

In memoriam. Raymond Boudon

By Michel Forsé

Raymond Boudon, Professor Emeritus at the University of Paris Sorbonne, died at the age of 79 on Wednesday, 10 April 2013. It is difficult to summarize so much fruitful work. He was of course the leader of the school of thought known as methodological individualism, which holds that the collective is always the result of rational individual actions. He devoted much of his effort to setting out the foundations for this and attached great importance to the thought of Max Weber. At the beginning of his career, his personal contacts with the American Paul Lazarsfeld led him to develop a formalized and rigorous approach to social facts, in contrast to the structuralism which was so much in vogue at the time and which he disliked. For Boudon, as the title of one of his latest books (2011) suggests, sociology was a science in the strict sense of the term. In a similar vein, he also tried to show in numerous articles and books all the havoc that ideological and cultural relativism could inflict.

A very prolific author, arguably making him one of the major sociologists of the twentieth century, he was also an editor. At the PUF publishing house he was until recently head of the "Sociologies" collection, which featured both translations of classic works and publications by young authors. For many years he also directed *Année Sociologique*, the journal founded by Emile Durkheim.

As a member of the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, he played an active role promoting research projects. He was also a member of many prestigious foreign academies, such as the British Academy and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Raymond Boudon graduated from the prestigious Ecole Normale

Supérieure with a degree in philosophy and taught throughout his career – many of his works are marked by a strong pedagogical approach. He wanted to make the great authors known, often in a new light, and to bring to life key concepts of sociology, for example, through the *Dictionnaire critique de la sociologie* and *Traité de sociologie*, which he directed. He was of course also a researcher, in the field of methods and theories as well as in empirical analysis. At the CNRS, he founded and for many years headed up the Study Group on Sociological Methods and Analysis.

Exacting in his scientific approach to social facts, unperturbed by not following the latest fashion, and with an impressive *oeuvre* translated into many languages□□, Raymond Boudon was, nevertheless, very simple and approachable, as all those who knew him can attest. Beyond the scholar whose work will remain, first and foremost we have lost a militant humanist.