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CITIZENSHIP WITHOUT A PREEXISTING COMMUNITY

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This Lecture is adapted from a talk that I gave in France exactly a year ago before an audience of students, school and University teachers, social workers, etc. in the cadre of a cultural association that wanted to organize collective reflection on the reasons for the renewed interest on the notion of citizenship, but also the profound transformations that it is undergoing (1). This was shortly after a series of controversies had taken place around the question of the rights of immigrant populations in our country and more generally in Europe, in the midst of debates around the value and future of national and supranational citizenry that the advances of the European Union have prompted in the last years. Although the background of my reflections is in this sense very European, I think that the questions that I address can have a more general interest, and even perhaps find analogies in some of the issues that the American continent is confronted with.

The title of my intervention was simply : « Une citoyenneté sans communauté ? » with a question mark, an intentionally paradoxical formulation which echoed the title of a book recently published by French Sociologist Madame Dominique Schnapper : *La communauté des citoyens. Sur l'idée moderne de nation*, published in 1994 (2), which has been very influential in the last years, widely acknowledged as a clever and reasonable expression for the so-called neo-republican current in political thought in France. Although she would not endorse the chauvinistic tones that frequently go along with this kind of position, Madame Schnapper shares some of the positions of the so-called « national republicans » who oppose European integration by arguing that any supranational construction is likely to abolish not only the national sovereignty as independent power of the State, but also the popular sovereignty associated with it in the Republican tradition. Perhaps a comparison with the discourse of somebody like Richard Rorty in the US would be relevant. Madame Schnapper, who had been an influential member of the State Commission officially appointed to

reform the rules of admission into French Citizenship in the 80's, is now a member of the French *Conseil constitutionnel* (Supreme Constitutional Court). For the sake of clarity, I will slightly correct my title, putting it as « Citizenship without a preexisting community? », still with a question mark.

I certainly have no intention to destroy such notions as « public space », « public interest » or « public function ». All these notions involve a reference to the community or the commonwealth. But I want to deconstruct them, as some philosophers would say, i.e., I want to criticize their implicit prerequisites and by so doing prepare their transformation. Actually I am not far from believing that such a critique is a necessary condition for them to survive in a different environment. I also suspect that it will prove necessary to carefully distinguish between references to the « common » and references to the « good » or the « just ». Not everything that is common is good, but also not everything that is good or just ought to be common. I am not saying this because I would defend the point of view of absolute individualism against every form of communitarianism, but because I think that the values of community are problematic, and that in some cases they have to be opposed in the form of dissent or resistance, if their political function shall be preserved.

This is the kind of necessity that for many of us became more apparent when the *national* form of the political community started vacillating in its function as an ultimate or exclusive reference. We are living in a world where it is no longer beyond any doubt that the nation forms the necessary cadre for the recognition of belonging to a community and the institution of citizenship. Perhaps it is not even acceptable on moral grounds. This does not either indicate clearly which alternative forms could be advocated, or mean that the very idea of community could be simply abolished.

What is interesting in Madame Schnapper's essay and similar attempts at renewing the « republican » tradition in political philosophy is that she tries to dissociate what she calls the modern idea of nation, as a political entity, from every substantial relationship with ethnicity. She wants the nation to be a « civic »

cadre for the totality of rights and obligations which provide a State with democratic legitimacy. This might be a very « French » representation, but it is also a widely acknowledged notion, notably in America. When it comes to deciding whether individuals could actively participate in the public life, i.e. become « citizens », without a *community* that incorporates them in a group that is associated with spiritual, perhaps sacred values, she clearly answers no. But she does not naively believe that the distinction of ethnic belonging and national belonging exists by definition - which I think is a rare merit. For her, if and when there is such an opposition, this is rather the result of a continuous effort within the realm of culture. Culture has to be stripped from its genealogical or mythical « rootings », it has to be raised to the level of rationality and political consciousness, *but* - here the crux of the argument - this should be achieved without culture and community losing every subjective meaning for the individuals who feel that they share a common destiny, and who must adhere to it. This is the kind of commitment for which, in our political tradition, the term « patriotism », as distinct from « nationalism », has been constantly used.

Being aware of the fact that the demarcation of patriotism and nationalism is never established for ever, that a civic education is needed to reinstall it continuously, being convinced also that the « civic nation » has historically triumphed notably in Western Europe since the XIXth Century (in spite of tragic counter-episodes), Schnapper sees that this institution, which she calls « singular », has now reached a point of extreme fragility, if not inconsistency. Her intention therefore is to ask, in an open manner, which conditions would make it possible to keep giving *national solutions* to the problems of democracy and modernization in the European societies. But she remains convinced that only such national solutions are effective, so that, if they proved impossible, the very existence of the political institution, the *polity* in the classical sense, would be threatened.

Allow me now to summarize some of the arguments that she invokes in this sense. As a « grouping » or « association », a civic nation would be something absolutely unique, where the unavoidable particularity of membership or loyalty does not

contradict the demand of universality. Much the contrary, it would be the necessary mediation for the historical institution of universality. The nationalization of social norms, she suggests by referring to the work of Norbert Elias, has made it that the dignity of the individuals is no longer only a consequence of their family ties or professional status, it becomes a universal quality of the citizens. Patriotism, as a repository of collective memory, no doubt has led to violent excesses, arousing much the same passions as traditional ethnic belongings, but the ideal democratic nation is a more open form than ethnic groups. If it keeps associated with exclusions - i.e. the mere distinction between insiders and outsiders, who cannot enjoy the same rights or privileges within the same entity - this is because the idea of a community which would be real or effective without a closure, without borders, is self-contradictory. A distinction of the citizen and the alien has to be maintained for the nation to be an institution, but such a distinction or difference ought not to be confused with discrimination.

It is precisely this universalistic character of the nation form that I want to discuss. What I find important is the fact that « republican » arguments like this are equally opposed to « substantial » conceptions of the community, where the political participation requires sharing a specific culture, a set of traditions, an idiom or an ethnic background, or all of that, so that anybody who does not possess them by birth or entirely assimilates them can never fully participate, and to what I would call a « formal » conception, where citizenship only depends on individual recognition of certain moral values, such as Human rights, certain constitutional rules or a certain « covenant » that is implicit in the political institution. Thus it is necessary that the nation at the same time avoid exclusive nationalism and create a singular identity, that it be open to the admission of foreigners and capable of transmitting from one generation to the other a common membership in whose name individuals occasionally accept to sacrifice themselves.

This is a moderate position that acquires its meaning when compared with typical extreme alternatives within contemporary political philosophy. With such a paradoxical expression as « distinction without discrimination » Schnapper and other authors

want to avoid that the foreigner be considered as a potential enemy, impossible to assimilate, hence threatening « our » identity. This is often referred today to the way in which, in his *Concept of the political*, German jurist and political philosopher Carl Schmitt had defined the « essence » of the political as a capacity to distinguish friend and foe, in fact identifying them with the « us » and the « others », insiders and outsiders of the political community. But they also distance themselves from the neo-kantian cosmopolitical position that you find in Habermas, who would agree that « a democratic political community must of necessity distinguish between members and non-members », a capacity that « the all-inclusive community of the citizens of the world is lacking », but does not see any necessary link between a collectivity of citizens - what he calls a « logical site » - and the national form. Which explains why a post-national space, as formed by the present European Union, tending towards a federal constitution, more concretely approaches a « cosmopolitical consciousness of solidarity » in his eyes, because it would create « procedures which allow to establish common interests and make them universal ». So a communitarianism armed for competition and war and a humanitarian cosmopolitics seem to form the alternative in an historical antinomy whose conciliation or mediation the republican commonwealth or « civic nation » would constitute.

Before going into more detail, I would like to suggest that the actual positions might be in fact less simple. On the one hand, it seems that Carl Schmitt and his modern followers who have been deemed « pro-sovereignty » do not refer to the distinction between friend and foe in an indiscriminate manner. They essentially want to distinguish between a legitimate collective enemy or adversary who is also an equal (a *hostis* in the latin sense), with whom relations of forces and competition are set up following international law within a « division of the world », and an illegitimate interior enemy, who can be the subversive rebel, the bandit or the revolutionary, responsible for a civil war, who has to be eliminated at all costs in order to preserve the law and order. In the end what has to be avoided is the specter of the « total war », where interests and ideologies become mixed, as the history of the XXth century testifies. On his side, what Habermas wanted to

promote when he grounded the political institution on the democratic rule, i.e. the procedures of public debate, was not only a « logical site » where a juridical and moral ideal becomes abstractly realized, but a set of concrete practices oriented towards communication, the mediation of particular interests, the rise of a legitimacy and the formation of a « constitutional patriotism » (Verfassungspatriotismus) redoubling legal membership and giving civic consciousness its deeper roots within the world of social life (Lebenswelt). But it is true that, for him, however democratic and committed to universalistic values a nation can be today, it has become an obstacle rather than a means towards such an end. The framework for the institution of Verfassungspatriotismus should be, by definition, as large as possible, it should come as close as possible to « the normative model of a community from which nobody can be excluded », i.e. humankind. Which confirms that the « site » where a « civic nation » or a republican « nation of citizens » could be located between the communitarian and cosmopolitic extremes, can be only very paradoxical. How could a membership which institutes loyalty or identification to the nation through the historical representation of the universal not be stamped with very deep antinomies?

I would like now to insist on the acute character of the tension between inclusionary and exclusionary aspects of the modern nation, not in spite of but because of its universalistic values. I want to insist on the fact that the contradiction between exclusive identification and the « political » form of universal citizenship does not diminish, but becomes exacerbated in the case of the national social state. To this end I will make a schematic use of the distinction between extensive and intensive aspects of universalism that are precisely typical of the western nation state.

It was undoubtedly a decisive moment in the historical progress of universality. Because the secular institution of a national citizenship, or, as Gramsci called it, a « national popular » citizenship in the framework of the bourgeois nation state after the chain of revolutions of the classical age, from Netherlands to England to America to France etc., has formulated political universality more effectively than in any previous form, by liberating it from cosmic and theological classifications and

hierarchies, the intrinsic contradictions of universality could also become displayed in a more complete manner. Let me quickly indicate some of their typical developments.

A first important aspect has to do with the historical relationship between the development of the nation-state and colonization. Since the so-called « discovery » of America, there has existed a material correlation between the development of the nation form, which triumphed over other political forms such as the city-state or the empire as a typically « bourgeois » form of instituting citizenship, and the dominant position which would be nations occupied in the world-economy and the world-system. The juridical and political framework of the nation-states, particularly their conception of sovereignty, which allowed them to compete as rival powers with a specific territory, population, currency, idiom, sometimes also religion, trying to establish or transform a balance of power, was a counterpart to the distribution of the world among the European, later « Northern » powers, what Carl Schmitt called a « nomos of the Earth ». This is why I sometimes ventured to say that the entire historical trajectory of the modern nation has been circumscribed by the successive episodes of colonization and decolonization.

What particularly interests us here, however, is the transformation that was induced by these circumstances in the very formulation of universalism : starting with a religious discourse of the christianization of the world, it became secularized as the enlightened discourse which gave the European nations individually and collectively the mission of bringing their universalistic idea of Man, Freedom, the State, Culture, etc. to the rest of Humankind. This is what I call the extensive side of Universalism, whose « assimilationist » orientation bears a relationship with imperialism in the broad sense that is hardly deniable. We know that the idea of this « mission » was completely interiorized by the European, later Western, nations themselves, where it became an essential part of the representation that individuals acting as merchants, ingeneers, soldiers, intellectuals, etc. acquired of their formation, their public activities, their contribution to the development of a common or unified world - in short what we might call the first steps of globalization.

But we have to understand also that this association of the two movements of cultural assimilation and political subjection could only grow into an acute contradiction. The colonized populations were at the same time incorporated into the dominant nationalities and excluded from the basic civic rights which the public right identified with national citizenship. In a country like France and many others the way typically « national » and « republican » institutions such as the public school system would organize their canon, their selective methods, their localization and accessibility, became the heart of the contradiction over more than a century.

However this brings us to another aspect of universality which I think is much more determining, which I call the intensive aspect. At the core of the representations of the Universal that provided the nations-states with their self-consciousness, their discourse, their capacity to rule the world, and later on allowed the nation-form to become generalized through the movement of « national » liberation and decolonization and the demand for « national » sovereignty expressed by the « new nations », what you find is not a specific or particularistic cultural model that had been abusively extended. It is much more a universalistic idea of the human rights that are conferred upon any group or individual by their belonging to the Human species, even if this universality is interpreted within a given juridical and political code. In other places I associated that universalistic and also emancipatory element with the claim or proposition of « equal liberty » that can be read in the Declarations and the Constitutional acts whereby the democratic institution of universal suffrage and representative government was conquered in the framework of the nation-state. This is the basic content of the identification of society, people and nation everywhere. Which means that, wherever the historical conditions are given, every human potentially has the quality of a citizen. « Intensive universalism » has to do with the elimination of authoritarian coercion and generic discriminations as political conditions of ruling.

Would this actually mean that the construction of modern nation-states resulted in a suppression of all exclusions from citizenship ? We cannot deny that such an emancipatory tendency has existed : it was associated with a movement of generalization of the Human

rights and their transformation into rights of the citizen that you can observe all along the history of democratic nations - a tautology admittedly, in this sense that nations were democratic precisely inasmuch as they carried this movement further. But we also know that emancipations had to be imposed through the difficult collective struggles of all the categories that had been, precisely, discriminated and subjected historically. Above all, and this is where things become at the same time more complicated and more challenging, we know that obstacles to emancipation could become formulated in the very language of the universal, the language of the « rights of man and the citizen ». This seems to be not only a « perverse effect » of so-called abstract universalism inherent in the notion of a unity of the Human species, but an actual contradiction of its political implementation : Humans are supposed to be treated as free and autonomous citizens because they are naturally « equal » and as equals because they are all free, but this principle also has the practical result that actual exclusions from active citizenship, or from the participation in the constituency, can be interpreted and legitimized as exclusions from the Human norm itself. You have that in a mild form, meant to be provisional, in the case of « minor » children, or in a murderous form in the case of « races » deemed « inferior ».

More precisely, if Humans and Citizens are potentially identified, a universal right of access to politics is open to human individuals, but this also implies that foreigners who are alien to the city or the community no longer have their rights defended as humans, unless they can be represented by another sovereign state with an equivalent power. This is a consequence of the modern definition of the nation which can have, and indeed never ceased to have tragic consequences, as Hannah Arendt has shown notably in the second part, « Imperialism », of her *Origins of totalitarianism*. It also leads to considering nationals who for various reasons are considered incapable of sharing active citizenship, such as in different periods of time women, minor children, sick or criminal individuals, as humans who are generically defective or lacking certain essential characteristics of humanity. In a more theoretical manner, you can say that basic « anthropological differences », such as differences among genders and sexualities, between the normal and the pathological, or differences between cultures and

with regard to cultural skills, are systematically interpreted as inequalities, and affect the constitution of citizenship. Which explains why, throughout its history, the sovereign nation along with its key institutions in charge of the « administration of the universal » went along with a vast system of social exclusions, which resulted from the normalization and socialization of anthropological differences.

But we must admit that in modern states the question of exclusion has acquired yet another dimension. This - again an acute contradiction - came from the fact that in many « advanced » nations citizenship had been progressively transformed into a social citizenship or a citizenship with a social dimension, to borrow from celebrated analyses developed by the British sociologist T.H. Marshall after the 2nd World War when the main European countries in the West created the institutions of the so-called « welfare state » or « social state ». A number of protections against natural and social risks, and a recognition of individual and collective material rights, most of which were directly or indirectly, that is politically, associated with a generalization and a public recognition of wage labor as a basic form of social individuality or social « property » (an expression from Robert Castel), were incorporated into the definition of citizenship itself, with more or less precise constitutional formulation. As this model became progressively universalized, at least as an ideal type of the « developed » form of state, it modified the tenor of national membership, but it also provided the nation with new possibilities to overcome its internal crises and regulate its conflicts. Without a specific dimension of economic and social democracy, even if limited, including rights of access to public resources and public services, and in fact inseparable from a set of political practices of conflict and contract, the representation of a « community of the citizens » could not have been preserved, just as the social conflicts themselves (the class struggles, as old Marxists would say) could not receive a constitutional solution.

But what unavoidably arises out of these transformation is the fact that citizenship becomes loaded with a « substantial » content, which appears as the « common good » of the nationals qua workers and the workers qua nationals (or restores the old notion

of the « common good » on the background of an at least partial equivalence between working activity and civic participation). This is what I have tentatively called a transition from a purely « national » state to a « national and social » state (neither purely « liberal » nor « socialist » nor « national-socialist »). It considerably increased the tension between the logic of universality and the internal exclusions which form but its reverse side.

Having in mind mainly the situation of immigrant laborers in the Western European countries, I would say that they illustrate the contradiction in an acute and particularly clear manner. Since, as laborers, they must enjoy some of the rights that are attached to professional activities and recognition, they must have a share in what Castel calls « social property », therefore also acquire a specific dignity. But all these rights are in fact associated with an « affiliation » to the historical and social group that is the nation, which appears as a condition for enjoying collective solidarity. In their case this is never considered fully normal or acquired for ever. So they find themselves at the very place where contradictory movements of inclusion and exclusion meet and violently collide.

If I had time for that, I would now try and show, as I did in other occasions, how this question of the rights or the citizenship of immigrants and particularly immigrant labor force, has become a trial or a crucial experiment for the meaning of the notion of a community of the citizens. In philosophical terms, we might say that it gave a concrete figure to the element of negativity that was involved in the institution of that community. On one side, we face a gigantic denegation of the very notion of community, where the State and the institution of citizenship become contradictory. This is not only the case at a general or abstract level, because the juridical and moral principles, the equalitarian ideals of the republican state are only realized in a very imperfect manner, it is a question of situations where the institution turns against its own principles, where anti-democratic and specifically violent practices surface in the very heart of the legal State, once again blurring the famous distinction between normality and the « state of exception ». The repressed side of the Rechtsstaat or « rule of law » comes to the fore in the practices of expulsion, ghettoization, illegal exploitation, institutional racism, etc., creating a situation that is

profoundly unstable by its very nature. It can become intolerable both for the victims and for other parts of the official constituency, who precisely for that reason feel the necessity to rethink the conditions and contents of citizenship.

As I argued in other places, this has been particularly the case in the framework of the « European construction » for some 15 years now, because that construction, while it progressively gave a legal and political, perhaps even cultural meaning, to the notion of a common « European » citizenship, at the same time added a new more general and more effective discrimination for large categories of foreign but also permanent residents in Europe, by excluding them both from the integration into the new emerging political entity and from the traditional status of foreigners, thus creating progressively what I dared to label a « European apartheid », and making it the reverse or dark side of the citizen's community (remember here that the immigrants and also asylum seekers from the East or the South are precisely called in the European jargon « extra-communitarians »). I think that this has a profoundly delegitimizing effect on democratic institutions, in the very moment in which it is claimed that new advances in democracy are being made through the supranational institution. Which testifies for a simultaneous crisis of the national and the post-national...

This is precisely the reason why I think it necessary, also at a philosophical level, to discuss afresh the speculative concept of a « community », its relationship with the idea of the political, the historical and logical correlation between community and citizenship and, so to speak, their order of dependency.

I certainly don't want to set up here a full discussion of what a « community » is or is supposed to be, notably in the political realm where we find it associated with such generic notions as « city », « people », « nation », etc. We know that philosophy and political sociology always associated this question with a set of massive antinomies, opposing « natural » to « artificial », « equalitarian » to « hierarchical », « contractual » to « organic » or « holistic » communities. I want rather to take a short cut, and refer to some

recent philosophical discussions of the essence of community, particularly in the post-structuralist tradition, that seem to me to have challenged in a significant manner the apparently natural idea of a distinction between the « interior » and the « exterior » of the community. As we have seen, such a distinction is central to the conservative representation of the sovereign nation as it is exemplified by the Schmittian discourse. But it is no less central in the classical republican or neo-republican discourse, where it leads to interesting paradoxes when it comes to asserting the differences between nationalism and patriotism, or defining the universalistic content of the nation-form. In the end I would maintain that it is basic also in the cosmopolitan tradition that runs from Kant to Habermas. This will lead me, in an admittedly very hypothetical way, to explore the intellectual ways of a reversal of the relationship between citizenship and community, and speak of a process of construction of the new transnational dimensions of citizenship or the new rights of the (new) citizens without a pre-given or pre-existing community.

As is probably well known, poststructuralist discourses, however questionable the name can appear, and whatever the very different relations they have to the philosophical legacies of Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Heidegger, etc., share a common critique of the primacy of unity over multiplicities, differences and conflicts, that seem precisely to belong essentially to the representation of the common and the community. Or to put it in more abstract terms, a critique of the procedures which tend to internalize unity and externalize or repress conflict, difference and multiplicity in order to make it possible for individuals or consciousnesses to recognize their common commitment. From a political point of view, I think that their interest comes from the fact that they help us trying to understand how it could be possible, through a mutation of our thought, to at the same time think of difference and sharing, of permanent conflict and public interest...

This is probably not a question that can be solved only at a logical level, particularly because the notion of citizenship itself has a long history with some important continuities, but also decisive breaks or recastings, where it became reestablished within completely new social frameworks on new theoretical foundations. But I

would also contend that, while never forgetting the specificity of the historical conditions, which make it impossible to purely speak of an « essence » of the citizen, the speculative dimensions are in fact unavoidable. We believe to know what it means to speak of « community », that is, we associate with that word some representations and injunctions, but we are mainly driven in this respect by dominant ideas which are also to a large extent ideas of domination.

As for the historical forms of citizenship, I have to be more than quick, because this is a matter for a whole year's study, not for a single lecture. What I would like to argue, much in the spirit of Max Weber's way of associating the institution of the political power with specific forms of Herrschaft or « domination » (indeed I think that these are but two correlative sides of the same problem), is that each great historical form of citizenship - inasmuch as it is a state form - implies certain forms of exclusion that are specific, but also for that very same reason poses a practical problem of emancipation and launches a dialectic of conflict and transgression of the limits, which indeed always concerned at the same time the concrete social and political realm and the most speculative concepts, such as the One and the Multiple, Difference and Hierarchy, Equality and Identity, etc.

We know that the Greek « city » or polis, from which our notion of the political derived its name (whereas citizenship comes from the partially equivalent latin civitas) , apart from its non-ethnic notion of the foreigner/enemy, basically « excluded » from citizenship by including, or more physically by enclosing part of the population within a « domestic » space where, as opposed to the public space of the marketplace, the assembly and the tribunal, there reigned not equality of access and freedom of speech but uneven and onesided command over the logos, which was supposed to define the « political animal ». We also know that the modern democratic nation, as it emerged from the « age of revolutions », to borrow Hobsbawm's title, whose foundation coincided with a secular definition of Human Rights in terms of abstract or individual civic capacity, basically excluded groups and

their members by de-naturing those whom she deemed incapable of autonomous judgment: that is, as I recalled a moment ago, by inventing « anthropological alterity », whose major criteria were sex, race, morality, physical and mental health and age, intelligence or better said intellectuality.

And now we discover that the contemporary social state, which on obvious empirical reasons I prefer to call a national (and) social state, has come to exclude a part of those who had been reintegrated into the dignity of citizenship as a consequence of social movements, either by precipitating them into the ghettolike and insecure condition of an « underclass », or into the circularity of crime and punishment on a mass scale, or on ethnic and national grounds, or through a combination of all this. But this is no longer taking place in the limited space of a city's territory, or even a national territory with relatively closed cultural, administrative and political boundaries: this is taking place in an increasingly global space, which allows virtually unlimited competition between capitals, techniques, ideas or images, and also workforce either manual or intellectual. A space that has no longer really an interior and an exterior, or better said, where officially external boundaries in fact play the role of « internal » means of controlling the populations and hierarchizing them within what we may perhaps be tempted to call « the Empire », as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have suggested in their recent book. Within such a space, which emerges from the uneven development and the crisis of the national social state, we are no longer able to simply reproduce a generic discourse on membership, belonging and not belonging to a « community of the citizens ». We want to address the uncertainties that affect the very idea of a political institution by rethinking the antinomic character of the community itself.

I said that I would refer to some recent elaborations. I am particularly thinking in this occasion of the works of Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Rancière. I could indeed have mentioned other names of no lesser interest, not all of them French... What I find important in Nancy's *La communauté désoeuvrée* (translated as : *Unoperative community*) which draws a good deal of its inspiration from a reading of Bataille, took the form initially of a discussion with Maurice Blanchot, and has now influenced a

current for which the Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito has renewed the category of the « Unpolitical », is precisely his use of the paradoxical formula : « a community without a community » (which can also make us think of Derrida's formulation : « a messianic without messianism »). What he wants to name is a modality of sharing the political space that is neither reducible to individualism nor to communitarianism, which indeed transgresses this opposition. His contention is that not only « exclusion » produces social alienation, but also inclusion itself, because it becomes unseparable from a fetichized representation of the Unity, the One or the Common (the « We » or the « Us », if I may say, as in « we, the people of... » when you hear it as a collective and not a distributive), which is both essentialist and normative. The extreme form, which you would observe in totalitarian regimes, would be indeed the representation of a mystical love uniting the members of the community. But any political community would be in fact haunted by that possibility or ideal horizon. Therefore it is always absolutely decisive to sharply distinguish between communication and communion when you speak of community. And it would prove necessary to retrieve an idea that was latent in Marx's concept of communism, albeit it was historically reversed into its exact opposite: that of a distribution or sharing not so much of riches or wealth (remember the significant plurivocity of the term commonwealth in the English republican tradition) than of the « voices » themselves. An idea which can be understood both in terms of a right to speak and to be heard, and in terms of the absolute singularity of each voice.

This becomes completed in Nancy's presentation by the idea of exposition or exposure, again in a double sense : implying that singular individuals who are thrown into the common space are at the same time exposed to the light, becoming visible or sensible for one another (instead of « invisible » physically and socially, as in most forms of exclusion), and exposed to danger, to the risk of their mutual conflict, which is also the possibility of losing their artificial protections. This idea indeed has many similarities with the notion of the reciprocal « visibility » of the citizens on the public sphere that we find at the core of Hannah Arendt's reconstruction of the political. But it is pushed beyond its initial cadre. Therefore it could help us understanding why, in Nancy's

eyes, the moment of truth for any community arises when it comes to deciding if and how to admit to the sharing of the public space what is most exterior, most foreign to it, or is perceived as such.

A somewhat different idea, but equally radical, can be found in Jacques Rancière's book *La mésentente* (transl. as *The Misunderstanding*) and related essays, where he questions the very idea of distribution and share of a common wealth or good as the foundation of the political phenomenon. Playing with the two words that in our languages are derived from the ancient *politeia*, namely politics and police (which initially meant a prudent administration by the rational ruler of the interests of the ruled), Rancière would explain that the political participation can never be a status, it can not be granted by the ruler or by the law, but it has to be conquered - as it was already the case in Greek democratic cities as testified by the very meaning of the word *demos* - in a movement of collective emancipation that shakes or destroys the established forms of recognition, distribution, the « accounting » and « counting » of the « parts » in the city dominated by the « haves », in order for the political (or, as I would say myself, citizenship) to emerge afresh as the share of the shareless people, the « have nots ». Therefore politics, as different from « police », is never a research of the good distribution, the perfect balance of revenues and powers among those who already share in the common good, it is not even - perhaps less than anything - the compensatory distribution of subsidies or charities to the oppressed groups, it must be the full recognition of equal rights to precisely those who were initially excluded from the community.

This is how the notion of emancipation has been progressively advancing towards universality, via the cases of poors, slaves or servants, women, racial and religious minorities, and the story is not finished... It is not even unquestionably irreversible. Political participation in this sense has to be imposed for the sake of the political itself. This indeed reminds us of the revolutionary tradition, in its most general sense, but Rancière prefers to insist on a more general term, which perhaps has a preliminary value, namely the idea of subjectivation, because it puts the emphasis on the invention of rules rather than their application (this is clearly different from Habermas, for example), and because it draws a line

of demarcation between the representation of consensus as a political value and the importance of conflict.

If « consensus » is the goal politics is aiming at, or if the value of the community comes from its capacity to obtain a consensus among people who have diverging interests, not only the conflict is crushed, but normative criteria for the common « identity » are necessary, which as a consequence exclude or disenfranchise the aliens, the others.

I want to keep some crucial elements from these radical critiques or deconstructions of the legal or mythical notions of community, which have become practically inseparable from the national values. What I think is important is not an abstract declaration that we are already living in a post-national era, I am not so sure of that, even if I think that the deep crisis of national values and institutions has endangered the preservation of democracy. What I think crucial is the acceptance of the negative element or « negativity » as opposed to the reign of normality and normalization. When I tentatively spoke of a « citizenship without a preexisting community », I precisely had in mind that acceptance. I wanted to stress the fact that there are circumstances in which the established representations of common identities, whether natural or spiritual or historical, need to be questioned. On this condition, and on this condition alone, some physical and symbolic borderlines can be removed, so that « absent » or « invisible » (or only too visible, i.e. stigmatized) people be recognized as active or full citizens, but also many others who have become citizens in a mere formal sense, can retrieve an active participation in politics.

Indeed, if politics is about equality, it cannot be the action of either the included or the excluded, which is precisely the formula of exclusion and inequality : it has to be their common practice. But this can happen only if it becomes fully recognized that the practical confrontation with social and political exclusion : exclusion from power, exclusion from communication, exclusion from representation, exclusion from decision-making, is and remains the foundational moment of citizenship.

In this sense the political community can not be given in advance, it cannot be (or not merely) a « tradition » or a « legacy » (even if there are ideas, principles and institutions inherited from the past which deserve continuation), because the constitution of the community is a movement that keeps transgressing its own limits, or pushing them beyond any institutional pattern of inclusion and exclusion, or distribution of mutually exclusive identities.

Notes

1) « Une citoyenneté sans communauté ? », exposé présenté le 2 mars 2000 à la journée d'études « Le bien commun », USTL-Culture, Université des Sciences et Technologies de Lille, placée sous la direction de Jean-François Rey.

2) Editions Gallimard.