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Dominique Schnapper, "Travailler et aimer. Mémoires." Paris: Odile Jacob, 2013, 231 pp.

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Book Review

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This is a very rewarding book to read. The author, responding to the stimuli represented by the questions and comments of two close associates that punctuate the text – the eminent Pareto scholar Giovanni Busino and Sylvie Mesure (Director of research at the CNRS and a central figure in GEMASS, a joint venture between that Center and the Sorbonne) – reflects and comments at length on her eighty-year-long itinerary (so far!) as a distinguished scholar and author. She also movingly describes the key role played over a long section of her life – 1958-2004 – by a very close and intense relationship with her spouse, an art historian. (Hence the title of these memoirs, which echoes Freud’s motto “*Lieben und arbeiten*”). On the background of the author’s whole story lies the figure of her father Raymond Aron (1905-1983), to whom the daughter owes constant and most significant inspiration on both scholarly, ideological, and political matters.

The book’s content is further enriched by the variety of contexts, situations, character it opens up to the reader, and by the author’s constant effort to clarify the makings of her career and the evolving content of her productive intellectual engagement. Her literary style also helps: it is elegant, but also most direct and explicit, thus conveying the strength of her convictions and the boldness of her judgments about people.

As a result, for instance, for any reader who greatly appreciates the scholarly significance of Bourdieu’s work, this book’s description of the man’s conduct and modus operandi and its evaluation of his personal character will constitute a shock. The same may be said of many of the author’s judgments about diverse academic environments, the career patterns they reward, the respective weight in their operations of strictly scholarly values, political alignments and sponsorship practices. As to judgments about individuals, while that about Bourdieu is partly tempered by a recognition of his scholarly imagination and creativity, consider the following:

Quand on pense qu’Alain Badiou est reconnu comme un grand penseur!

Also, she expressly deplors the rise within the spectrum of the French social sciences of political science, which addresses phenomena sociology should have claimed as its own concern. One should not think that in this work the author takes advantage of her age and her high standing to deliver previously views and judgments previously entertained privately but not publicly expressed. Everything in this text suggests, to the contrary, that Dominique Schnapper never hesitated to express them forthrightly, and to disassociate herself from positions and views which we would today characterize as “politically correct.” This was on account, among other reasons, of her persistent, profound attachment to her father and of the extent to which she shared his convictions, even when these exposed them both to attack from other writers. This was of course particularly the case at the time of the *événements* of the late 1960s and during the decade that followed, when most French sociologists continued to be inspired by one

or the other form of that Marxism that the title of a book of Aron's called "the opium of intellectuals."

Both Aron's and her daughter's political commitments were of course coherent with their distinctive position within the sociology discipline and the social sciences at large, a position shared for instance with François Furet. Even in the 1980s, she says

j'avais encore la mauvaise identité, j'étais de droite.

This position unavoidably imparts a certain bias also to the author's scholarly production, perhaps more than she realizes or would admit. For instance, she sees in the contemporary situation a deplorable "double de-valorisation of work: with respect to capital," due particularly to financialisation of economic processes, "and with respect to welfare." However, at any rate within this book, the first phenomenon and its dis-equalising effects get ignored, and only the second is repeatedly and insistently thematised, and its tendency to generate claims in the form of "rights" is criticized.

There is something to this, but it concerns some unintended consequences of policies intended to remedy to an extent the effects of a marked (and growing) asymmetry in the distribution of economic power. If I am not wrong, this concept does not figure in this book and is probably extraneous to Schnapper's scholarly production, much of it dealing with on phenomena – immigration, ethnic identities, citizenship, diasporas – which so to speak cut across class differences and the related conflicts.

The author repeatedly speaks of the "marginality" as a constant of her own professional itinerary. This characterization enlighteningly qualifies from a subjective viewpoint some significant manifestations of her objectively deserved recognition, culminating in 2002 in the award of the Balzan prize, which she suggests is a kind of Nobel Prize for sociology. But I'll give two other examples. Starting in 1987 Prof. Schnapper was for years a member of the Commission de la Nationalité, convened by the President of the Republic to elaborate a reform of the existent French practices in matters of nationality. In 2001 she was appointed for eight years to an even more exalted, permanent body, the Conseil constitutionnel, a non-judicial body intended to monitor elections and referendums and to test the constitutional validity of new laws and regulations. Schnapper reports that in both bodies the other members did not quite seem to know what to make of her presence and own contribution. (At the end of the second experience she analyzed it in a book, *Une sociologue au Conseil constitutionnel* [2010]).

One final remark. The large and diverse scholarly production of the author has lately veered more and more in the direction of a sustained reflection on democracy, to a considerable extent inspired by Tocqueville's thought. I cannot say to be familiar with it, but my impression – largely derived from my reading of this book – is that it deserves much greater recognition than it has received. This is particularly so in Italy; a quick inspection of the catalogues of Italian academic libraries has turned up a deplorably low number of titles from Schnapper's scholarly production. Her first book, *Italie rouge et*

noire. Essai sur les modèles culturels de la vie quotidienne a Bologne [1971] appears in very few catalogues, and even her *Sociologie de l'Italie* [1974] does not appear in all.

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