

Latest Books

The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature and Art (Londres, décembre 1915)

Anon.

S. Baciocchi and F. Théron (ed.)



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It is a relief to turn from a recent perusal of the dogmatic utterances of a German anthropologist¹ to this scholarly study by a Frenchman. Professor Durkheim does not fall into the Teutonic mistakes of thinking that theory and fact are interchangeable terms, nor of examining his subject with the subtle presumption that only material culture of primitive peoples really matters. These mistakes have vitiated almost everything that the German scientists, despite all their great industry in amassing details, have done with regard to anthropology, particularly in the matter of comparative religion. Turning to Professor Durkheim's work, there is something very attractive in this statement: "There are no religions which are false. All are true in their own fashion; all answer, though in different ways, to the given conditions of human existence [...]. Some can be called superior to others, in th [e] sense, that they call into play higher mental functions, they are richer in ideas and sentiments, that they contain more concepts with fewer sensations and images, and that their arrangements are wiser. But howsoever real this greater complexity and this higher ideality may be, they are not sufficient to place the corresponding religions in different classes." ^[2] However profoundly some will believe that this statement must be modified, however variant their judgment upon the meaning of facts adduced may be, it will be strange if all English readers do not find Professor Durkheim's arguments as valuable as they are provocative of thought.

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NOTES

1. [Allusion aux travaux de Robert Fritz Graebner. Cf. Bishop George Horsfall Frodsham, « Melanisan Culture – ‘The History of Melanesian Society.’ By W.H.R. Rivers. Cambridge University Press. 2 Vols. 36s net. », *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature and Art*, 119 (3097), 6 March 1915, p. 256a.]
2. [« Introduction », Durkheim 1915, p. 3]