Rethinking Durkheim and His Tradition

This book offers a major reassessment of the work of Émile Durkheim in the context of a French philosophical tradition that had seriously misinterpreted Kant by interpreting his theory of the categories as about psychological faculties. Durkheim’s sociological theory of the categories, as revealed by Warren Schmaus, is an attempt to provide an alternative way of understanding Kant. For Durkheim the categories are necessary conditions for human society. The concepts of causality, space, and time underpin the moral rules and obligations that make society possible.

A particularly original feature of this book is its transcendence of the distinction between intellectual and social history by placing Durkheim’s work in the context of the French educational establishment of the Third Republic. It does this by subjecting student notes and philosophy textbooks to the same sort of critical analysis typically applied only to the classics of philosophy.

This will be an important book for historians of philosophy, historians of ideas, sociologists, and anthropologists.

Warren Schmaus is Professor of Philosophy at the Illinois Institute of Technology.
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WARREN SCHMAUS

Illinois Institute of Technology
In memory of Walter F Schmaus (1922–1994)
and Richard J. Thome (1928–2002)
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Preface and Acknowledgments

This project owes its inception to an invitation from the British Centre for Durkheimian Studies in Oxford to participate in a conference on Durkheim’s *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* in 1995. It was the paper that I presented there that first got me thinking about the social functions of the categories. I am especially grateful to Bill Pickering for his encouragement and continued interest in my work, as well as to Nick Allen and Willie Watts Miller, his coeditors for the proceedings volume that resulted from that conference. Throughout this and three other book projects with Bill in which I have been involved as either an author or a coeditor, I have had the opportunity to try out some of the ideas in this volume. Bill is one of the kindest, most generous people in academics with whom I have ever worked.

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