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Dominique Schnapper, *La citoyenneté à l'épreuve. La démocratie et les juifs*. Paris: Gallimard, NRF Essais, 2018. 400 pp. €22.50. (pb). ISBN 9782072791468.

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The sociologist Dominique Schnapper, known for her work on minorities and the concepts of integration, nation, and citizenship, offers in *La citoyenneté à l'épreuve. La démocratie et les juifs* her perspective on the successes and limits of the democratic project as highlighted by the experiences of the Jewish minority in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution onward. She defines this "democratic project" as the aim to transcend the historical, religious, and cultural affiliations of the citizens through civic-mindedness (*civisme*) (p. 13). The role and place of traditions in Jewish communities and for the maintenance of healthy democracies are also central to her book.

Schnapper divides her essay into four parts and eight chapters. The first part focuses on the effects of emancipation on Jewish minorities in a few Western countries--France, Germany, England, and the United States--and offers a succinct overview of the general context, which will seem superficial to specialised historians but will be useful to people new to the subject. With emancipation, Schnapper explains, Jewish communities lost their semi-autonomy and their ability to manage most aspects of their daily lives. In exchange, they gained a direct relationship with the state as citizens, and on paper, the same rights, duties, and opportunities as other non-Jewish citizens. The emancipation process was always narrowly linked to the diffusion of democratic modernity (p. 33). It paralleled the development of an inclusive "civic nationalism," and the building of a common citizenship.

The second part moves on to the "trials of modernity." Emancipation brought Jews rights, but it forced them to abandon or adapt many of their political and social practices. For Schnapper, the Jewish resistance to modernity, though limited, was due to the centuries of struggles they had gone through in hostile countries under hostile regimes. It was about survival and continuity, not backwardness. They maintained religious practices and rituals to keep a sense of history and collective identity in a world that wanted to erase them. Traditions were strengths. For Mordecai Kaplan and Schmuel Eisenstadt, Judaism was, and still is, a civilisation, defined as a "total way of life" (p. 68). It encompasses religion, history, art, language, literature, but also a specific social organisation, norms, conceptions of the world and of society. Maintaining traditions meant safeguarding this specific social organisation, by putting Jewishness at the centre of family life and intimacy. With no Temple to turn to for centuries, and a long-lasting exile, the religious structure had to come from rules, rooted at the time of the emancipation in more than a

millennium of practice. They became indispensable for Jews to recognise themselves and each other as Jews. Yet, despite the central role of traditions, Schnapper, following recent historiography, shows that emancipation did not cause a fundamental rupture. Jews had always borrowed from the cultures and societies among which they lived (p. 110), such as the court Jews of the German states. Further, some degree of rupture had occurred, as with the changes made to Jews' political autonomy in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.

The third part of Schnapper's essay concentrates on the successes of Jewish integration into democratic societies. Indeed, Jews were noted for their patriotic fervour and adhered *en masse* to the values of modern citizenship and political liberalism--an adhesion made easier by the little attachment they had to their pre-democratic situation. While most Jews made a conscious effort to integrate into their nations, going through a process of acculturation, their structural integration into their home countries depended more largely on the civil society and the state's will to welcome and include them. Integration processes depended in part on the existing separation between politics and religion, which Schnapper illustrates through the exposition of a few national examples (pp. 152-172). She notably mentions Hungary, Germany and the Jewish attachment to Bildung, France and the memory of the Revolution, Great Britain's long road to complete political emancipation despite its tolerance, and the United States.

She then turns to the modalities of Jewish integration, and especially the weight of prejudice on the process. In England, newspapers continued to mention the Jewish origins of individuals who had converted. In the United States, Jews achieved acculturation, but assimilation was hindered, partly because of the nativist movement. For Schnapper, these limits were to be expected because democracy calls for "perfect fluidity between all members of a same society" and is, in the end, an abstract notion that has never been, and can probably never be, fully realised (p. 203). In the case of the Jewish minority, some forms of attachment and belonging to Judaism, the traditions that had allowed them to survive as a community, added to these limits. As a result, the political awareness (*conscience politique*) of Jews developed not horizontally (within civil society) but vertically (relying on relationships with authorities and power).

The last part of Schnapper's essay, "Ethnicity and democracy," highlights even more strongly the limits of democratic developments and aspirations. She begins with the most direct and deadly form of hatred Jews encountered between 1870 and 1945: antisemitism. With the development of modern societies, she theorises that racism became necessary to explain difference and justify inequality (p. 264). Schnapper covers the origins of modern forms of antisemitism, especially in France and Germany, discussing the role of political and intellectual figures, on all sides of the spectrum. In Great Britain and the United States, Jewish minorities encountered social antisemitism, but nothing reaching the levels of continental Europe. There is little here that will be new to scholars of antisemitism, or even modern European history.

The Holocaust unsurprisingly marked a decisive turn in the relationship of Jews to democracies. Schnapper's conclusion is that Jews are now more pragmatic in their attachment to democratic values. Indeed, with the development of what she calls a "citizenship of reason" (giving more place to ethnic and religious particularisms in the name of republican values), the democratic project evolved in a menacing way, according to Schnapper. In parallel, in England, and to a lesser extent in France and Germany, criticism of the state of Israel has led some to positions close to antisemitism. In the United States, the situation of the Jewish minority did improve greatly after 1945: they became part of the country's elite and developed strong links with Israel,

providing financial and political support through lobbying. However, according to Schnapper, their preponderance has lately been "threatened" by the social and intellectual successes of other ethnic groups (p. 297), and they are witnessing a resurgence of antisemitism due to certain movements-- though some readers might find her comparison of white supremacists and the Palestinian BDS movement problematic.

The last chapter returns to the topic of traditions, this time in a post-traditional world. For Schnapper, traditions should not be seen as reactionary. They are the products of a collective legacy and "we cannot imagine a society that, at a given moment, would start from scratch" (p. 321). Societies only exist through their links with the past, though no tradition reproduces itself completely (p. 324), and what is transmitted depends on collective choices. Political modernity may tend to see no normative value in the past and believe in the superiority of the new over the old, yet we should be careful to recognise both the value and inescapability of tradition for the survival of strong democracies.

To conclude, for Schnapper, contrary to what Hannah Arendt states, Jews did have political experience and traditions, just not as Jews. Jewish communities adhered to the democratic project and their participation in their nations' public and political life as citizens, rather than as Jews, was conform to the idea of citizenship they were so attached to. They had transcended their Jewish identity. She insists that democracy is the only known regime that protects "deviants" (though her definition of this term is far from clear and her use of such a word to refer to sexual minorities problematic to say the least). She does recognise the asymmetrical relationships between democratic states and certain minorities, but does not denounce the structural and systemic racism exposed in the past few years. Instead, she ends with the following warning: modern democratic nations are becoming more and more ethnic and less and less civic, and this evolution weakens the democratic project (p. 349). To prevent its decline, citizens should make sure to transcend--rather than suppress--their particular attachments through *civisme* (p. 354). What she means by transcend or *civisme*, however, remains a mystery.

Schnapper is careful to pre-empt criticisms in her introduction. She recognises that some of her analyses are schematic, that she took shortcuts, and was probably too synthetic for a number of specialists. Her work indeed suffers from a lack of depth, and its narrative style can sometimes lead the reader away from the argument. This is not a piece of historical scholarship; this is an essay. She presents it as "an intellectual project on the integration of democratic societies" built on the "knowledge of historians" (pp. 20-21). However, said historians are barely acknowledged, and such warnings sound like an easy way out of what is considered in the profession as standard practice--namely, proper and precise references. Instead, the reader is at a loss whenever Schnapper mentions "historians" or does not attribute quotes, the Six Day War presented as "a second Auschwitz", for example (p. 268). This is not a secondary issue. Schnapper's work relies on decades of historiography. She brings little new to the table when it comes to Jewish history, mostly allowing for a superficial examination of a number of democratic nations. The least she could do is acknowledge the studies she stands on. Besides, she does not offer real comparative conclusions that would directly answer her introduction's question, i.e. what does the situation of Jews teach us about the democratic project and the building of democratic nations?

More important, however, are my issues with the lack of clear definitions and, above all, a number of unnecessary and rather random remarks that betray Schnapper's least attractive views. Beyond the fact that she never truly defines what she means by *projet démocratique*, her core beliefs (*laïcité*,

assimilation, *anti-communautarisme*, and anti-multiculturalism) heavily inform her writing, leading to diversions that weaken her argumentation. For instance, she criticises the existence of specific scholarly domains (African-American studies, gender studies, Jewish studies) because of the risk of *entre-soi*, without highlighting the rich interdisciplinary work and international dimension of these areas, recognising the necessity for these fields to exist, or questioning the dominance of white male *entre-soi* in academia and beyond (p. 18). A better knowledge of these fields may have prevented her from wondering whether the enslaved people of the South of the United States were less unhappy than the black citizens of the great industrial cities of the North (p. 264), or calling the memory of slavery and colonisation a "memory of humiliation"--an expression that minimises the constant violence, dehumanisation, and death inherent to this history. Her mention of "déviances sexuelles" without quotation marks or discussing the words (pp. 324, 345) is equally disturbing, and culminates in what can only be described as a series of implicit transphobic statements (pp. 340-341).

In the end, the strengths of Schnapper's essay are first in the overview of the history of Jewish integration in Western democracies it offers, and second in what appears at the periphery of her argument. Her points on the role of Jewish habits and the importance of traditions in democratic states offered a perspective I had not encountered much before.

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