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A Guide-post to the Sociology of Eduation

—Through the Consideration of E. Durkheim's Theory of Education—

Yasushi Naka

A great French sociologist, Emile Durkheim was also the eminent theorist of Education. Instead of approaching to education from the aspect of value, he studied it from that of fact. "Education is a social fact," this was a motto in his theory of education.

Social fact, according to his sociological theory, is a thing (not material, but social) that we can observe, describe and analyse from the outside. In fact, when he declared in les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique, "Social facts are things and must be treated as things," this formula expresses precisely the rule of objectivity of the sociological knowledge that had been posed by A. Comte.

Things are all that are given, all that are offered to the observation. Therefore, "Social facts must be treated as things," it means that we must treat them in quality of data that consitute the starting point of the positive science.

Through the method of considering education as a social fact and studying it as a thing, Durkheim systematised a new science of education and named this science "la Science de l'Education". His famous la Science de l'Education has in itself many interest problems.

We firstly outline the argument of this science, then consider it in relation to his sociology, and finally critisize his theory of education based upon the sociologism.