concept embodies all the feelings of attachment to society which have been discussed throughout this paper. Common life in the classroom, in the school becomes the moral agent through which the child comes to know and love the larger society. The way of instilling a solidarity in children which binds them to others is to make them feel "that the value of each is a function of the worth of all . . . that we are not self-sufficient, but a part of a whole that envelops, penetrates, and supports us."[39]

To behave in a moral fashion, we then must be disciplined, feel an attachment to the group, and also finally understand the reasons for our actions. Durkheim describes this third element, autonomy, and its relevance in the school. Because of a sufficient knowledge of the causes and functions of moral precepts, Durkheim argues that conformity is then consciously carried out.

> This explains the place we accord the teaching of morality in our schools. For to teach morality is neither to preach nor to indoctrinate; it is to explain . . . if we

---

[35]Ibid., pp. 198-199.
[36]Ibid., p. 198.
[37]Ibid., p. 204.
[38]Ibid., p. 206.
[39]Ibid., p. 245.

> do not try to help [the child] understand the reasons for the rules he should abide by, we would be condemning him to an incomplete and inferior morality.[40]

This last element is, Durkheim says:

> . . . the principal differentiating characteristic of a secular morality since, logically, it can have no place in a religious morality. It implies, in fact, that there is a human science of morality and consequently that moral facts are natural phenomena that emerge through reason alone. Science is impossible except as it is based on nature, that is to say, upon observable reality.[41]

Such is the reason Durkheim emphasizes the great importance of science in the school curriculum. Science gives the child the sense of the real complexity of things and demonstrates the idea of progress, i.e., through history, areas of ignorance are progressively reduced.

From Durkheim's works on education, he can be seen as a scientist who was personally committed to make a practical contribution to the French society of his time. The formulation of his response to the issues of education in society was first, an attempt to understand what societal needs education served, and then, to develop guidelines to remold the educational system in accordance with these needs. Some of Durkheim's ideas seem to be overly idealistic. On the other hand, much of Durkheim's educational theory is practical and still very relevant for our educational process today. As sociologists or educators, we would do well to read and consider Durkheim's ideas on education for perhaps, above all, they are a source of great inspiration.

RESUME

Bien qu'Emile Durkheim soit connu comme un important théoricien de la sociologie moderne, peu de sociologues et moins d'éducateurs encore reconnaissent l'importance de sa contribution à la sociologie de l'éducation. Cet article donne brièvement le cadre historique qui, selon l'auteur, a exercé une grande influence sur la pensée de Durkheim au sujet des rapports entre l'éducation et la société. Ses principales théories sur l'éducation sont commentées ici en trois grands chapitres: l'aspect social du développement de l'éducation — le rôle de l'éducation dans la socialisation de la jeunesse — le rôle de l'éducation dans le développement de la moralité. L'application à l'éducation des théories sociologiques de Durkheim reste valable dans l'évolution actuelle de l'éducation.

[40]Ibid., pp. 120-121.
[41]Ibid., p. 119.