



Citizenship as Equaliberty Practice in the Philosophy of Étienne Balibar

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on citizenship as a critically envisaged and inherently conflictual term discussed in the work of Étienne Balibar, a contemporary French philosopher with a background in Althusserian Marxism. It interprets and explains citizenship as a term ‘pervaded with antinomies’, yet one very actual and crucial for critical philosophy. The problem of citizenship has central importance in Balibar’s work, questioned in terms of its *possibility* in the current world and whether it can exist in contemporary globalized realities, under what conditions and how. To answer these questions, Balibar identifies the *conditions of possibility* of citizenship in history, finding them embedded in material socio-political settings, and discussing and developing his ideas in extensive works including *Equaliberty: political essays* (2014), *Citizenship* (2015) and *The Citizen Subject* (2017). Their interpretation provides contrast when evaluating the conditions of contemporary citizenship. Hence, his philosophy contains a *critique, grounded in* historical interpretation and critical reflection on

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actuality. It does not align with a pure description of reality, but develops through active selection, interpretation and purposive reading of historical realms placed in a comparative relation with actuality. Concepts resulting from such a critique have a dialectical structure linked to historical manifestations of phenomena in a comparative and evolving manner. In a similar vein, Balibar's notion of citizenship appears in relation to identified conditions of possibility as a historical, *structured practice* conditioned and shaped by context.

This chapter scrutinizes the nature of citizenship in light of the conditions of possibility critically assessed by Balibar; in other words, the kind of citizenship he reveals and enhances in his critical analysis. Such an inquiry might seem inappropriate as neither the substance nor the concept emerges in the critical realms; indeed, Balibar's citizenship always occurs in concrete historical settings shaped by the concrete conditions of the past and, hypothetically, of today or in future. Nonetheless, I argue that by identifying the crucial characteristics of Balibar's usage of the term, the positive features giving citizenship its delimitation might be abstracted and anchored in a positive figure—the task undertaken in this chapter. Balibar is widely known for his emphasis on human rights and transnational citizenship, yet the conditions of such a political standpoint and the sense (transnational) citizenship carries in his work are less addressed in academic discussions. Thus, to contribute to deepening our understanding, in this chapter I provide a detailed interpretation of Balibar's notion of citizenship.

According to Balibar (2015: 33), 'an institution of citizenship remains essentially antinomic'; in other words, citizenship contains and carries contradictions as its inner condition. Therefore, my interpretation of Balibar's notion of citizenship proceeds via exposition of this antinomy, which is neither a substance nor a quality but a structure evolving from numerous phenomena related to citizens' practice. I focus on phenomena where the antinomy is most revealing and elucidate Balibar's notion of citizenship from different angles. Balibar proceeds in a similar way in his work *Citizenship* (2015), the main text discussed in this chapter, although I also identify the antinomy in *Equaliberty: political essays* (2014), in which the author's significant contribution to political philosophy occurs.

In the first part, I approach *antinomy as an outcome* of Balibar's philosophy. He formulates his citizenship treatise as an argumentation *against* the critiques of citizenship, contradicting the theoretical voices negating

citizenship today; yet the very double negation gives rise to its possibility. In other words, by opposing theories that deny the existence of citizenship in the contemporary globalized world, the possibility of citizenship emerges. In this manner, citizenship is never revealed in positive terms. Paradoxically, this non-positive approach inverts citizenship from a passive phenomenon into an active element, which is alive despite its contradictions or, even better, evolves throughout them. Therefore, the first part introduces the discussion of which Balibar's work is part, and interprets his philosophy as a *stance* against the critiques: one that envisages citizenship beneath the renouncing institutions of the nation state and approaches the decline of national citizenship as an opportunity for new forms of citizenship practices to take root.

In the second part, I provide a closer analysis of the *citizenship antinomy*, focusing on its logic. In Balibar's philosophy, citizenship is antinomical because it is historical; as a historical phenomenon, citizenship appears as both a (passive) product of historical events and, at the same time, their active cause. Its active-passive character develops in citizens' relation to democracy, which is not simply reciprocal and causal but also transformative and creative. On the one hand, citizenship requires a stable democratic environment to occur; on the other, it emerges only by transcending and transforming existing realms, existing as a widening of the shape of the given. This active-passive character as a structure of practice remains characteristic of citizenship throughout its historical transformation. Balibar depicts it in terms of *insurrection* and *constitution*, referring to the communal revolt against existing institutionalized conditions and their simultaneous reproduction in other forms. Balibar's emphasis on antinomy and the consequent characteristic of citizenship as a structured, conflictual practice enables contemporary political transformation to be approached in terms of citizenship's actualization instead of its destruction or decay. Thus, this section provides a closer look at *citizenship's antinomy* logic, demonstrating that citizenship only lasts as far as it remains a problematic, even conflictual practice based on both acceptance and transcendence of existing realities.

In the third part, I reflect on the *antinomy's origin*, on Balibar's explanation of why citizenship is antinomic and how it developed its antinomical structure. It is a proposition, because no evidence exists of the antinomy's origin other than the antinomical presence of citizenship. To formulate and accept the origin as the foundation of citizenship represents an appropriation of a practical stance rather than a theoretical work.

For Balibar, this means actively enrolling in a particular political tradition. The origin of citizenship emerges via historical interpretation of the most decisive citizenship movements and their distinctive structure: the requirement of *equal liberty*. The demand for *equal rights* conditions and permeates *every* historical appearance of citizenship. Thus, the third part explains Balibar's concept of equaliberty and shows that if we anchor citizenship in this concept, it will result in a historical practice that distributes a (conflictual) unity of equality and liberty grounded in an unconditional claim whose every institutional inscription remains necessarily partial.

In the last part, I focus on the dialectical method as an essential source of citizenship antinomy. I demonstrate that the categories produced via the dialectical method are incomplete without the reader's participation in their formulation and, further, that the method involves the reader in theoretical construction, thus developing theory as a praxis. Likewise, dialectical citizenship accomplishes its full meaning via the reader's appropriation of the concept and the reversal of theory into practical stance. Therefore, I conclude, rather than a theoretical concept, Balibar's citizenship is a suggestion in search of endorsement.

2 CONTEXT AND DISCUSSION

Presenting Balibar's notion of citizenship must begin with the introduction of the wider discussion Balibar enters and enriches. His contribution emerges in relation to other authors and develops through discussion with contradicting opinions. As there is no positive articulation of the citizenship notion in Balibar and it emerges only via the contradiction of differing claims, in this section, I introduce ideas and voices Balibar opposes and in light of which his citizenship conception is revealed as a stance.

The principal discussion in which Balibar participates is framed by the structural changes in politics and society connected to developments in processes of globalization since the 1970s. These changes include the transformation of nation states and their incorporation into the global economy, in parallel with the accommodation of market interests by national politics. Contemporary left-wing critiques by Wendy Brown, Roberto Esposito, Ernesto Laclau and others claim that the infiltration of the global economy into the institutional structures of nation states has undermined federal welfare and required a switch from state-building politics to policies facilitating financial flow (Brown, 2005; Hardt &

Negri, 2000; Harvey, 2005). Such policies focus on stakeholders other than the nation state's citizens and promote the needs of transnational financial subjects instead of those of national citizens.

Most critical thinkers regard these changes in terms of the *de-democratization of democracy*—that is, politics focused on the destruction of democracy's preconditions (Brown, 2005). It begins with the extraction of competencies from the institutionalized structures of collective decision-making, such as local communities, political parties and nation states, continues via the authorization of transnational institutions' taking precedence over national policies, and leads to society's transformation into an instrument of the market economy. From this perspective, loci of collective decision-making have adjusted to the globalized course and lost their cultural/territorial differences; they have adjusted to the stakes of a single marketplace without any apparent reference to represented communities. Different political and social realities succumb to one single principle, thus generating an alienated *hegemony* (Harvey, 2005; *empire* according to Hardt & Negri, 2000) built on the rules of the economy, in which nation states no longer represent diversified populations; instead, they control and manipulate a localized workforce according to capital's needs. In such an economic frame, communal activity loses its sense as it has no significant effects. Similarly, politics transform into biopolitics: governance operating with 'bare life' as the sole subject of power (Agamben, 1998; Foucault et al., 2008; Hardt & Negri, 2000). Citizenship in this perspective represents kind of a lost treasure, no longer a powerful agency.

These structural changes deny individuals political agency. The loss of communal instruments, including representation, turns the economy into a societal principle, meaning that all individual and communal activity is reduced to the calculation of profit (Brown, 2005; Castel, 2002). Such utilitarian rationality produces the 'new ethic of self-care, whereby individuals must moralize their conduct by submitting themselves to the criterion of utility maximization or the productivity of their individuality' (Balibar, 2014: 26). All this results in the expansion of a vague and indeterminate globalized society based on neutralized communal participation and accentuated economic interests. In a society where places of communal engagement disappear, and commons remain unknown or unattainable, only economic subjects governed by a logic of profit, no longer citizens, seem to be active (Balibar, 2014: 102).

From the critical perspective, the globalized world represents an unfortunate reality for citizens and political agents, because its structural changes limit individuals' genuine agency and remove competencies from communities. In response to this, some theoreticians, especially in the liberal field, elaborate on the concept of transnational citizenship, which benefits from globalization processes and develops communal agency in a globalized world (Ivic, 2018). Balibar connects the critical and liberal stance, as he appeals for a *universal citizenship* while maintaining a critical view. He acknowledges the critiques of society and community transformation described above but, at the same time, refuses to see the transnationalization and economization of politics in terms of citizenship demise. For him, a decrease of national citizenship represents an opportunity to develop more appropriate communal activity whose conditions of possibility should be conscientiously examined and (re)established.

Balibar counters the critiques by claiming that, in history, the economy has never represented an independent force distinct from political practice, and neither citizenship nor democracy equates with the decreasing institutions of national state. If there are structural changes in terms of citizenship, it is hardly a consequence of hostile economic forces attacking existing democracies or a product of undemocratic powers infiltrating existing democracy. On the contrary, it results from citizenship transformation, breaking out of malfunctioning forms of national citizenship agency to develop distinct forms of collective autonomy situated in a globalized environment. Citizenship is not an effect of the external environment but an active cause. Therefore, Balibar posits a hypothesis to verify: the current structural transformation is '*an expression of the destructive aspect inherent in the antinomies of citizenship*' (Balibar, 2014: 3). If the antinomy is an inevitable constituent of citizenship—or, to put it differently, *if* citizenship is antinomic—then it represents an active force that causes its own transformation, turning the destructive aspect into a creative one and maintaining itself as a historical force. On that account, Balibar focuses on antinomy as *the core of citizenship*, whose elucidation identifies citizenship as an active historical element which produces its own contradictions.

3 CITIZENSHIP ANTINOMY

In the following, I explain how citizenship antinomy is elaborated in Balibar's work, *Citizenship* (2015). Here it is shown that citizenship

produces a plurality of contradictions, but they all evolve from a principal rupture which citizenship embodies, a rupture that might be explained as both horizontal—that is, historical—and vertical, in terms of citizenship's relation to democracy. In other words, it is evident in time—with citizenship maintaining its characteristics while transforming into various historical shapes (in the ancient polis, roman republic, city-state, parliamentary democracy, etc.)—and in space, in the citizen's relations with democracy. Balibar explains this double rupture—the historical relations of citizen to democracy—as the key structure of citizenship antinomy. In relation to democracy, citizenship appears as *conflictual activity*, with no causal or direct structure but rather one that is paradoxical and antinomical. As Balibar argues (2014: 2), '*At the heart of the institution of citizenship, contradiction is ceaselessly born and reborn in relation to democracy*'.

Citizenship reveals the reciprocal rights and duties constituting an individual's bond to the community (Arendt, 1951; Aristotle, 1976; Balibar, 2014; Lazar, 2013; Marshall, 1950), which endorse communal bonds, mirror an agreement over communal sharing and distribute collective power. Such power belongs to equals who share the duties/rights and henceforth participate in the commons. A democracy (not only a parliamentary one but any 'reign of the demos') distributes rights through its institutions, and citizenship thus belongs to equals who are recognized by the institutions and so take a share. On the other hand, democracy grounds citizenship in *natural* equality, which democratic institutions tend to affirm, maintain and further distribute. However, the full installation of equality is problematic because its inscription requires a definition that changes historically, culturally and socially. Equality grounded in nature/humanity is always historically delimitative; therefore, the inscription of citizenship always includes some but excludes others: not everyone fits the category of equals and enters the community. The un-equals, unspecified and dependent remain essential members of society but without participating in citizenship. The discord between 'the all' (society) and equals (community) opens a space of *politeia*, a space '*widening the sphere of equality, actively producing it as a fiction, constantly transgressing the limits imposed by nature*' (Balibar, 2014: 16). Therefore, democracy, in fact, only exists as an active distribution of equality, widening the shape of citizenship via the production of mechanisms for broader participation in community. It only exists as democratization, a practice transgressing its institutions, forcing community to open more

broadly. Likewise, citizenship consists of an activity that confirms equality and opens a space for its transgression. An openness, a possibility to extend, determines democratic institutions, including citizenship. Citizenship without democracy turns into an oligarchy; democracy without citizenship reverts to anarchy.

The relationship between citizenship and democracy is reciprocal and dynamic. It relies on an essential incompleteness of the political body of democratic society and goes with an enduring quest for equality.¹ Citizenship, therefore, cannot be entirely fixed to political institutions; in other words, institutionalized citizenship is always partial, enhanced by a wider community of the excluded, unrepresented (Schmitt, 1996), silent (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988), non-citizens (Mouffe, 1985), those without a share (Rancière, 2007). The unrepresented support the equals in a communal reign under various conditions.

Two democratization processes are widely acknowledged. First, the liberal view distributes equality and incorporates the masses into the condition of citizenship (society in the community) according to a single regulative principle. Such democratization relies on a presupposition of universal rationality (Habermas, 1982). Second, the agonistic denies a single principle that would enable everyone to enter the community of equals. For agonist theoreticians, including Balibar, the installation of equality always represents a temporal inscription of citizenship into political institutions based on a temporal agreement between equals and un-equals (Mazzocchi & Penner, 2018). Their agreement on equality embodies a temporal victory in which one group dominates the others, a *moment of temporal equilibrium* when the broadest number of people agree on the designated power distribution and conform to it under specific conditions. Behind this agreement, however, a constant dissensus pertains.

The antinomy is revealed in multiple ways here. It is evident in the discord between the universalist claim of democracy and the privileges of citizenship, the breadth of society and limitation of community, the power distribution among equals and the constant ‘threat’ from

¹ ‘It is clearly very difficult to define the idea of a community that has neither dissolved nor reunified in purely juridical or constitutional terms, but it is not impossible to conceive of it as a historical process governed by a principle of reproduction, interruption, and permanent transformation. This is, in fact, the only way to understand the discontinuous temporality and historicity of citizenship as a political institution’ (Balibar, 2014: 8).

those who demand participation in the communal. Balibar captures the discord in terms of citizenship antinomies caused by the fact that every power or form of governance, including democracy, produces universalistic ideology while at the same time relying on the suppression of un-equals who do not participate in the factual reign. Each universalist claim is delimitative (Balibar, 2020). Democracy, contrary to other regimes, enhances constant discussion and redefinition of the universality subsumed by citizenship and does not suppress the conflict.

In reference to the unresolvable conflict, Balibar labels the installation of democratic citizenship in terms of *insurrection* and *constitution*, activity that gathers community together *against* an unfavorable inscription of equality in political institutions and reinstalls it in other forms. It describes the negative movement *against* an existing institutional inscription, grounded in certain delimitations, and *toward* another equality installation in different realms. The insurrectional-constitutional movement is not necessarily violent but always contains conflict between various groups. The victorious group, gathering community into institutionalized bonds, wins equality over other groups as it installs and exercises the equality of its members in a factual reign. A gathering against inscribed equality in favor of its re-inscription regularly occurs in a democracy because the universality of community, in one way or another, consistently exceeds its institutional inscriptions and disrupts them from inside. The power equilibrium is temporal and fragile. In short, for Balibar, democratic citizenship exists as *both creative and destructive practice*—destructive because it opposes the existing order, creative because it installs equality and reproduces community in other forms. As such, it remains principally intact in different historical époques.

From the citizenship antinomy perspective, today's citizenship decline is only an institutional decline of citizenship inscribed in the democracies of national states. The communitarian bonds founded on territorial principles degenerate as there is no actual power to share in national rights. The commons (stakes) have shifted from immediate material realities to the transnational terrain without opening to majorities. The masses do not participate in communal sharing but can perceive the 'equals' who do. So far, participation in the global economy provides the masses with a position of the 'silent', the 'non-citizens', the 'share-less' or 'non-represented' who are promised citizenship (equality in rights) in the case of relevant accumulation. Today's equals are subjects with enormous wealth sharing the stakes within transnational space. As their collaborative practice does

not distribute equality or invite other humans to participate in equality, rather than constituting democratic citizenship, it is oligarchic. However, as the commons have transposed to the international terrain, Balibar perceives global/universal citizenship as an inevitable shape of citizenship in the transformed world. Its challenge is evident: how should bonds be created among inhabitants of an unlimited global society that has never existed before?

According to Balibar, the passage to transnational or universal citizenship consists of an inevitable identification with a global community achieved via the *productive movement toward its creation*. However, this movement is not a straightforward course toward an ideal, but contradictory, a counteraction against the institutionalized obstacles that exclude equals from communal sharing. It gathers the community in the negative movement against inequalities that prevent society from becoming a community. For example, contemporary participation in universal commons demands the specific skills necessary for entering the community of stakeholders, usually provided by international education. Today's democratic citizenship appears via collective contradiction of structural inequalities inscribed in elitist practice, and opposition to institutionalized practices that prevent everyone from achieving the same skills. The opposition produces community via a collective negation of exclusivity and exclusions (from dignity, property, security or rights in general). For Balibar, today's eventual citizenship identified as a practice has the same antinomical structure as it has always had: contradicting inequalities inscribed in institutionalized practices and installation of communities via a negative movement reinscribing communal equality.

4 EQUALIBERTY

An emphasis on antinomy gives rise to citizenship as a non-substantial, indefinite, transformative practice that consists of specific relations among people and occurs in a dynamism directed at shared historical conditions. Citizenship consists of structural, historical relations, and to formulate it theoretically means offering a structural model of power distribution embedded *in* and *behind* political institutions (Balibar, 2015: 1–7). Elaboration on the antinomy is an effort to sketch such a model. Apart from the conceptualization of citizenship in relation to democracy (*ibid.*), Balibar (2014) develops a historical explanation of the antinomy, which I

discuss in what follows. While the previous section explained the principles of antinomy, this part focuses on its historical description, that is, it explains the origin of antinomic citizenship.

According to Balibar, the citizenship antinomy evolved historically from the combination of two contradictory requirements united and produced in citizenship practice: equality and liberty. Balibar does not search for ideals meeting these requirements or their inscriptions in people's minds; rather, he identifies the material inscription of the concept in historical realms, finding the first conjunction of equality and liberty in Cicero's Orations, where an appeal for equal distribution of laws urged the *nobilitas* to protect the reputation of Rome and defend the principles of citizenship in the republican regime. However, the most explicit and evident conjunction of both universals occurred in the revolutions of the eighteenth century and their declarations,² during which, Balibar argues, citizenship materially evolved through the deliberative action of the unrepresented against the aristocracy and unequal power distribution. The very act of rebellion against inequalities instigated the installation of common space as one of *everyone's rights*. The revolutionary act of *insurrection* opposed and destroyed the feudal order, and the very negation of inequalities resulted in the *constitution* of a new community, confirmed in the installed rights.³ These rights did not take their legitimacy from an a priori transcendental realm but, in contrast, from the community of equals put in place by the very act of the declaration of rights. In that sense, the declarations guaranteed everyone the right to have rights and thus a share of the commons. The rights themselves distributed the communal right and served as an instrument for establishing a community of equals which materially emerged on the grave of unequal community, *in* the deliberative declarations projecting future installation. Therefore, the rights carried crucial importance, yet were rewritten many times and are still fluid in the present. Their purpose, however, is evident: to declare equality and *distribute* it further. With the right to have rights—that is, a possibility to possess rights—an individual gains the power over the communal, or to put it differently, becomes the communal individual. This individual is *to be* installed in rights, but at the same time, rights refer

² Balibar refers mainly to the French Revolution of 1789 but also assigns the same principle to the other declarations such as the American, Haitian, Belgian etc.

³ Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen from 1789 in France but also the Belgian or American Declarations.

to this communal individual as their precondition, whom they presuppose and reproduce at the same time. Its installation in rights brings equality and liberty to all communal individuals. The revolutionary events materially entailed the unity of equality and liberty and enframed it in rights. The consequent rights only repeat this presupposition of the communal individual, who represents both the declared condition of the possibility of rights and *at the same time* their consequent product.

On the grounds of historical interpretation of the revolutionary movement and its inscription of equality in revolutionary rights, Balibar formulates the concept of *equaliberty*—a pattern which in his view conditions every citizenship and reveals it historically in the twofold act of insurrection and constitution. According to Balibar, the pattern remains intact throughout changing historical inscriptions of citizenship, be it in the ancient polis, roman republic, city-state or parliamentary democracy. It always expresses the same power of the individual over the communal, the right to have rights, thus, equal liberty. Citizenship has always resulted from this requirement and expressed it further. Formulated by Balibar, equaliberty has a unique structure which consists of a mutual interdependence and perfect equivalence of equality and liberty, literally an ‘equal liberty’ brought together in action. In the conjunction, neither equality nor liberty has a positive content; their meaning is tied up with historical conditions. Both, in a particular way, express the rejection of oppression. The content of equality amounts to the achieved liberty and vice versa. One is the other’s counterpart in the sense that one is revealed on the basis of the other.

This rather *extensive* meaning ties the character of the joined concepts to historical realms as equaliberty exists only in material reality. The only content of the unified notions ‘is destined to remain indefinitely open, indefinitely deferred by its very contradiction’ (Balibar, 2014: 46). The extent of one universal is measured by the other, but at the same time one concept excludes the other, as it is measured and realized *on the basis* of its counterpart. Both concepts are dialectically linked—excluding one another, yet existing only in mutual dependency. Equaliberty embodies the historical reality of this dialectical bond.

According to Balibar, equaliberty as a historically identified pattern embodies the real and principal condition of the possibility of citizenship. Citizenship, in one way or another, always displays its structure. However, as a historically identified pattern, equaliberty cannot be proved. Only its temporal reversal, a projection from the past to the future, can

verify its validity. If the ‘historical conditions of freedom are exactly the same as the historical conditions of equality’ (Balibar, 2014: 46), and if equaliberty materially *conditions* citizenship, then it must apply anytime, anywhere. Its verification proceeds accordingly: if something suppresses freedom, it simultaneously suppresses equality; if every freedom suppression results from inequality, every equality refutation evolves from the subjection. More than an idea or a concept ‘hidden’ beyond citizenship, in equaliberty Balibar presents an *appeal* for *equal importance and mutual intertwining* of equality and liberty in *citizenship’s incidence*, whose historical truth is only *to be verified*.

5 EQUALIBERTY AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF CITIZEN WITH HUMAN

Equaliberty, identified in material settings as a fundamental aporia, invites *anyone* to measure and approve the conditions of the possibility of citizenship in particular historical settings. In this section, I focus on the *anyone* addressed in the equaliberty term, who comes forward when perceiving equaliberty as an appeal. On the one side, equaliberty represents a historically identified pattern; on the other, imposed as an origin of citizenship antinomy, it incites people to endorse it. In other words, equaliberty is not only descriptive term, but also, and especially, regulative. As such, it addresses everyone universally. Its approval proceeds via the appropriation of the equaliberty perspective, resulting in a critical stance toward material reality, regardless of geographical locality, cultural apperception, societal organization or political circumstances. If equaliberty represents the fundamental citizenship pattern, then citizenship embodies a universal category devoid of idealization or normativity. Its universality results from the universal demand and possible application.

Equaliberty’s appeal is universal, which means it has an expansive tendency. If we accept the argument that an individual achieves liberty to the extent that equal others do, then, naturally, every individual tends to extend the equality of others to obtain liberty of his/her own. As long as there is someone unequal, my own liberty is limited. As the citizenry of one determines the citizenry of others, citizenship grounded in equaliberty expands and is allocated universally to all humans. A productive tension between citizen and human is already present in the formulation of democratic rights. As reflection on revolutionary events showed, democratic institutions articulate liberties in reference to equality grounded in

humanity. They apply to every human. However, in Balibar's view, the modern appeal of citizenship is characterized by the rejection of a priori human nature and the decision to install it via constitutions.⁴ Rights produce the equality of citizens as the equality of humans and, thus, *create* and distribute the environment of citizens as the human environment. Although rights refer to humanity as a precondition of equality, they even *install* it anew in the production of communitarian beings, in citizenship. According to Balibar, every modern constitution explicitly relies on the equality of human beings and simultaneously produces it in rights. By producing citizenship, institutions produce the idea of humanity. Since there is no single definition of humanity, equaliberty expands as long as there are humans left who do not feel represented by a humanity distributed in rights.

Karl Marx was the first theorist who showed that the human to which the rights of the modern constitutions refer, does not entail a pre-existing substance, but a totality of social relations encapsulated within the notion (Marx, 1845). As only a few representatives formulate the rights of the community, rights often represent only those who participate in their formulation. Marx, for example, showed that the humanity inscribed in the constitutions of the nineteenth century represented the humanity of a male proprietor, a self-possessor (bourgeois), who is human as far as he already participates in the commons and has his share of the common wealth. Accordingly, Balibar argues (2015), all rights distributed in revolutionary constitutions only confirmed and circulated the equality of the bourgeoisie, who imposed their social being as a norm. Although the revolutions declared the eradication of any preliminary order, formulated rights did not escape inequalities of social relations, enframed in the distributed concept of human, which were later revealed in a society built upon distributed laws. The limits of such humanity, that is, a society based on restrictive preconditions, similarly arose in premodern constitutions. For example, the ancient constitutions explicitly distributed the rights of the human as interchangeable with those of a noble citizen. Aristotle's definition of human referred to those who had *logos* and spoke with

⁴ 'Not only does the Declaration not install any "human nature" before society and political order as an underlying foundation or external guarantee; it integrally identifies the rights of man with political rights and, in this way, short-circuits theories of human nature as well as those of theological supernature, identifying man, individual or collective, with a member of political society' (Balibar, 2015: 54).

words; however, only a few citizens could speak and be heard, and therefore possessed *logos*. Only *nobility* formulated their speech in the agora and engaged in decision-making about the commons; therefore, only a few citizens enjoyed the rights (Arendt, 1951). The others, the unrepresented, naturally had a voice but their words were not heard and had no common meaning (*logos*). Their only chance to gain rights was to find a way to be heard and, thus, become humans to whom the laws would apply. They had to find instruments enabling the general recognition and acceptance of their existence as endowed with *logos* (Rancière, 2007). Later, the concept of social citizenship represented another effort to reformulate humanity and extend the universality of equals (Marshall, 1950). The rights distributed in welfare states referred to, and thus distributed, the equality of a worker, an employee regardless of gender, economic or national determinants (Balibar, 2015). The human who was the recipient of social rights was a worker, a citizen involved in economic production. However, such a formulation of humanity overlooked those working beyond the borders of the market economy and left plenty unrepresented (Castel, 2002). Therefore, the nature of being human distributed in rights as the nature of being citizen transforms again according to the actual historical reconceptualization and an expansive claim of equaliberty.

In equaliberty terms, the tension between society and community in democracy, as described above, is revealed in historical terms from a different angle: in the antinomy between a citizen and a human, terms which can never be reduced to each other, yet exist only in mutual interrelation (Balibar, 2017). However, equaliberty better captures the universalist tendency of citizenship and an expansive dynamism enhancing historical transformation. This dynamism is driven by a principally unattainable appeal to inscribe unconditional rights or, in other words, to inscribe rights unconditionally. The movement toward this inscription is a movement of ‘constant negotiation between constituted and constituent forms of power; between the demand for an institutionalization of universal rights and its actual incorporation into a legal framework’ (Nosthoff, 2014).

Evidently, an absolute inscription of equaliberty, even in a single political framework, is always challenged and underpinned by numerous aporias. Neither equality nor liberty can be actualized unconditionally, and their institutional inscription always depends on the existing instruments (cognitive and material) in societies to confirm their common will (Balibar, 2014: 104). Therefore, equaliberty has historical limits.

The parliamentary democracies distribute communal governance via the production of rights that balance equality and liberty, so they can ‘always agree with each other *at some point* in time’.⁵ The representative powers use various mediators to provide a balance of equality/liberty and guarantee a certain level of institutional stability, especially in fraternity and property, material instruments easily regulated, controlled and distributed by laws (Balibar, 2014: 106). However, institutional inscription is never firm because *equaliberty* succumbs to constant reinterpretation, negotiation and challenge within historical contexts and the unstable matrices of power.

6 CITIZENSHIP ANTINOMY AND DIALECTICAL METHOD

An explanation of citizenship antinomy in terms of political history reveals citizenship as a dynamism that transforms and historically changes while maintaining its key characteristics. Balibar’s perception of antinomic citizenship entails equaliberty as a precondition of citizenship and, at the same time, reproduces it as a product. Such a duality appears in the dialectical method, which I examine in the following.

Reflection on methodology is essential because it explains why Balibar perceives citizenship in terms of antinomy and, at the same time, grounds it in equaliberty. An antinomical interpretation represents a logical approach to citizenship, while interpretation from the perspective of equaliberty situates antinomical citizenship in history and explains it materially within its frame. While the first approach leans on the terminology of contemporary political philosophy, Balibar’s historical interpretation of citizenship has a speculative intention and resembles a suggestion. Both approaches, however, are revealed by the dialectical method, which exposes citizenship without substantializing or ideality. On its basis, the notion is revealed in the negation of other meanings placed in a constructed context, and its nature is necessarily relational. Captured via the antinomies, citizenship appears to bridge them as a mediating *transformative practice*. The identified antinomies make citizenship appear as a structured movement—a bridging agency—mediating between the

⁵ ‘Each modernity, each new way of thinking the reciprocity of equality and freedom, can engender its own consequences and its own problems, and therefore bears its own dialectic’ (Balibar, 2014: 105).

citizen and democracy, the political (communal) agent and his/her environment. However, this practice lacks causality or a linear structure aiming for an origin to achieve. It is not normative or prescriptive, which follows from the absence of hierarchies within identified antinomies or the mutual interchangeability between the cause and effect identified within the rights or their equality, both presupposed and produced.

The citizenship antinomies that Balibar presents to depict the structures within the term are not to be overcome, broken through, diminished or achieved. Their articulation invites personal meditation, suggesting that the reader mingle with the antinomies and meditate on their 'solutions'. The dialectics operating via the antinomies embody a theoretical way to involve a reader in the dialectical process and, throughout his/her thinking, launch the category in concrete practice. An effort to think about the antinomies within a single concept and see the term in relation to other material settings incites the reader to accommodate a fresh perspective and approach the actuality with new lenses, which do not prescribe citizenship as an object or normative stance but present it as a *possibility to try*. Dialectics turn theory into concrete practice. As depicted above, the installation of citizenship, according to Balibar, proceeds via communal agency based on both insurrection and constitution. Citizenship's historical inscription demands destruction and constitution, revolt against constitutive power and its constitution in other forms. Historical reconstruction of equaliberty as a fundamental citizenship antinomy provokes the verification of agency, applying the perspective in particular conditions in the globalized world.

Besides the incitation, Balibar's articulation of equaliberty also provides a critique of actual politics. Its enunciation repudiates, for example, political practice based on divergent perceptions of equality and liberty, laws separating individual from communal rights, practice focused either on liberation or emancipation and proposing some subjects as more equal than others (Balibar, 2014: 38). From the perspective of equaliberty, divergent practice distorts the understanding of citizenship, that is, does not produce a citizen. While doing so, it misleads the politics, because production of the citizen is a crucial political aim. This citizen to be promoted has a unique form. Its specification on an actual globalized level is a task to solve. In fact, according to Balibar, the subject's specification on the transnational level in terms of international rights provokes an envisaged political community because it enables anyone to identify

with the subject, defined outside of geographical and political circumstances (the universality of transnational citizen is broader). In his view, supra-national institutions such as the United Nations or the European Union already formulate citizenship on a more universal (supra-national) level and distribute citizens' rights as human rights. The human rights discourse produces a single human and covers a comprehensive spectrum of rights from free conscience or individual security to the right to existence or self-determination. However, in Balibar's view, formulated as a defense, rather than a conquest, they still do not admit their historical and political origin and fulfill their potential.

But the institutional politics movements are insufficient without the effort from below. An antinomic concept of citizenship grounded in equaliberty brings forward the need to involve the masses in politics, as they are, in fact, the real originators of the universalizing appeal, or 'place' where citizenship antinomies (henceforth citizenship as such) evolve. Equaliberty demonstrates that every institutional inscription remains necessarily partial and restrictive in the face of the immense unlimited social will as a constitutive power. To some extent, Balibar's antinomies and the equaliberty term invite readers to invent 'a politics against politics' (Balibar, 2014: 66) and realize action directed against institutional inscription (static politics), which both accepts the necessity of institutionalization but admits and revolts against the incompleteness implied therein.

7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed Balibar's contribution to the citizenship debate of his conception of citizenship as a term 'pervaded with antinomies'. From his perspective, citizenship is never an evident or unequivocal task. As an activity, it always produces ambiguities resulting from the antinomy of privileges (the rights) citizenship distributes and universalizing (trans-limitary) demand which it imposes. The unconditional demand and parallel need to specify and maintain privileges together make citizenship a problematic concept as long as it remains democratic. Balibar's task is not to resolve the citizenship antinomy or narrate a history of antinomic citizenship; instead, he asks us to dwell on the unsolvable paradoxes and meditate over them, or even better, experience their material inscriptions and consequently participate in their distribution with a personal contribution. Opening citizenship as a concept pervaded with

antinomies—which bridges the gaps between society and community, liberty and equality, humanity and citizenry, insurrection and constitution—invites a reader to participate in the ‘solution’ by taking an active and participative stance. The antinomies are not to be resolved or decided either-or; they only challenge individuals to participate, in their way, in the collaborative practice and dialectical analysis of the fundamental questions of citizenship and humanity.

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