

IN SEARCH OF UNIVERSALITY FOR POLITICS OF EMANCIPATION:  
THINKING WITH ÉTIENNE BALIBAR AND ALAIN BADIOU

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
OF  
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

BÜŞRA ÖZCAN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE  
IN  
THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION

SEPTEMBER 2024



Approval of the thesis:

**IN SEARCH OF UNIVERSALITY FOR POLITICS OF EMANCIPATION:  
THINKING WITH ÉTIENNE BALIBAR AND ALAIN BADIOU**

submitted by **BÜŞRA ÖZCAN** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Science in Political Science and Public Administration, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Sadettin KİRAZCI  
Dean  
Graduate School of Social Sciences

---

Prof. Dr. Kürşad ERTUĞRUL  
Head of Department  
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

---

Assist. Prof. Dr. Reşide Ömür BİRLER  
Supervisor  
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

---

**Examining Committee Members:**

Assoc. Prof. Fahriye ÖZÇOBAN ÜSTÜNER (Head of the Examining Committee)  
Middle East Technical University  
Department Of Political Science And Public Administration

---

Assist. Prof. Dr. Reşide Ömür BİRLER (Advisor)  
Middle East Technical University  
Department Of Political Science And Public Administration

---

Assoc. Prof. Çetin TÜRKYILMAZ  
Hacettepe University  
Department of Philosophy

---





**I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.**

**Name, Last Name:** Būşra ÖZCAN

**Signature:**

## ABSTRACT

### IN SEARCH OF UNIVERSALITY FOR POLITICS OF EMANCIPATION: THINKING WITH ÉTIENNE BALIBAR AND ALAIN BADIOU

ÖZCAN, Büşra

M.A., The Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Reşide Ömür BİRLER

September 2024, 108 pages

In this thesis, it is intended to discuss the comprehension of universality in relation to differences in the writings of Étienne Balibar and Alain Badiou. In light of the theoretico-political requisite to reflect upon universality in the face of both historical and present necessities, the crisis embedded in the birth of bourgeois universality is discussed at the beginning. Based on Karl Marx's interpretation regarding the doublet of man and citizen in *On the Jewish Question*, it is aimed to examine how the relation between these figures is conceived in the works of Balibar and Badiou, and how these respective configurations affected their discussion with regard to universality. With reference to the difficulties in articulating differences with universality, this thesis attempts to investigate the meaning and significance of anthropological differences in Balibar's thought and Badiou's interpretation of the figure of Paul and his indifferent position vis-à-vis differences. This thesis concludes with a discussion about the theoretical and political divisions between Balibar's antinomic and Badiou's evental conceptions of universality, as well as the probable affinities between them in the context of the contentious relationship between universality and differences.

**Keywords:** Universality, Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen,  
Anthropological Difference, Saint Paul



## ÖZ

### ÖZGÜRLEŞTİRİCİ SİYASET İÇİN EVRENSELLİĞİN İZİNDE: ÉTIENNE BALIBAR VE ALAIN BADIOU İLE BİRLİKTE DÜŞÜNMEK

ÖZCAN, Büşra

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

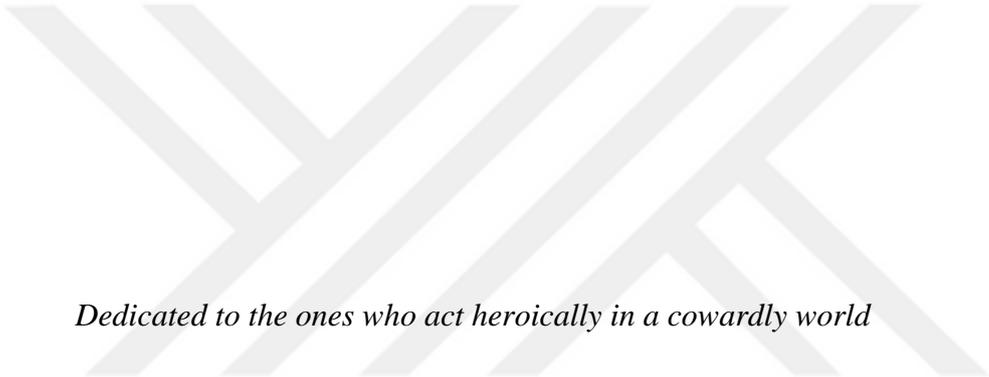
Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Reşide Ömür BİRLER

Eylül 2024, 108 sayfa

Bu çalışmada Étienne Balibar ve Alain Badiou'nun metinlerindeki evrensellik kavrayışının farklarla ilişkisinin tartışılması planlanmıştır. Tarihsel ve güncel gereklilikler karşısında evrensellik üzerine düşünmenin teorik ve politik gerekliliği ışığında, başlangıçta burjuva evrenselliğinin doğumuna içkin kriz tartışılmıştır. Karl Marx'ın *Yahudi Sorunu Üzerine* metnindeki insan ve yurttaş ikiliğine dair yorumu temel alınarak bu iki figür arasındaki ilişkinin Balibar ve Badiou'nun eserlerinde nasıl ele alındığının ve bu farklı ele alış biçimlerinin söz konusu düşünürlerin evrenselliğe dair tartışmalarını nasıl etkilediğinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Çalışma, evrensellekle farkları eklemlemenin güçlüklerine işaret ederek, Balibar'ın düşüncesinde antropolojik farkların konum ve önemini ve Badiou'nun Paul figürüne ve bu figürün farklar karşısındaki konumuna dair yorumunu incelemeyi denemektedir. Söz konusu çalışma hem Balibar'ın antinomik ve Badiou'nun olaysal evrensellik kavrayışı arasındaki teorik ve politik ayrımlara hem de iki düşünür arasında evrenselliğin farklarla çatışmalı ilişkisi bağlamında kurulabilecek olası yakınlıklara dair bir tartışmayla sonlanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Evrensellik, İnsan ve Yurttaş Hakları Bildirgesi, Antropolojik Fark, Aziz Pavlus





*Dedicated to the ones who act heroically in a cowardly world*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout the writing of this thesis, I had the chance to immerse myself in texts that I had always wanted to engage with, but I also learned a great deal about how to follow a path persistently and endure the hardships that such persistence brings along. During this period of learning, sometimes I got lost and miswandered, and it took time to see the light again. From the beginning to the end, my dear advisor, Asst. Prof. Ömür Birler, was always open to thinking together and lending her support. In addition to her careful reading of every sentence, constructive criticism, and insights, she also provided encouraging support throughout the whole process. I would like to thank the jury members, dear Assoc. Prof. Fahriye Üstüner and Assoc. Prof. Çetin Türkyılmaz, for their eye-opening comments and encouragement to develop this project. It was very instructive and valuable having the chance to discuss both the general perspective and the details of this work with them.

I am feeling grateful for the adorable constellation of my friends who have surrounded me with warmth, care, and a calm love throughout my life. Expressing my gratitude to all my beloved ones here is such an arduous task that every sentence will fall short of my truest feelings. In the first place, I want to thank Tarık for all the years that we have grown up together. Throughout the decade of our friendship, they have been the heart of this heartless world. Thank you for every conversation, every journey, every small moment we shared. Thank you for courageously welcoming all the beauty and terror that life brought us. Thank you, Bektaş, for always being as close as a phone, and for all the memories of the troubles we got into together that brought us up all of a sudden. Thank you, Ezgi Bilge and Dilge, for your endless heartiness and our beautiful Kurtuluş days. Thank you, Sesil, for reading the earliest draft of this project in detail and providing me with attentive suggestions.

My friends and I grew up together amidst the busy and noisy atmosphere of never-ending meetings and discussions. Due to the unprecedented pace at which we found ourselves at that time, I realized I would never have the chance to express my

gratitude to them. Thanks to all my comrades and friends for their ruthlessly critical and untameable souls. I learned much from their perseverance, dedication, and courage to swim against the current. Most of the themes and ideas embedded in this thesis had been discussed with them for many years. In spite of the heartbreaking disagreements between some of us, I am and always will be thankful to them.

Being lost in a new city, trying to figure out where you are, and finding yourself was both frightening and exciting. Some of my fears came true during these years, but most of the time, I felt blissful thanks to the lovesome encounters this city gave me. First, I want to thank the courageous and cheerful feminists of Ankara for all the nights and streets we shared together. Thank you, Nazlıcan, for your joyousness, or “kız neşesi” as you love to be called, you generously shared with me. Thank you, Duygu, my sista, for your endless encouragement that always raises me from the storm of anxieties, for all the hugs and the free-associative talks in which our personal stories, desires, dreams, and theoretical interests are intertwined with each other. Thank you, Çağlar, for our inspiring conversations, which we always regretted not recording afterwards, and for reading this thesis and making thoughtful suggestions. Thank you, Özgürcan, for always being there and always being a thoughtful friend. Thank you, Pınar, for the mesmerizing care you show all the creatures, and for being right beside me over the years. Thank you, Halil, for the immense love and friendship we nurtured, for all the inside jokes we shared, for having created together a soulful and joyful world out of “the randomness of an encounter”.

And thank you, mom, for those beautiful good morning messages you never missed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
ÖZ .....	vi
DEDICATION .....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	xi
CHAPTERS	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1. Motivation of the Study .....	1
1.2. Problematic of the Study .....	5
1.3. Outline of the Study .....	13
2. EMANCIPATION IN THE GRIP OF THE PSEUDO UNIVERSALITY AND THE APPEAL OF PARTICULARISM .....	15
2.1. The Universality of the <i>Declaration</i> .....	16
2.2. The Critique of the Pseudo Universality .....	17
2.2.1. The Unevenness of the <i>Declaration</i> .....	17
2.2.2. The Marxist Critique of the Declaration: “ <i>A Life in Heaven and a Life                 on Earth</i> ” .....	20
2.3. The Appeal of Particularism or the Search for a Renewed Articulation of Universality .....	27
2.3.1. The Appeal of Particularism .....	28
2.3.2. The Search for a New Articulation .....	31
2.4. Conclusion .....	36
3. BALIBAR’S ANTINOMIC UNIVERSALITY: FROM THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES TO THE PROPOSITION OF EQUALIBERTY .....	37
3.1. Anthropological Differences Between Suppression and Uneasiness .....	38
3.1.1. The Double Bind .....	43

3.2. Balibar’s Critique of Marx, or Man=Citizen.....	46
3.2.1. Man/Citizen or Man=Citizen .....	48
3.3. Balibar’s Antinomies.....	53
3.4. Conclusion.....	56
4. BADIOU’S EVENTAL UNIVERSALITY .....	57
4.1. Badiou: An Abstract Communist? .....	58
4.1.1. Paul’s Indifference: “ <i>There is neither Jew nor Gentile</i> ” .....	60
4.1.2. The Criticism of Paul’s Indifference .....	63
4.1.3. Thinking Difference in Badiou with Svenungsson .....	70
4.2. Rights Between Human Animality and Immortality.....	75
4.2.1. Evental Universality or “the Thief in the Night” .....	78
4.3. Conclusion.....	82
5. CONCLUSION: THINKING UNIVERSALITY WITH BALIBAR AND BADIOU.....	83
REFERENCES.....	91
APPENDICES	
A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET.....	98
B. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU .....	108

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. Michelet writes: ‘Woman, the relative being ...’ And Benda is most positive in his *Rapport d’Uriel*: ‘The body of man makes sense in itself quite apart from that of woman, whereas the latter seems wanting in significance by itself ... Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man.’”

*The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir

#### 1.1. Motivation of the Study

Ever since I identified myself as a socialist and a feminist (I do not remember which identification preceded the other), an obstinate tension haunted me. Whenever a discussion about imposing a quota for women to ensure gender equality at all levels in a mixed-gender organization was made, I always felt the pressure of this tension. On the one hand, in the words of Ranci re (2009: 17), I was well aware of the “privileged starting points”. In fact, it was impossible to be unaware of them as a woman. On the other hand, I regarded the quota policy as uncomfortable in the context of a social and political organization where every member of it is deemed equal. The same discomfort was revealed in the debate of giving extra time for speech to women and queer people in the meetings. Despite my awareness that gender inequalities result not just in legal, economic, or representational inequalities, but also in corporeal inequalities like the systematic reduction and appropriation of women’s and queer people’s abilities to effectively relate to their bodies and environments, I never feel at ease in the face of such ‘encouraging’ policies. In fact, what I called a tension was the name of a split between the wish to be a *universal* subject and the predicament to be a *particularized* subject — a particularity that I was imposed upon due to being born as a woman. In a word, the need to make sense

of this personal (and inevitably collective) experience that I shared and the difficulty in articulating the gender and sexual difference with the idea of universal emancipation became the source of motivation for this study.

Of course, there are infinite ways in which such tension can be framed and discussed. There is, indeed, an extensive literature, especially within feminist and decolonial theories, that addresses the dilemmas of universality. This implies that thinking on the idea of universality amounts to thinking on a much-criticized concept. However, I think that abandoning the idea of universal emancipation would be synonymous with universal catastrophe in the face of the current state of the world, where ethical, political, and ecological deadlocks are intertwined and intensified. For this reason, I decided to place this notion at the core of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is possible to mention the significant hardships in the way of the comprehension of emancipation as a universal project, from the fragmentation of the places of struggles to the varied character of contradictions (class, racial, gender and sexual, and others) in capitalist societies.

There are various inspiring attempts to explore the idea of universal emancipation and, in this direction, to analyze the articulation and interrelationship of different currents and actors of the politics of emancipation. For instance, I think it is reasonable to argue that both the proposals such as using the notion of labor as a mediator to articulate the categories of race, class, and gender (Goikoetxea 2024: 305), the significant literature within feminist theory on intersectionality, and in addition, the retheorization of universality as a basis for such an articulation, would all be seen as different responses to the above-mentioned hardships.

On the flipside, the ‘class versus identity’ debate can also be seen as a defensive reflection of the unsuccess in terms of proposing a substantial theoretico-political perspective to associate the struggles that take place both inside and outside of the sites of production and related and intertwined with different contradictions. As the theoretical and political crises that arise from the varied character of the contradictions do not arrive at an adequate solution, the ineffective dichotomies that are in need of a novel form of articulation are brought back out as pseudo-remedies.

One example of this compulsion is observable in the distinction made between “economic demands” or “material interests” and “other kinds of demands” (Haider 2018, as cited in Roberts 2019). For instance, a recent book, *Identity Trumps Socialism*, argues that identity politics can be seen as a tactic of the “neoliberal centrists” that aim at weakening left politics and diverting the attention of political practice away from the inequalities in wealth distribution (Léger 2023: 1-2). However, throughout this project, I intend to discuss the notion of identity and identity-based politics not as a diversion, but as a problematic that should be framed and subjected to specific theoretical operations of distinction in a nuanced way to think about the probable interrelationships between different actors involved in the politics of emancipation. Within this scope, I will examine the contentious place of differences in the idea of universality in this thesis, starting with the constitution of its bourgeois form, and discuss how Étienne Balibar and Alain Badiou address this contentious relation in the following chapters.<sup>1</sup>

For sure, there have been vital theoretical conceptualizations and politico-strategic attempts to either contemplate or come up with a solution to the burning questions and hardships that I briefly mentioned. In this study, I aspire to focus on the literature about the place of the notion of universality within the horizon of emancipatory politics specifically. There are two leading motives behind this choice: first, I am of the opinion that this notion has the potential to provide an emancipatory horizon in consequence of a theoretical reconstruction. This is the affirmative aspect of the motivation for this study. The second motive is related to examining the negative construction of the notion, which will be concretized throughout the criticism of the bourgeois form of universality. In this way, I intend to think of an emancipatory idea of universality that contains the critique of its pseudo forms within itself.

There are certain perspectives that regard a specific focus on this notion as of little use. For example, according to Bruno Bosteels (2023: 59), although universalism came into prominence by becoming the subject of vivid theoretical polemics at the

---

<sup>1</sup> Identity will be referred to in this thesis as a construction that is formed in consequence of a specific fixation on a difference. Difference, however, will be interpreted as a realm of multiple possibilities, of which fixation is one of them.

beginning of the millennium, these discussions remained ineffective in the face of the return of fascism or quasi-fascism to the political scene around the world. In Bosteels' thought, this ineffectiveness is directly related to the notion of universality itself. For him (2023: 59-60), whether universality is put on the stage as "a substitute formation hiding the more urgent need for a radical militant project" or not is debatable. In this context, Bosteels points at socialism and/or communism as the concretization of the probable names of such a radical project.

It is more likely, however, that the failure that Bosteels draws attention to is due to the infantile character of the attempt to construct an emancipatory notion of universality, rather than its hegemony. It seems to me that Bosteels' argument misses one crucial point. While the debate on the notion of universality within the left and progressive academic circles that became inflamed in the late 1990s and the early 2000s aimed at confronting the question of multiculturalism, the present context in which a heightened debate concerning the resurgence of the far-right or fascist(ic) political figures, parties, and movements is initiated, necessitates a novel discussion about universality. When Balibar (2020b: 85) explained the mode of interrogation he used to examine a problematic, he referred to one of Althusser's dictums: "Everything depends on the conditions." Based on this valuable dictum, I think that universality also must be discussed in light of our current circumstances. In addition, the argument that the emphasis placed on universalism is a "substitute" for "socialism and communism" is devoid of both due diligence and overlooks the historical context within which this notion came to the fore.

As mentioned above, there is a world of inspirational theoretical attempts to seek out an adequate conceptual perspective to associate the multivarious struggles situated both inside and outside the sites of production and rooted in the varied contradictions of capitalist societies. Such attempts, either interweaving Marxism with the theory of intersectionality (Bohrer 2019), formulating "an expanded conception of capitalism" (Fraser 2022), or putting forward a "social republican" interpretation of Marx (Roberts 2019), work on a similar (though not identical) theoretical project. This study will center upon the notion of universality, which is a part of the same theoretico-political ambition. In the next section, I will present the problematic of the

study by placing it both into the current conjuncture and the relevant literature of universality and explain the reasons for choosing to focus on the conceptualizations of Badiou and Balibar in particular.

## **1.2. Problematic of the Study**

In *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, Badiou (2003: 10) asserts that the prominent character of that period is the superimposition of these two processes: the “abstract homogenization” of capital and the “fragmentation into closed identities”. Far from being in a state of conflict, Badiou (2003: 13) elucidates, homogenization and fragmentation are “in a relation of reciprocal maintenance and mirroring”. For Badiou (2003: 9), Le Pen could be regarded as one of the concretizations of the latter process in the context of France, where the universal character of law is displaced by appealing to the affirmation of Frenchness vis-à-vis the socio-political “threat” of the non-French populations — a process defined as the “Petainization” of the State” referring the Vichy France.

However, as expected, the question of identity is not merely discussed within the framework of nationalism. For Badiou, all identitarian perspectives, regardless of their content, are subject to criticism due to their unrelatedness to the truth procedures. In this framework, identitarianism is discussed with respect to its harmony with the functioning and necessities of capital. However, the gist of the argument is not the criticism directed at the identity and recognition claims. Instead, the crucial point is the distinction made between the “identitarian” and “universalizable” singularities (Badiou 2003: 11). At this point, the figure of Paul is called to the theoretical scene, for whom “[t]here is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female” (Badiou 2003: 9).

To put forth the reason for its importance and introduce the figure of Paul into this framework, it is indispensable to elucidate the fundamental characteristics and fault lines of the contemporary theoretico-political scene. In a sense, there is a certain relation between the proliferation of popular struggles and the “politicization of the

social”.<sup>2</sup> That being said, identifying a structural interaction (if not determination) neither settles the conflict concerning their theoretical and political position in the face of the dominant conceptual frameworks and organizational forms nor equips such struggles directly with an emancipatory perspective. Hence, there is a vast literature that directs criticism at their organizational characteristics (such as horizontalism) or their incapacity to propose an affirmative project that transcends both ideational and practical limits of discontinuous waves of protest. For this project, a limited aspect of this literature that focuses on the criticism of ‘identity politics’ will be referred to here.

Such criticism has existed for quite a while and is rather well-known. For one of the recent representatives of this position, Asad Haider (2018: 20-21), differentiating the forms that identity politics has taken in particular historical periods is necessary for a nuanced critique. For Haider, the perspective of Combahee River Collective<sup>3</sup>, which is referred as the forerunner of an identitarian political approach due to their pioneering document (titled “A Black Feminist Statement” and published in 1977) cannot be analyzed on the same plane with the contemporary advocates of identity politics. The fundamental difference between the two forms is rooted in the deep-seated transformation observable in their approach to politics. While for the former actors, such as Combahee River Collective, the main aim was to insert both knowledge and practice related to the forms of oppression, which were overlooked at that time into the dominant composition of socialism, an individualist demand of recognition substituted this aim for the latter actors. The change from a collectivist method to an individualist one is highlighted as an important phenomenon. Another transformation is also emphasized, namely, a change in the comprehension of the subject of politics. According to Haider (2018: 24), the relation of the present form

---

<sup>2</sup> Here I am referring to Poulantzas’s description of the “politicization of the social”, which amounts to the concretization of “the expansion of the state”, which is indeed described as a historical tendency, in the contemporary form of the capitalist state. Poulantzas (2017) depicts the concrete form of expansion as follows: “We are seeing a complete reshuffling of public and private spaces, as well as a considerable modification of the articulation of the political and the socio-economic (which poses the question, among others, about a new articulation of their respective organizations, parties/unions).”

<sup>3</sup> Founded by Black feminist lesbian socialists, CRC existed between the mid-70s and the early 80s. Its most well-known contribution is its document, titled “Combahee River Collective Statement”, which is regarded as rather important because it is known as the first text to use the notion of identity politics.

of identity politics vis-à-vis the political subject is one of reduction and fixation. In this context, the subject is approached as the “starting point” and locked onto “who you [they] are”.

Another contemporary theoretician, Todd McGowan (2020: 149-150), who criticizes the identitarian approach to politics, also discusses this instance of reduction and fixation. For McGowan, the equalization of one’s identity to their “political position” amounts to the limitation of the subject to “what one already is”. At that point, the author distinguishes between “commitment” and “identity”. Commitment requires an outwardness — an object situated outside and beyond the subject. The notion of identity, however, does not require openness or an object by which the subjects should temper themselves. Due to this difference, McGowan asserts, in the absence of commitment, “who we are” and “what we are”, in other words, “singularity” and “identity” overlap as if these are the same.

The critique of identity politics I presented so far comes from the standpoint of emancipatory politics. In this context, the purpose of the attempt to reach a renewed concept of universality is rather apparent. Through such an examination, what is aimed is to think of a novel notion that is reconfigured in consideration of the different forms of oppression and domination besides the capitalist exploitation, and the interrelation of these forms.

However, there is another rather emergent reason to revitalize the concept of universality, that is, the “conservative opponents of identity politics”, as in the words of McGowan (2020: 177-178). This opposition reflects the right-wing attitude to criticize social movements that challenge existing power structures by labeling them as identitarian while at the same time situating oneself on the universalist side:

Rather than look for new articulations of universality that the term identity politics obfuscates, critics use this term to wage their own identitarian war against universality. They fight against universality under the cover of fighting against identity politics, which is what an analysis of the attacks reveals. They present themselves as the champions of the universal by attacking identity politics, but they do this, like Jordan Peterson, for the sake

of identity politics. The privileged vehicle for contemporary identity politics is, ironically, the criticism of identity politics (McGowan 2020: 180).

According to the author, a notable concretization of conservative opposition is observable within the context of the slogan “All Lives Matter”. The criticisms that are directed to the forms of struggles that fight back against racist and/or patriarchal social structures as being divisive or a deviation from the fundamental agenda of anti-capitalism (which is conceived as “a purely “economic” program” (Haider 2018: 21)) is of long standing. However, for me, the pseudo-universalist challenge that McGowan calls attention is a lot more insidious than the accusation of divisionism because of the veil of its commonsensicalness. As clarified in a luminous manner, the reason for this insidiousness is that the rhetoric of “All”, which is put up against “Black”, is depicted as an opposition between universalism and identitarianism. McGowan (2020: 186) asserts that while the discourse of “All” presents itself as the universalist mode of politics par excellence, it proposes a politics of inclusionism; however, as a result of its ability to point out “what remains absent”, the discourse of “Black” corresponds to a universalist practice of politics, even though it appears to be particularist on the surface. In this context, it is impossible not to recall the uproar in Turkey related to the slogan “We are all Hrant, we are all Armenians”, which was put into words after the assassination of Hrant Dink on January 19, 2007. Although due to the unbridled nationalist atmosphere, even the conservative attempt of pseudo-universalist discourse was rather impotent, it was possible to witness the call of “We are all human” as a more universalist ‘correction’ of the original slogan.

The second contemporary occasion that stimulates the attempt to revitalize universality is developed from a theoretico-political current that has risen within feminism in the form of trans-exclusionism. As came to the fore through incidents such as the opposition to legal regulations on behalf of trans people, such as the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) or the statements of far-famed representatives like J. K. Rowling in recent years, the trans-exclusionary feminist position, widely abbreviated as “TERF(ism)”, is based upon the exclusion of trans subjects from the realm of feminism. Identified as “postfascist feminism” by giving reference to its affinities with gender-critical movements (Bassi & LaFleur 2022: 317), the fundamental characteristic of this emergent current is “the renaturalization of the

heteronormative sexual order” through the postulation of the “authentic”, “real” or “true womanhood” as the principal subject of feminism (Bassi & LaFleur 2022: 312-319).

It is apparent that from the perspective of trans-exclusionary feminism, the subject of feminism is a pre-defined figure whose boundaries are formed through biological determinants. Due to this pre-definedness, the inclusion of trans subjects as part and parcel of feminism is a deviation from the political perspective of TERF(ism). Then, where does the concept of universality come into view in this discussion? Here, I will follow Alenka Zupančič’s footsteps (and caution) concerning the uselessness of the aim “to fill in the identity of “woman” with the right content” and her call to attach importance to “its [the category of “woman”] form itself, its negativity, as its only positive content” (Hamza & Ruda 2019: 448). Based on these, I argue that the attempt to comprehend feminism on an identitarian basis serves as a function in the conservatization of its political horizon and potential for the very reason that there is a foundation that is in need of protection, instead of a logic that operates in the direction of the emancipation of ‘all’ who are exposed to the violence of the cisheteropatriarchal structures of power.

I argue that just as the present form of identity politics can function in a mode to passivize the politics of emancipation, as Haider states, the conservative opposition can be seen as the mirror image of the same effort of passivization that is actualized by the actors that oppose any movements of emancipation. In this context, it is indispensable to put forward the characteristics of a universalist form of politics that builds a barrier to such conservative theoretico-political deviations.

Then, two concurrent phenomena set the ground for a reevaluation of the notion of universality: 1) The threat of the weakening of an emancipatory horizon in the face of the dominance of the identitarian form of politics, and hence, the need to constitute a universalist perspective within which the relations between different forms of oppression, domination, and exploitation are articulated instead of being overlooked, 2) The threat of the enfeeblement of emancipatory politics by way of the critique of identitarianism of a pseudo-universalist rhetoric, and hence, the need to

differentiate both the identitarian and emancipatory forms of struggles and the pseudo and emancipatory forms of universality.

Of course, the attempt at rethinking universality is neither a novel nor an authentic initiative. Up until now, a great deal of theoreticians, from Judith Butler to Ernesto Laclau and others, plumbed new depths of this notion and placed their efforts in a theoretical-political context in which the question of how to articulate the notion of difference as part of an emancipatory project became a vital one. For example, Jodi Dean (1996: 10), in one of her earliest works, *Solidarity of Strangers*, described the intent of the book as to achieve a conceptualization of “a universalism of difference” and offered the Habermasian-infused notion of “reflective solidarity” as the basis of such a perspective of universalism. Dean’s (1996: 5) major concern about the identitarian mode of politics was the loss of a perspective that takes into consideration the “internal differences” as a result of the presupposition as if there is an inevitable overlap between a political position and an identity.

This concern is observable in other theoretical attempts, such as Massimiliano Tomba’s *Insurgent Universality*. Throughout this book, Tomba (2019: 6-7) proposes a counter-narrative to the idea of universal history by examining the past to unearth its multilayered character and suppressed potentialities embedded within these layers. In doing so, Tomba does not abandon himself to the temptation to reduce a concept like Europe or a momentous historical episode like the Haitian Revolution to one single fixed meaning. Instead, the pluralization of the concepts or histories is meticulously pursued within the book’s scope to present the internal differences that have a fundamental role in either politicization or depoliticization of them. In addition to its theoretical precision, the importance of Tomba’s work within the literature of universality is its effort to illustrate in diverse historical backgrounds, such as the French Revolution, Paris Commune, or Zapatista insurgencies, the enrichment of a politics of universalization with the help of the legacies of cross-temporal and geographical ideas, institutions and imaginations.

Nick Nesbitt has made another significant contribution to the initiative of rethinking universality in his book *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the*

*Radical Enlightenment*. Nesbitt's book, which centers upon the Haitian Revolution, discusses the importance of its subject matter through the foregrounding of the universalization of emancipation as a consequence of this world-historical event (Nesbitt 2008: 1). For the author of this book, like Tomba, the main purpose of his project is not reducible to the examination of a distant historical episode per se. What is intended through such an examination is to shed light on the lessons of this insurgent period of history, which is composed of the "images of an unfulfilled promise of social justice and human dignity". In addition, it is aimed to present the central inference of the Haitian Revolution, the assertion of universalization "to move beyond regimes of difference", that has strong repercussions for our contemporary era (Nesbitt 2008: 6).

In addition to Tomba and Nesbitt's endeavor to trace the concretization(s) of an insurgent form of universality, there are other attempts of rearticulation that adopt a psychoanalytical perspective. One of the recent examples of such efforts, Ilan Kapoor and Zahi Zalloua's *Universal Politics*, puts forward the articulation of a "negative universality" based on a Žižekian framework. For Kapoor and Zalloua (2022: 1-16), the distinctive character of their articulation is its constitution through a reference to the notion of antagonism, in their words, "a shared deadlock", instead of a "positive element" such as identities. Within this framework, the cement of different actors is not a predefined idea(1), on the contrary, this kind of conceptualization is criticized as being abstract and regarded as being doomed to ineffectuality. It is obvious that the attempt of these authors is on the same wavelength with this project due to their insistence to uncouple the assumed immediateness between a political position and an identity.

Kapoor and Zalloua are not alone in their effort to constitute a psychoanalytical-based articulation of the concept. It is appropriate to subsume McGowan's above-mentioned book, *Universality and Identity Politics*, under this part. In effect, his point of view coincides with Kapoor and Zalloua's thesis to a considerable extent. Just like the authors of *Universal Politics*, McGowan (2020: 6) also proposes an idea of universality that is not constituted with reference to the potential of a social whole which is "all-inclusive". Along the same line with the notion of "negative

universality”, the significance of universality is not rooted in its realizability. On the contrary, it is situated “in the internal limit that every society confronts”, it is manifested as the “lack” or “absence” of all societal formations.

*The Reasoning of Unreason*, which has the subtitle *Universalism, Capitalism and Disenlightenment*, is another representative of the same sort of conceptualization. In this book, John Roberts aims to reveal the distinctive characteristics of a notion of universality that is compatible with the politics of emancipation. For Roberts (2018: 3-5), just like McGowan and Kapoor and Zalloua, this distinctiveness is rooted in the attribute of being a “negative ‘empty place’” and its structuration through the reference to an antagonism, instead of a positive content. When comprehended as such, it is possible to present its difference from “invariant and pre-established universalisms”. For the author, the crucial point is to apprehend the mechanisms that allow “the reasoning of unreason”, which is defined as the “conservative radical particularisms”, which present itself as if it is the personification of what is universal.

Thus far, I presented the attempts that were either based on the exposition of the failure of the abstract form of universality through the examination of concrete historical scenes or the rearticulation of the notion of universality with reference to the notions of negativity and antagonism. Well, it is time to think about the reason to focus on the thoughts of Alain Badiou and Étienne Balibar to contemplate upon the notion of universality and its relation to the notion and question of difference(s).

After reading the transcription of one of Balibar’s (2020b) speeches, which is part of a dialogue between these prominent philosophers on the notion of universality, I was inspired to explore the relationship between their approaches regarding this notion as well as the place of difference(s) in their comprehension of universality. Based on Balibar’s comment on this notion, I imagined how Badiou would pursue this dialogue and what their points of convergence and division would be. How would their approaches to the questions of politics and subject(ivation) affect their perspectives with regard to the notion of universality? What would be the differences and similarities between their conceptions of difference and the relation of such conceptions to universality? What would be the contribution of such an attempt of

co-reading in helping us to make sense of our present time? It was such questions that initiated this project and served as its starting point.

### **1.3. Outline of the Study**

As the thesis opens, we are brought back to 1789 and the historical document of the *Declaration* to discuss the constitution of the modern form of universality and its discontents. In this part, both the overt and the latent mechanisms of non-universalization are discussed with reference to both the conditions of slaves, women, and Jews, as well as the Marx-Bauer debate. After the presentation of these mechanisms, I attempt to introduce the objections directed towards the early Marx from a decolonial point of view and consider whether periodization is possible within his thought or not, focusing on the impact of the Paris Commune and his correspondence with the Russian revolutionaries on the subject of the fate of peasant communes.

In the succeeding chapter, Balibar's conceptualization of the anthropological differences is discussed to present a framework of articulation to approach the relation between the overt exclusion of particular subjects from the realm of the *Declaration* and Marx's examination of the partial character of the emancipation that the *Declaration* proposes. In what follows, I discuss how Balibar and Marx interpret this historical document almost oppositely and how such an opposition leads Balibar to propose the idea of equaliberty and an antinomic conception of universality.

The third chapter of the thesis addresses Badiou's conception of universality, which is discussed around the figure of Paul, and the place of difference(s) in this comprehension. Here, I interpret Badiou's fundamental work on universality by discussing the criticisms which problematize the place of the notion of difference in his theoretical framework. In response to these criticisms, I emphasize that Badiou's discussion of the traversal of differences is far from pointing to a dismissive theoretical position, and in fact it is open to an encounter with Balibar's discussion of anthropological differences. After a lengthy discussion about the notion of difference, I discuss the reformulation of the disjunction of man and citizen in

Badiou's thought with a reference to the constitutive concepts of his political anthropology. At last, the evental character of the conception of universality that is proposed in *Saint Paul* is discussed around the notions of grace, faith, and love.

In the conclusion part, I intend to present how the interpretation of the relationship between the figures of man and citizen have transformed in the thoughts of Marx, Balibar, and Badiou. As Marx discusses the pseudo character of the idea of their superimposition, Balibar emphasizes the constitutiveness of the identification of these figures, which is at the heart of his proposition of equaliberty. At last, Badiou's differentiation of the "human animal" from the "immortal being" amounts to a return to Marx's thesis of disjunction. Nevertheless, it is seen that Marx and Badiou have diverged in their interpretations of history, political change and subject that lead to a fork in their paths. These different comprehensions of man and citizen bring along different articulations of the idea of universality in each philosopher's thought. For all the theoretical and political divergences, I think it is inspirational to think of the potential intersections that might open new possibilities for the politics of emancipation, while the search for universality continues.

## CHAPTER 2

### EMANCIPATION IN THE GRIP OF THE PSEUDO UNIVERSALITY AND THE APPEAL OF PARTICULARISM

The relationship between universal and particular is neither static nor ahistorical. Their relationship, instead, is open to substantial transformations over time. According to Ernesto Laclau (1992: 84-86), three historical forms of this relationship can be identified:

In the first historical form, which is intrinsic to the “classical ancient philosophy”, the relation of universal and particular is conceived as a sharp contrast. Within this framework, while the definitive characteristic of universal is that it is decipherable with the help of reason, particular is defined as an element of deformation.

In the second historical form, which is identified with Christianity, the relation of universal and particular is not decipherable through reason. Instead, their relationship is constituted via a mediator, i.e., God, that sets the ground for the “incarnation”. In this context, universal comes to life in the guise of particular, however, their connection is not subject to a formal explanation.

The last historical form arises from the criticism of the former conceptualization. The cryptical relationship between universal and particular that is peculiar to Christianity is redefined through the incorporation of reason into the framework. In this perspective, which is defined as “universalistic rationalism”, both God and the idea of incarnation are abolished because universal does not incarnate within particular; instead, their relationship is comprehended in the form of a superimposition. However, Laclau claims, the idea of superimposition, which is present in the European form of universality and Marxism, cannot overcome the return of either

particular or incarnation due to the unease of the social elements that are excluded from the procedure of universalization.

In a sense, the history of the last historical form of this relationship is the history of its contestation. From the outset, the constitution of this relationship in the form of a superimposition is opposed either with the intent of being incorporated into or reconstituting the established framework. In the following section, I will examine the process within which a pseudo form of universality is constituted in the context of the French Revolution by examining the *Declaration*, which made a constitutive and permanent impact on modern politics. At this point, it is crucial to underscore that the constitutive character of the *Declaration* in the creation of bourgeois universality, the tensions that is embedded the process by which it was crafted, as well as the paradoxes that its universal character has brought along from the very beginning in relation to the realms and subjects that are excluded from its body, are the main reasons for our attention. Afterward, I will present the appeal of particularism as a dominant form of the critique of pseudo-universality and discuss its restrictiveness. A renewed idea of universality that can rescue emancipation from the grip that holds it tight will be discussed at the end of the chapter with a reference to Marx's method and his critics.

### **2.1. The Universality of the *Declaration***

Before the interpretation of the *Declaration*, it is elucidative to delve into the process in which this historical document was produced. As Keith Michael Baker (1994: 160-171) discusses in detail, the *Declaration's* birth was far from being painless. On the contrary, it was the product of a period ridden with the conflicts of the actors that advocated diverse political aims and philosophical approaches with heart and soul. According to Baker's interpretation, there was more than one (and clashing) motivation to argue for the need for a declarative document. For example, while the supporters of a "constitutionalist" position such as Jean-Joseph Mounier both comprehended and justified the creation of a declaration as a framework for the functioning of the separation of powers, the "political rationalists" -who objected to the idea of the separation of powers- such as Condorcet regarded such a document as

a preventer that can hinder the transgression of political power thanks to its precise and rational structure. However, the available justifications were not limited to these two positions. There was a third point of view, that of Sieyès', who stood out for using a declaration in an attempt to "the assertion of a revolutionary political will" (Baker 1994: 169). In addition to the conflict between the constitutionalists and the political rationalists about the constitution of political power (either in a separate or a unitary form), there was another clash between Sieyès and political rationalists on whether using a declaration for a break or a continuation of the existing structure of power. Despite their dissidences, all of these actors considered the creation of a declaration essential with different impetuses and purposes.

However, there were other actors who completely opposed the idea of a declaration during the same period. One remarkable commonality of these actors was their uneasiness regarding the abstract character of such a document. For them, the exposition of abstract ideals could play a disruptive role within the context of France at that time. In addition to their "impractical" character, these ideals could potentially be subjected to "a terrifying extension". It was possible that such a document could "take on a life of its own", according to Gérard de Lally-Tollendal, one of the defenders of this position (Baker 1994: 174-179). Since its creation, it is undeniable that the *Declaration* has taken on a life of its own, as its opponents have feared and predicted. In the following section, the conundrums of the *Declaration* will be presented to examine the (in)effectualness of its assertion of universalism.

## **2.2. The Critique of the Pseudo Universality**

### **2.2.1. The Unevenness of the *Declaration***

One of the essential forms of the scrutinization of the *Declaration's* claim of universalism is to examine the boundaries of its subject. Who are the dwellers of the realm that the *Declaration* opens up and who are the outsiders of this realm, being left out with a brush fence? According to Shanti M. Singham (1994: 114-115), who explored the unevenness of this historical document in detail, Jews, Blacks, and women were excluded from the promised realm of the *Declaration* initially.

Singham's account reveals that the unevenness in question does not result from a single motive. Instead, on each occasion, it is possible to speak of a different reason for the exclusion that is overdetermined through the existing balances of power:

The fate of the Jews was linked to the attack on the Catholic church. Intent on passing the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and afraid of having it denounced as a Jewish and atheist plot against the Church, the Jansenist abbe Henri Gregoire, a clerical deputy from Nancy and one of the Jews' most active defenders, remained silent on Jewish emancipation during his presidency of the National Assembly in the winter of 1790-91. The freedom of Black slaves in Saint Domingue was linked to the economic importance of West Indian sugar to the French economy as well as to the international implications of Anglo-French rivalry in the New World, inducing Robespierre to argue for the preservation of slavery in 1791. The fortunes of women were tied to their important interventions on behalf of the Revolution as well as to their unfortunate coalitions with losing parties, like the Girondins and the Enrages in 1793 (Singham 1994: 115).

In addition to overtly excluding this trio of social identities from the realm of citizenship, even the actors that aimed to set the stage for their inclusion could have used differentialist strategies. In compliance with such strategies, the class and/or status differences that are an intrinsic part of each identity were used against the most unprivileged sections of them. For instance, before the alliance of Mulattoes<sup>4</sup> and slaves for collective emancipation, there were abolitionist attempts to justify the acquirement of Mulattoes alone to the citizenship status based on their economic activities (slave ownership) or their attribute of being "mixed blood", which was deemed convertible to white as generations evolve (Singham 1994: 132).

In Singham's (1994: 152-153) perspective, it is possible to detect a common aspect about all these experiences of exclusion beyond the conjunctural (either stems from economic and/or political balances of power) rationales, that is, "intolerance" and "great antipathy towards difference of any sort". For Singham, one fundamental obstacle that was on the revolutionaries' road to articulate these above-mentioned differences was the approach that regarded the existence of any difference synonymous with the perpetuation of the "hierarchies and privileges" that are

---

<sup>4</sup> Within the context of slavery, "mulattoe" was a term used to describe people who have a black and a white parent, as well as whose parents are both mulattoes.

inherent to the Old Regime (1994: 152) or the “result of the chaotic and anarchical organization of feudal society” (1994: 128). As a consequence, in addition to the conjecture-based justifications of exclusion, there emerged a hiatus between the abstractness of the *Declaration* and its backstage.

In fact, it could be argued that this hiatus was subjected to criticism since the *Declaration* was aiming to be transcended in a practical manner from the outset. For Nick Nesbitt (2009: 99), the Haitian Revolution deserves to be defined as the concretization of this process of transcendence. This unprecedented historical episode amounts to both “radicalization” and “development” of the ideas embedded in the two prominent revolutions of the 18th century. According to him, neither the American nor the French Revolution had the will to abolish the institution of slavery until the unbearable heaviness of the revolt of Haitian slaves. Up until that time, the colonial question had been treated with paternalism at best or completely disregarded at worst. In a sense, the unevenness of the *Declaration* hinges upon these two determinants: first, the imperative of the continuation of colonial rule, and second, the perception that the Haitians were child-like subjects who did not have the capacity to be free. As Laurent Dubois (2004: 84-85) narrates, even the committee charged by the National Assembly to pursue a debate on the colonies prohibited the expression of the incompatibility of colonialism with the (pseudo) universalism of the Revolution by emphasizing the importance of the newly formed nation:

The colonies would be governed by particular laws developed by their populations, laws unconstrained by the constitution of France or, presumably, the Declaration of the Rights of Man. These provisions granted planters the freedom they had long demanded to govern their colonies internally. But the decree also protected the interests of French merchants. There were to be “no innovations” in “any of the branches of commerce between France and the colonies,” the law promised. (...) The law was rushed to a vote with no discussion, and it passed. The colonies were safe from the dangers of universalism. Indeed, the decree took aim at the abolitionists by declaring that “all those who worked to incite uprisings against the planters will be declared guilty of crimes against the nation.” (Dubois 2004: 84-85)

Thanks to the detailed archival examinations, the unevenness and the pseudo, therefore, the incomplete character of the *Declaration*, and in general the French

Revolution, had been brought to light. A substantial literature has been composed about this subject within the feminist and decolonial theories. However, neither the purpose nor the scope of this project is appropriate for presenting such a vast literature. Therefore, I will address the subject of unevenness and pseudo universalism in terms of the tension between the desire to be included in the existing framework of power relations and the aspiration to reconstruct the framework in which these relations are embedded.

### **2.2.2. The Marxist Critique of the Declaration: “*A Life in Heaven and a Life on Earth*”**

The pseudo character of the *Declaration* is not discussed for its explicit exclusionism alone. In fact, in one of the most influential interpretations of the *Declaration*, *On the Jewish Question*, Karl Marx, in his discussion with Bruno Bauer, seeks to reveal the “partial” and “devious” character of political emancipation to distinguish it from human emancipation, which is defined as the fullest and unmediated form of emancipation. For Marx, however, the partialness of this form of emancipation is not rooted in its inclination to exclude. Rather, even if there is no such overt exclusionism as contextualized in Singham’s narrative, due to the mediated character of the political emancipation, the outcome is the emergence of “a double life, a life in heaven and a life on earth”, which amounts to a division between communal and private aspects of a subject’s life. For Marx (1992: 217-220), the United States is a perfect example of such partialness due to the co-existence of the indifference of the state vis-à-vis religion and the preservation of the religiousness of the citizens.

The origin of the debate, and hence Marx’s distinction between political and human emancipation, is Bauer’s thesis about the potentialities of the political emancipation of the Jews. According to Marx (1992: 214-216), the political emancipation of the Jews, in Bauer’s view, could result from the “emancipation from religion” of both the Jews and the state. However, Marx considers Bauer’s theses as a superimposition of the different forms of emancipation and condemns him for not comprehending the “state as such” in his examination. What is the characteristic of the “state as such”? To explain its attributes, Marx repeatedly invokes dualisms because the state as such,

the political state in its fullest form, is a scene within the “double life” of the subject, who is sentenced to such a fissure, which exists alongside another scene, the civil society. Within this framework, the state appears in a universal form. However, Marx (1992: 219-220) asserts that its universalness is pseudo because the “species life” of the subject is not safe from the effects of the material constituents of this life.

Therefore, the pseudo character of the emancipation that is secured through the political state is rooted in the gap between the “civil society” where the forcefulness of this materialness is experienced, and the “political community” where the subject is constituted as “the imaginary member of a fictitious sovereignty”. For Marx (1992: 220-221), after all, the promise of emancipation that stems from the universalism of the political state is pseudo because it is not “practical” and thus is in opposition to a genuine emancipation. Hence, this is the point where Marx and Bauer differ. What is theorized in Marx’s (1992: 226) framework as the truth of the political emancipation, i.e., its partial and limited character, is discussed as the outcome of the partial and limited character of the subject(s) of emancipation, i.e., Jews, in Bauer’s perspective.

Herein, I will take a detour for a moment to reflect on the repercussions of the above-mentioned gap in the context of the discussions about the form of political representation throughout the French Revolution. All the differences of opinion that rose to the surface in that period can be conceived as the concretization of the tensions resulting from the antinomies of political emancipation. According to Joan Wallach Scott (2005: 12-13), the constitutive characteristics of the idea of representation throughout the French Revolution are: 1) the abstraction of the citizen in relation to the notion of individual who is one and the same with other citizens and 2) the abstraction of the nation as a unified totality. As a result of the decisiveness of these abstractions, the components of the double life that Marx points to (the fissure between the species-life and the material life), are conceived in a relation of antagonism.

In Scott’s opinion, the antagonization of the abstract and the concrete sparked a debate about the boundaries between the political and the non-political. As presented in Laclau’s interpretation, universalization was conceived as a superimposition;

however, there was a conflict between this process of universalization and the social elements that were excluded from it:

The debate focuses on the status of difference: the concrete mode, sometimes referred to as *representativity*, calls for differences to be made visible, so that rights can literally be seen to be exercised by all. The abstract mode, sometimes referred to as *representation*, requires the assimilation of those previously excluded on account of their differences; only when the excluded are included (shorn of their attributes, visible only as individuals) will true universalism (the absence of difference, the end of conflict) prevail. In the course of French history, representativity has put constant pressure on representation, exposing its limits and its insufficiencies and forcing compromises in practice that have been deemed impossible in principle (Scott 2005: 17-18).

Another context that concretizes the pseudo character of the political emancipation and the gap pointed out above in the framework of representation is the clash between the mediated and the unmediated interpretations of the idea and practice of representation. One of the crucial outcomes of the constitution of the abstractions that Scott identified is the dissolution of the forms of political organizations that pose an obstacle to these abstractions in a coercive manner. One example of these forced implementations is the limitation of the political activities of the assemblies that were active at the beginning of the French Revolution. The driving force behind this decision is the intention to replace the mode of representation that these assemblies adopt -to act as the spokesperson of a specific political organization- with a newer mode of representation based upon the representative force of an individual of the whole nation. The proponents of an assemblist approach in the context of representation argued against the emergent mode of representation that derived its justification from the abstraction of the sovereign nation and defined the novel paradigm as a probable form of “legislative tyranny” (Tomba 2019: 52-55). The common point between the critics of the comprehension of the nation as a whole (and the refusal of the perspective of representation that accompanies such a comprehension) and Marx’s criticism about the pseudo character of the political emancipation is that in both of these accounts, the non-revolutionized character of the social vis-à-vis the political is opposed. Therefore, as Tomba emphasizes, the conflict between these diversified approaches cannot be interpreted as a difference of opinion for the possibilities of direct representation (Tomba 2019: 55).

After this essential parenthesis about the issue of representation, I will focus on another aspect of Marx's criticism in *On the Jewish Question*. Marx's (1992: 227) second criticism concerns a detailed examination of Bauer's idea that a Jew cannot have the rights of man due to her/his "restrictive" and "particular nature". For Marx, Bauer's argument about the dissonance between being a Jew and having the rights of man is unfounded, just like his argument about the conditions of political emancipation. Marx refers to the *Declaration's* 1791 and 1793 versions to reveal that Bauer's considerations are groundless. As an example, Marx (1992: 228-230) examines how liberty is described in the *Declarations* of 1791 and 1793 as exercising freedom without harming others. In this context, it is asserted that Bauer's criticism towards the nature of Jews as an element of separation is unfounded since the description of liberty is based on "the separation of man from man" instead of their cooperation. Or, the concept of property in these documents is not communalistic, but rather relies on the fulfillment of the "self-interest" of individuals as closed entities. Following this train of thought, Marx argues that the rights of man, and the political emancipation in general are the embodiment of a restrictive emancipation par excellence. The hiatus between man and citizen lies at the core of the *Declaration's* restrictive nature.

For a clearer explanation of this hiatus, Marx rewinds the clock and jumps back to the scene of the "dissolution of the old society" in which both civil society, whose constituent element is the "unpolitical man", and the political state, whose constituent element is the citizen, emerged at the same time. Marx (1992: 231-233) asserts, however, that despite their simultaneous birth, man and citizen are not constituted equally; on the contrary, the latter is functionalized for the preservation and continuation of the former. Unlike citizen, the subject of civil society, that is, the "egoistic individual", is the personification of partialness, and its triumph over the citizen prepares the way for the limitations of political emancipation. Marx, therefore, suggests the inversion of the relationship between man and citizen to achieve human emancipation:

Only when real, individual man resumes the abstract citizen into himself and as an individual man has become a species-being in his empirical life, his

individual work and his individual relationships, only when man has recognized and organized his forces proper as social forces so that social force is no longer separated from him in the form of political force, only then will human emancipation be completed (Marx 1992: 234).

Hence, Marx's criticism differs from Bauer's in terms of both its addressee (or the object) and method. While Bauer directs his criticisms at the Jewish subject, Marx (1992: 236) searches out the "social element" that hinders the motion of emancipation and therefore, departs from Bauer's "theological" approach to the Jewish question. In a sense, Marx puts the debate into a recontextualization to assert a probable solution to the issue in question.

Marx's criticism of Bauer, of course, could be interpreted differently. For example, Tomba (2015: 164) draws attention to the dead spots of this criticism in his co-reading of Marx and Bauer. Despite Marx's accusation that Bauer does not examine the "state as such", he argues that, in fact, Bauer's perspective embodies an explanation of "the political-theological structure of the modern state". For the author, one of the most prominent aspects of Bauer's work is emphasizing the internal relation between religion and exclusion. In this approach, no religion can be constituted without excluding others. But Bauer's argument goes much deeper than this. As Tomba (2015: 162) emphasizes, Bauer adopts this point of view into the scene of the modern state and presents how it is structured through "the principle of exclusivity".

As it is well-known, Bauer asserts that the condition of emancipation for the Jews and whole societies is to leave religion aside (Marx 1992: 215). In Tomba's account, this insistence on giving up one's Jewishness could be interpreted as a critique of "the liberal idea of emancipation". According to Bauer, if the state does not exclude in an evident manner, it shows tolerance, which does not emancipate. For Tomba (2015: 167), Bauer's incisive interpretation of toleration contains within itself a novel idea of emancipation: "Bauer's universalism requires dis-identification instead of identity and dis-belonging instead of belonging". In other words, Bauer's proposal is not content with the limited form of emancipation that Marx attributes to him. Instead, Bauer attaches importance to "the process of emancipation" in discordance with Marx's interpretation.

The emphasis that Tomba laid on, i.e., Bauer's focus on the process, is the source of the difference between Bauer's and Marx's ideas of emancipation. The difference between their ideas could be pictured as different lights that, depending on their placement, illuminate different aspects of an object. In Tomba's (2015: 169) interpretation, Bauer's perspective of emancipation is describable first "as a practice" that comes into existence in the form of "dis-identification", which amounts to the inversion of the universalism that is embedded in the modern state, and second as self-referential due to the impossibility of emancipation through a representative. For this reason, I think, it is assertable that Bauer's approach implies a specific proposal of subjectivation (through dis-identification and dis-belonging), and thanks to this character, it sheds light on the agential and non-representational character of the "practical" emancipation, which contrasts with the form of emancipation that is put into practice through the representational framework of the modern state and its vision of universalism.

If Bauer's interpretation illuminates the subjective aspect of the issue of emancipation; how does Marx's interpretation illuminate its object, namely emancipation? In Tomba's interpretation, the examination of the "anthropological [...] dimension" of the "epochal break" (Tomba 2015: 170-171), i.e., the emergence of the egoistic man as the outcome of the non-revolutionized character of the civil society (Marx 1992: 234) is definable as one of the most significant aspects of *On the Jewish Question*. All in all, if the importance of Bauer's interpretation rests in its contribution to the agential dimension of the question at hand, the strength of Marx's contribution rests in the power of its structural examination of the concurrent birth of the subject of civil society and political state.

In brief, one of the most crucial aspects of Marx's critique of the notion of universal embedded in the political state is the criticism of the anthropological figure on which it rests. To transcend its partialness, Marx puts the idea of "generic essence" against this figure. According to Stathis Kouvélakis (2005: 709-710), as opposed to the abstractness of the citizen of the political state, Marx attempts to constitute a novel figure which is "reconstructed in the immanence of its mediations" through the notion of "generic essence" which implies an integrated envisioning of the subject

with a reference to the relations and practices of this subject. In a sense, the distinction between political emancipation and human emancipation is about the character of the mediation that traverses the subject. In the former context, the mediator is the political state, but in the latter context, the subject is mediated through the social relations in which s/he is embedded. Hence, Kouvélakis (2005: 714) claims that the aim to get free from the pseudo character of universality takes the form of ““disabstractification,” of the extension of the sphere of politics itself”.

In sum, Marx’s method that is practiced in *On the Jewish Question*, which could be described as exposing the pseudo character of the universality of political state by focusing not on its explicit practices of exclusionism but on the constitution of the realm within which the practices of inclusion and/or exclusion materialize, is in fact on the same page with Laclau’s above-mentioned critique of superimposition. The focus of Laclau’s critique is “the universalization of its [European culture] own particularism” (1992: 86) and this emphasis on the pseudo character of such an attempt at universalization bears a significant resemblance to Marx’s criticism. However, despite the elucidative contribution of this criticism to the debate on the character of universalism that was enacted with the *Declaration*, Marx had also been the target of criticisms in regard to the notion of universality due to the dead spots within his own theorizations:

From what we could call a peripheral or Third Worldist perspective, or a postcolonial one, Marx has been severely criticized, not without reason, for his occasional lapses into partially Eurocentric, evolutionist, stagist, or teleological thought, especially with regard to colonialism and the relations between the center and periphery of the new world-system. [...] The understandable and perhaps excusable but still real Eurocentrism of Marx and Engels (the latter of whom would even speak of “peoples without history,” in what is arguably a lapse into the worst kind of Hegelianism) has been seen to have seriously limited their analysis and critical knowledge of the complex realities of the non-European world. So, too, has their privileging of the proletariat (also understandable given the European situation, but not so easily applicable to the realities of Latin America, Africa, or Asia at the time) and even their internationalism (a product of their Eurocentrism and privileging of the proletariat) cast doubt on their ability to analyze the consequences of the colonization and “peripheralization” of much of the world that resulted from proto-bourgeois expansion and then fully bourgeois ascendancy beginning in the eighteenth century (Grüner 2020: 174).

There is a caveat at the center of such criticisms, whether from a decolonial or a feminist standpoint, regarding the problematic place or non-place of the notion of difference (in the first place, cultural, ethnic or gender and sexual differences) in Marx's thought. It is possible to argue that both the prominence that these critical perspectives gained as well as the collapse of the political projects that embodied universality paved the way for the strengthening of two opposing forms of the criticism of Marxism and the idea of universality in general. The appeal of particularism (which is in essence the overt rejection of or indifference to the idea of universality) is one form of these tendencies, while the other is a search to articulate the idea of universality with an inspiration from as well as through a critique of Marxism to transcend its dead spots regarding the notion of difference.

### **2.3. The Appeal of Particularism or the Search for a Renewed Articulation of Universality**

Although *On the Jewish Question* is one of the most solid references on the criticism of the political state, it is also interpreted as a perspective that sets the ground for a gradualist narration (in which political emancipation, even if partial, is a necessary phase).<sup>5</sup> In other words, Marx's argumentation seems to have the same fate as the subject of its criticism: On one hand, an important break, from another, a limited perspective.

According to Wendy Brown, the implicit gradualism in Marx's interpretation has its roots in a "progressive historiography", whose abandonment requires a significant theoretical and political reconstruction:

In this recasting, rights discourse appears in opposition to -rather than a stage in the progress toward- alternative modes of redressing social subjugation expressed as politicized identity. When "history" is no longer regarded as driven by structural contradictions and tethered to the telos of freedom, the delusion is no longer possible that "every emancipation is a restoration of the human world and of human relationships to man himself" (Brown 1995).

---

<sup>5</sup> For an illustration of the argument of gradualism, see Shoikhedbrod 2019: 64, "The decisive lesson of "*On the Jewish Question*," therefore, is that political emancipation represents a *necessary* condition for human emancipation, though not a *sufficient* one."

Brown (1995) turns to Foucault's conceptual repertoire to fill the void that the "progressive historiography" has left behind. Foucault's appearance in the theoretical scene results in a transformation in the comprehension of the notion of subject. Both whoness and whatness of the subject of emancipation are exposed to this transformation. Whoness is altered, in the sense that the structural relation between the subject's position within existing power relations and its emancipatory potential is ruptured. Whatness is altered, in the sense that the notion of the "subject position" is supplemented with the notion of "subject formation" due to the understanding of the subject not as an outcome but as an effect or production.

The abandonment of the "progressive historiography" which was implicit in Marx, or rather, the author of *On the Jewish Question*, i.e., the early Marx, leads to the rethinking of the notions of history and subject, as well as the notion of universality. The repercussions of this search will be discussed in the last part of this chapter. Before this scrutinization, however, I will examine the dominant form of the non-universalist stance of the current conjuncture in the next section. Although such a theoretical and political position does not target Marxism in particular and could be seen as an indirect objection to it, this particularist appeal will be discussed as a symptom of the weakening of the idea of universalism throughout this study.

### **2.3.1. The Appeal of Particularism**

According to Todd McGowan (2020: 5-6), one of the distinctive characteristics of the present situation is the discrediting of the idea of universality and universal emancipation in general. In McGowan's view, due to the ill-famed character of real socialism(s), the universalist appeal that it represented throughout the 20th century has faded out. However, the source of the problem was not situated in the idea itself; instead, it was located in its practitioners' actions, decisions, and implementations. The fundamental mistake, McGowan asserts, was that instead of being conceived as a "discovery", this idea was conceived as an "invention" within this period. What were the implications of this distinction? Unlike discovery, invention implied a disengagement with the past, and in addition, the idea of invention produced a phantasm about the creation of a complete universality. However, for the author, a

destitute idea of universality should have been put into the place of such a phantasma within which the possibility of a “fully realized and present” form of universality is presupposed.

What filled the void that was opened as a consequence of the weakening of the idea of universalism? Laclau (1992: 87-88) asserts that this void is filled with the idea of “pure particularism”. However, the particularist appeal is not immune to contradictions. First, Laclau claims that since the coexistence of various particularisms leads to conflict, it is inevitable that non-particularistic ideational frameworks will be used to ensure the regulation of the conflicts. And second, if a claim arises that does not relate to these particularities but rather to the overall social and political structures, the completeness of these identities breaks down. Therefore, “the universal is part of my identity insofar as I am penetrated by a constitutive lack - that is, insofar as my differential identity has failed in its process of constitution” (Laclau 1992: 89).

However, the particularistic appeal amounts, in essence, to the preference for identity (that is conceived without a constitutive lack) over singularity, according to McGowan (2020: 14-15). In his view, from Kant to the works of Simone de Beauvoir, Frantz Fanon, and others, the true spirit of emancipation is the abandonment of the identitarian investments and an appeal to universality, and not the other way around. With the idea of the moral law, Kant aims at decentering identity in favor of the autonomy of the subject, McGowan asserts:

We become autonomous, Kant believes, when we impose the universality of the moral law on ourselves. This is a violent, disruptive act. Without this encounter with universality, we remain trapped within what we are born into or what socially determines us. Unlike our particular identity, the universality of the moral law doesn't derive from natural or social factors. It is not the determination of the social order but the law that emerges out of the individual's alienation in language. The moral law is a moral law for speaking beings, and it alienates them from who they are. Its dictates do not take into account particular differences but instead enable the individual to distance itself from the trap of its identity (McGowan 2020: 12).

Consequently, law, through its universal character, creates a horizon that does not confine the subject into the realm of identity. According to him (McGowan 2020: 14-

15), singularity is the name and the result of the state of de-identification a subject achieves when s/he distances from the determinants that construct her/his identity, and universality is the condition that makes the act of de-identification possible. Another (and rather recent) exemplification of the same gesture of leaving the terrain of identity within which the subject is trapped for emancipation is concretized, the author claims, in Beauvoir's rejection of femininity as a basis to build the feminist politics upon. For Beauvoir, the singularity of the subject results from a dual rejection: Neither the pseudo-universalism of the dominant social structure, which, in fact, is rooted in the continuation of the patriarchal relations of power, nor the trap of femininity (McGowan 2020: 18). Both McGowan's and Laclau's theorizations share a common line: the demise of the idea of universality results in an appeal to particularism that locks the subject into her/his identity and closes the door that opens up to singularity.

What is the fundamental consequence of the appeal of particularism regarding the horizon of emancipation? In a word, Haider (2018: 12) sums it up as "neutralization". From the well-known and pioneer initiative of the Combahee River Collective (CRC) to its functionalization in the hands of political figures such as Hillary Clinton, the concept of identity politics has undergone a structural transformation in his view. The participants of the CRC hoped to integrate the critical perspectives of black struggle and feminism into socialism and used the notion of identity politics to clarify their efforts. However, Haider (2018: 21-22) claims, as soon as such initiatives cease to be connected to mass initiatives and begin to individualize, identity politics becomes a tool that neutralizes the present power relations. Neither abandoning CRC's initial effort to articulate the relations between different forms of domination and exploitation nor establishing "a gradient of identity politics" provide a solution. If so, what would be a proper answer to the deadlock that stalemated the idea of emancipation? For Haider, the hint is contained in the idea of universality, which will be discussed in the section that follows:

Universality does not exist in the abstract, as a prescriptive principle which is mechanically applied to indifferent circumstances. It is created and recreated in the act of insurgency, which does not demand emancipation solely for those who share my identity but for everyone; it says that no one will be

enslaved. It equally refuses to freeze the oppressed in a status of victimhood that requires protection from above; it insists that emancipation is self-emancipation. From the plantation insurrections to the Combahee River Collective, this is a universality that necessarily confronts and opposes capitalism (Haider 2018: 113).

### **2.3.2. The Search for a New Articulation**

What is to be done with the idea of universality? Indeed, as mentioned in the *Introduction* with reference to Bosteels, the meaning and essentialness of this notion has been challenged in a serious manner on both practical and theoretical grounds. Was it a vital component of the horizon of emancipation or, contrariwise, an impediment? Was the Marxist critique about the partial, devious, and pseudo character of the universality embedded in the political emancipation adequate? According to Wendy Brown (1995), the main difference between the thoughts of the early Marx and the advocates of post-structuralist or post-Marxist positions is about the disagreement on whether the idea of universality is “realizable”. In the perspective of early Marx, Brown asserts, substantiating a real form of universality is a possibility; however, the latter perspectives aim to disclose its unrealizable character through their theoretical practice.

That being said, the debate regarding the idea of universality does not end up with an unfruitful dichotomization. Instead, there were and are theoretico-political positions that do not content themselves with either the critique of pseudo universality or the appeal of particularism. As stated above, those positions which are in pursuit of a new articulation distance themselves from Marxism (to be more exact, from the early Marx) in the matters of history and historiography, as well as the idea of the subject of history. Nevertheless, the distance does not necessarily amount to the abandonment of Marxism as a whole. Here I will present one version of these criticisms and attempts that are in search of a renewed idea of universality from a decolonial angle.

As discussed earlier, for Brown (1995), a “progressive historiography” is embedded in early Marx’s thought. What are the results of the adoption of a progressive comprehension? In Brown’s thought, Marx’s implicit postulates lead to an

inadequacy in terms of interpreting the framework of rights because although Marx criticized “the rights of man” and the anthropological assumptions that these rights ruthlessly embody, the idea of rights was presented as a phase within the flow of history: “[E]very emancipation is a restoration of the human world and of human relationships to man himself” (Marx 1978, as cited in Brown 1995). However, taking a step back and looking at the things in a grand scheme might reveal that the pitfalls of a progressive standpoint are not limited to its weakness in terms of the evaluation of the idea of rights. Instead, the main problem is the singularizing character of a progressive historiography, which results in a theoretico-political lacuna in terms of the articulation of the notion of difference into an emancipatory vision of universality. In a sense, the use of the concept of singularization in this context reminds Laclau’s criticism of the superimposition of particular and universal. However, it should be remembered that as distinct from Laclau’s (1992: 85) problematization, which is about the significance attributed to a certain particular in terms of representing “the privileged agent of history”, the critique embedded in this concept, i.e., singularization, is related to the progressive apprehension of history and its repercussions.

The prominent criticism towards a progressive idea of history is about its compartmentalization of the societies as “advanced, backward, or residual forms”, and therefore the imposition of a particular societal, political, and juridical order as normative upon all the social formations. For Tomba (2019: 3-4), this idea of universal history, which is unidirectional, idealistic, and singularizing is based upon a specific conception of time (and also space) whose concretization is traceable in Kant’s thought. This idea has been criticized for a variety of reasons. In addition to the comprehension of history as the successive movement of specific socio-political and juridical forms and modes of production, it is singularizing (and as a result of this singularization, violent) because of its either implicit or explicit equation of the progression of these forms and modes with a normative content.<sup>6</sup> Due to the mentioned characteristics of a universal apprehension of history and time, Tomba

---

<sup>6</sup> Singularization, according to Tomba, implies comprehending history as a linear and teleological form that can be traceable and predictable, in a way that reflects the past not as a black box where different probable configurations are hidden, but as a source where origins can be uncovered (Tomba 2019: 3).

argues, a new approach is required that reveals the multivariate character of these notions rather than singularizing them - a position that decolonial perspectives advocate:

Movements for decolonization reacted against this conception of history. In a letter of October 24, 1956, that Aimé Césaire wrote to Maurice Thorez, at that time the secretary of the French Communist Party, Césaire denounced the paternalism of the Communist Party members: “their inveterate assimilationism; their unconscious chauvinism; their fairly simplistic faith, which they share with bourgeois Europeans, in the omnilateral superiority of the West; their belief that evolution as it took place in Europe is the only evolution possible, the only kind desirable, the kind the whole world must undergo.” Finally, denouncing the “emaciated universalism” that suppresses the multiplicity of particular and alternative paths of development, Césaire presented an alternative vision of universalism based on a solidarity that respects the particulars (Tomba 2019: 8-9).

The rejection of the “progressive historiography” and the proposal of a renewed historiography that is based upon the acknowledgment of the multilayered character of time and history (and the theoretico-political repercussions of this acknowledgment) amount to the conceptualization of an “alternative legacy of modernity” (Tomba 2019: 14). What does an alternative conception entail? Based on Tomba’s attempt, such a renewal can be described as an archival examination that does not anticipate the transcending of the horizon of political emancipation within a linear framework but traces the always-already present elements of human emancipation throughout history. As a result, Tomba asserts, it is a framework within which the assumptions of Kant and Hegel’s idea of universal history are reversed. It is in this renewed form of historiography that the social elements that have been silenced by the singularizing, or in other words, depoliticizing tendencies of universal history are brought to light. For example, the struggles of peasants, women, and slaves against the emerging social order are seen as the seeds for an alternative trajectory, which died out in infancy without the opportunity to flourish (Tomba 2019: 15-24). It is in this sense that Tomba’s examination could be seen as both the critique of the progressive elements embedded in the thought of the early Marx as well as a concretization of the idea of the politicization of the social, which constitutes one of the central arguments of *On the Jewish Question*.

Michael Löwy (1989: 116-120) shows a similar approach when interpreting Marx's commentaries on the French Revolution. According to him, it is more than ambiguous that Marx assumes the existence of "an embryo of 'proletarian' revolution" within the French Revolution. In contrast to the attempts that defend this thesis, Löwy suggests that Marx's position in *On the Jewish Question* does not lend credence to such arguments. Instead, there are countertendencies in Marx's interpretations that lead up to a point of view that assumes the successiveness of political and human emancipation. The characterization of Jacobinism as "a vain and necessarily abortive attempt to confront the bourgeois society", the absence of an elaborative examination of "the anti-bourgeois popular movements (*sans-culottes*) of the years 1793–94" except the place given to Babeuf, and at last, the evaluations about the French bourgeoisie, Löwy asserts, strengthens the hand of the position that criticizes the embeddedness of the idea of a proletarian revolution in Marx's commentaries on the French Revolution:

Such reasoning led him to the celebrated conclusion formulated in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*: 'The social revolution of the nineteenth century can only create its poetry from the future, not from the past. It cannot begin its own work until it has sloughed off all its superstitious regard for the past.' This is a highly questionable affirmation —the Commune of 1793 inspired that of 1871, and that, in its turn, fed into October 1917— but it bears witness to the hostility Marx showed against any resurgence of Jacobinism within the proletarian movement (Löwy 1989: 119).

For Marx, indeed, the poetry of the Paris Commune provided a significant source of inspiration in terms of expanding the potential sources for social revolution. How did the Commune transform Marx's thought? At this point, two transformations should be mentioned.

The first account might be presented by David Harvey. According to him (Harvey, 2000, as cited in Ross 2015: 120-121), the Commune forces Marx to opt for a renewed notion of dialectic that distances itself from a Hegelian notion of transcendence and grounds on an "either-or" logic. The immediate outcome of such a transformation is a change in terms of the place of the state machine within the class struggle:

The new sentence Marx felt obliged to add to the new preface to the *Communist Manifesto* he wrote in 1872 —“the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for their own purpose”— indicates clearly the distance that the Commune made him take toward his earlier thoughts about state centralization. What he now understood was that under the Second Empire, the state’s formal independence from civil society, its growth as “a parasitic excrescence” grafted onto civil society, was itself the form through which the bourgeoisie ruled. Attacking the separation between the state and civil society was not one of communism’s remote objectives but was instead the practical means for its attainment, the very medium for class struggle (Ross 2015: 121).

In fact, the form of the bourgeoisie rule, i.e., the political emancipation is rather apparent to Marx even in *On the Jewish Question*. Therefore, it might not be accurate to assert that it is the Commune that led Marx to understand the functioning of the role of the separation between state and civil society. Instead, the novel element is the abandonment of a gradualist projection in which formal emancipation and human emancipation develop in succession. The concreteness of the Commune, or “its own working existence” cancels the logic of gradualism and more to the point, this existence that named itself as the “Universal Republic”, permeates the idea of human emancipation with content, materialized in such practices: “[T]he burning of the guillotine on the Place Voltaire on April 10; with the May 16 destruction of the Vendôme Column, built to glorify Napoleonic imperialist conquests; and with the establishment on April 11 of the Women’s Union (Ross 2015: 38).”

The second vital transformation that the Commune sparks in Marx’s thought is the importance that Marx gives to the “archaic” communal forms, which is concretized in his interest in *obshinas* (Ross 2015: 41-47). This communal form, common to Russian peasants, became an object of examination for the late Marx. If one reason for his interest in the *obshinate* is the crucial effect of the Commune, the latter reason is the debate between the Russian populists and Marxists with regard to the importance of this communal form. Could the *obshina* continue its existence as an effective element of communal organization or is this form condemned to dissolve as a result of industrialization? As it is well-known now, throughout his correspondences with Vera Zasulich, Marx advocated the first potential to the latter, which Russian populists defended while Russian Marxists rejected. According to

Ross, Marx's attention to such archaic forms results from the Commune's subtleness in illustrating the dissolution of state machinery throughout its brief existence. Ross cites Marx to concretize the transformation of his thought: "What threatens the life of the Russian Commune is neither a historical inevitability nor a theory; it is state oppression, and exploitation by capitalist intruders whom the state has made powerful at the peasants' expense" (Ross 2015: 127). Consequently, the impact of the Commune brings to light the forking paths of history that cannot be interpreted through singularization.

## **2.4. Conclusion**

It is rather evident that Marx's early and late phases have different interpretations of the notion of history. However, since Marxism is not a closed book, but rather under constant review by the class struggle, it is required that the undertheorized sections of its conceptual structure should be rethought. At this point, within the context in which both whoness and whatness of the subject of emancipation are transformed in the absence of a progressive telos, the question of "How to (re)think of the relation between the notion of difference and an emancipatory form of universality?" comes to light as a burning topic to extricate the idea of emancipation from the above-discussed bottleneck. For this purpose, Étienne Balibar's conceptualization of universality and difference(s) will be elaborated, and the notions of political subject and practice that these conceptualizations entail will be examined in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### BALIBAR'S ANTINOMIC UNIVERSALITY: FROM THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES TO THE PROPOSITION OF EQUALIBERTY

“It seems that universalism never does exactly what it says, nor says exactly what it does.”

*On Universals*, Étienne Balibar

In the previous chapter, both the uneven character of the *Declaration* and Marx's criticisms of this historical document, whose one of the most prominent exemplifications could be found in *On the Jewish Question*, were presented. However, it is doubtful that these two forms of critique are well-articulated in a theoretical manner. What is the exact relation between the overt exclusion of slaves, women, and Jews from the realm that the *Declaration* opens, and the latent forms of the depoliticization of the social through the constitution of the divisions between public and private or man and citizen?

As discussed in the *Introduction*, the absence of a profound articulation resulted in a theoretical and political obscurity regarding concepts such as difference and identity, which have either become the subject of a particularist appeal or approached as the objects of the retreat from the fundamental categories of the politics of emancipation, such as class.

In addition to this obscurity, the lack of a proper conceptualization leads to a further imperceptiveness in terms of comprehending the novel articulations and appearances of the far-right and/or the (neo-, post-, or late) fascist movements, such as the great uproar that the “anti-gender ideology” is raising. In case of the absence of a comprehension with regard to the notion of difference (racial, sexual, cultural, etc.),

it turns into a hardship to answer the question of “What causes a notion directly related to the question of difference, such as gender, to become a figure of hate for non-emancipatory movements?”. McGowan (2020: 184) points out that such hardship results in the disarmament of the politics of emancipation in the face of the right-wing critique of ‘identity politics’, which in fact allows their own particularism to predominate. To him (2020: 178), this disingenuous criticism can be summarized as the desire to “return to the lost unity”. An important contributor to this debate, Judith Butler, discusses in their latest book, *Who’s Afraid of Gender?*, how the idea of gender is transformed into “a phantasm with destructive powers” for right-wing forces today, as well as what causes the notion to be demonized, leading to the belief that gender poses a threat to “both civilization and to “man” itself” (2024: 4-5). All in all, it is an important question for us to understand how the critique of identitarianism has turned upside down in our current conjuncture in the form of a pseudo-defense of universalism, and where the line of demarcation lies between the genuine critique of identitarianism and its false, in other words, conservative version?

Due to their effectiveness in putting novel blocks on the attempts of universalization, it is a requisite to interpret the motives and argumentative moves of such contemporary articulations. For this purpose, I will present Balibar’s notion of the anthropological differences and discuss its relevance with respect to making sense of the theoretical lacuna between the unevenness of the *Declaration* and its Marxist critique in the next section.

### **3.1. Anthropological Differences Between Suppression and Uneasiness**

For Balibar (2012: 207-8), modern politics can be identified with two fundamental characteristics: the first is the constitution of the idea of universality on a “civic-bourgeois” basis, and following from this origin, second is the emergence of new forms of subjection incidental to this idea. In the first context, the novel and ruptural element is the identification of “man” and “citizen” as equivalents, hence the universalization of the latter. Since the dramatic after-effects of this identification will be discussed in the following sections, I will not dwell on them in this subsection.

If these two notions were equated to each other, how do the practices that conflict with this equation's ideational and practical implications arise in such an extensive manner? For Balibar, it is inconclusive to answer this question with a naive reference to the all-too-common conflict between theory and practice. To reach a substantive explanation, it is vital to examine the novel forms of subjection that the emergent configuration of the idea of universality brings along with itself. Within this framework, looking at the hiatus between the abstract and the concrete or searching for an external reason is not applicable. The answer resides in the constituents of the question:

I submit that such a contradiction is not to be considered only as a gap between the ideal and the real, but as *arising from the universal itself*, or *affecting its concept from the inside*, because old and new forms of discrimination and oppression have to be not only *reiterated* or *preserved* but *reformulated* (and, in a sense, "generalized") in the bourgeois-civic world, in order to paradoxically emerge as implications of the universal itself, requisites of its very institution. This means that they have to be located at the level of what I will call *anthropological differences*: differences perceived among humans that are also immediately constitutive of the *idea* of the human (Balibar 2012: 208-9).

In this framework, it is acknowledged that the equation that the *Declaration* concretizes amounts to a break in terms of terminating the justification of subjection. However, as emphasized in the quotation, although subordination common to the pre-modern era becomes unjustified, neither it is totally eliminated nor the construction of new forms of subjection is prevented. At this point, a new notion, that is, anthropological difference, appears on the scene to interpret the constitution and the internal mechanisms of these new forms.

What do anthropological differences mean, and how are they instrumentalized to justify modern forms of discrimination, exclusion, and domination? It is stated that one of the major consequences of the equation of man and citizen is that the attempts to suspend the implications of this equation are obliged to tamper with the notion of human. Well, how does the attempt to manipulate this notion be achieved?

For Balibar (2020a: 4), the disruption of the equation is realized through the gesture of limitation that nature exposes itself to. This means that it is actualized in a context

within which certain subjects are defined through a “natural difference”, which is an act of marking. Within this framework, the “naturalization of differences” forms a basis for the fragmentation of the figure of human, which amounts to the fragmentation of the equation. Balibar asserts that there is a direct correlation between the naturalization and/or “essentialization” of a difference and the situation of being exposed to discrimination, exclusion, and domination. This means that if one’s difference is not perceived as a marking but rather as a neutral characteristic, that subject is far less likely to be subjected to such experiences. At this point, Balibar emphasizes that the whole process of naturalization comes to light to the extent that it is resisted: “[W]hen they are deconstructed, usually as a result of protracted struggles and “civil wars” within the polity, that they appear *retrospectively as constructs*, whose *historical* and *political* character becomes manifest” (2020a: 4, italics in original).

At this point, Butler’s rhetorical question finds an answer: Who is afraid of gender? The subjects whose gender differences have never been naturalized, essentialized, and therefore never become grounds for their discrimination, exclusion, and domination. Balibar asserts that a “double inscription” is granted to these subjects because in their case both the “generic” and “specific” coincide (Balibar 2012: 218). Thus, it is claimable that the fearful subjects of today are the doubly inscribed subjects of the past. However, it is necessary to delve into Balibar’s explanation of the anthropological differences to comprehend the boundaries of the notion.

Balibar asserts that differences can only be conceived as anthropological under certain conditions. I will present these conditions in three separate arguments:

- 1) Since the conceptualization of anthropological differences is related to the purpose of revealing the mode of argumentation and functioning of the practices of discrimination, exclusion, and domination that are peculiar to the modern form of universality, Balibar (2020a: 5) is interested in the “differences that are universal themselves”. Hence, the first condition is their universalizable character. This means that the notion of anthropological difference includes the differences without which the human cannot be represented. To give examples, Balibar (2012: 209) enlists

these differences as anthropological: masculine/feminine, normal/pathological, adult/infantile, intellectual/manual, ethnic differences, etc.

At this point, I think, the gist of the argument is that anthropological differences are differences that are functionalized (as a result of the complex processes of theorization and institutionalization) to prepare the ground for the above-mentioned practices that are used to deviate from the equation of man and citizen, however, such differences precede and exist independent of such processes. In Balibar's approach, the element that makes discrimination, exclusion, and domination possible is not the anthropological difference itself, but its "naturalization". Thus, the reasoning is rather straightforward. "Mankind is a composition of sick and healthy people" (Balibar 2020a: 5), but the difference between sick and healthy performs as an instrument of exclusion to the degree that it is classified, institutionalized, and naturalized, which is in fact a process of construction.

2) However, it is not possible to itemize anthropological differences from A to Z in Balibar's framework, since the functionalization of an anthropological difference as the instrument of throwing off the balance of the equation is realized in a "retrospective" manner. Therefore, there may be anthropological differences whose constructedness have not yet been revealed. In other words, Balibar (2020a: 5) does not refer to "a positive anthropology" here.

3) The third argument is that the anthropological differences are both "indissoluble and undefinable" in Balibar's thought (2020b: 98). The first notion indicates that these differences are indissoluble because of the impossibility of disregarding their existence. However, the naked truth that there are differences between humans does not denote that the content of such differences can be defined in through absolute terms. In this framework, there is a qualitative difference between speaking of the mere existence of an anthropological difference between people who are sick and healthy and the institutionalization of the conceptions of normal and deviant. To explain this distinction, Balibar refers to the notions of "the impossibility of erasure" and "the impossibility of definition":

What I have in mind is the fact that, each time in a specific manner, anthropological differences confront us with a double impossibility: *the impossibility of erasure*, eliminating the difference either symbolically or practically in the organization of life and the working of institutions, as well as *the impossibility of definition*, assigning a stable and identical place and design to the “line of demarcation” between antithetic poles of the human. And let us remember here that there is, or can be, as much violence in the project of neutralizing anthropological differences as there is in the project of deciding forever and for all what constitutes the difference, which marks of difference are to be upheld, and which are to become silenced or suppressed. (Balibar 2020a: 5)

Those are the fundamental arguments Balibar outlines regarding anthropological differences. According to him (2012: 225), the inclusive character of the modern form of universal explains the reason for tampering with these differences. Due to the equation between man and citizen, the classification of “otherness” should be inscribed in the notion of human. However, his argument does not come to an end at this point. Although it is crucial to comprehend the effectiveness of the functionalization of anthropological differences for the purposes of discrimination, exclusion, and domination of specific subjects, this still could be seen as a descriptive theoretical move that makes the processes underlying such practices more transparent. However, Balibar asks, “What should be done with the question of anthropological differences?”.

It is suggested that Kant’s framework, for example, exposes these differences to “suppression” (Balibar 2012: 227). But if neither suppression nor neutralization is an effective choice, what kind of an attitude should be maintained? For Balibar (2020a: 8), when the differences are not functionalized with the intention “to identify individuals” as in the case of the civic form of universality, a novel realm, which is not individualistic but in fact “relational” lies ahead. In such a realm, the impossibility of the definition described above turns into a source of examination about the question of “What is human?”. According to Balibar, the name of human, both as the signifier of a subject and as a generic name, includes a perpetual questioning about the modes of being a human: “[T]he human is the being for whom the different ways or possibilities of being human are a problem” (2020b: 104, italics in original). Within this framework, the motive behind the urge of a perpetual

questioning is described as “the desire to know”. However, Balibar (2020b: 104-5) emphasizes that while this desire is “transhistorical”, its historical forms are subjected to transformation. As I see it, what is transformed is not the desire to know, but its object and direction. The desire to understand oneself and others within all the multiplicity is at the root of it which cannot be regarded merely as an ideological product.

Such an examination, without attempting to fixate, objectivize or naturalize the anthropological differences, creates an “uneasiness”. Within this relational framework, subjects are not restricted within the boundaries of the rejection or the recognition of their differences. “The anthropological difference in its singular forms” (Balibar 2012: 228) is present outside these dichotomies in a mode that remains undiscovered. Here, one crucial aspect of Balibar’s attempt is that these singular forms do not amount to identities. I think it is arguable that Balibar aspires to preclude the inclination to put another fixated difference up against the constructed differences of civic universalism because Balibar is in search of a definition of “a difference which will always become different of itself, *differing from the difference that it is*” (Balibar 2020a: 9).

In this way, Balibar provides us with a substantial conceptual repertoire to criticize both the blind spots of a theoretical position that fails to consider the significance of anthropological differences as instruments of discrimination, exclusion, and domination, as well as the dead ends of a particularist appeal that treats anthropological differences not as an occasion for the examination of humanness, but rather as a category of fixation. There is one final crucial notion about Balibar’s anthropological differences which deserves to be addressed. Before concluding this subsection, I will take a detour to discuss this notion, namely, the double bind, with a reference to feminist literature, which Balibar also covers in his writings.

### **3.1.1. The Double Bind**

It can be argued that one of the most insightful aspects of Balibar’s discussion about the anthropological differences is the concept of “the double bind”. As discussed

above, even though modern politics is universalistic, which is identified as “civic-bourgeois universalism” (Balibar 2012: 207), residual forms of non-egalitarianism persist, and novel forms are reproduced within the declared framework of universality. While Balibar points out that the subordination of both women and queer subjects does not enter the scene with the universalistic politics of the modern age, which is a bare fact, there are mechanisms incidental to bourgeois universalism functionalized to reproduce this subordination. According to him, the main mechanism that is put to use throughout this process of reproduction is the utilization of nature:

This *revolution against the revolution* relies, it seems to me, on the typically bourgeois introduction of *a supplement of naturality* in the representation of the “feminine,” from which its contradictory relationship to the universal should derive, or a tendency to represent the feminine as the bearer (and the residue) of “nature” within universality, qua conventional or institutional construction of the political assimilated to masculine “virtue” or virility (etymologically the same word) (Balibar 2012: 218).

As it is well-known, however, the supplementation of feminineness through the use of the element of nature results in the complexification of feminism as a theoretico-political practice. This complexification is framed as “the sameness-difference debate” in feminist literature. For Balibar (2012: 218 & 2020b: 100), the contradiction of sameness and difference embedded in feminism deserves to be named as a double bind. In his perspective, it is possible to speak of the two faces of the double bind in the context of anthropological differences. The first holds the civic universalism, built upon the fixation of anthropological differences that are in essence resistant to such a determination, captive. The civic-bourgeois universalism strives to fixate them, but its determinative gestures are probably met with resistance. That being said, the double bind has another face, which causes a disturbance in the politics of emancipation dealing with the attempts to fixate a particular anthropological difference. In a nutshell, this disturbance is about either affirming the difference in question or refusing it to be incorporated into the realm of universal. In Balibar’s (2020b: 100) words, the contradiction is about drawing attention to “the legitimacy of difference, the right to particularity, or the primacy of universality and the need for its reconfiguration on new grounds”.

How can Balibar's questioning the different modes of being human and the emphasis on the transhistorical desire to know these modes be considered within the framework of the double bind intrinsic to feminism? I think that Balibar's attempt to propose the category of human as a *question*, as opposed to the objectification of this category through scientific, juridical, and other forms of institutionalization, can be considered in relation to the sexual difference feminism.

In brief, sexual difference theorists sought both to acknowledge the difference itself and at the same time reconstitute it in a contentless form (Felski 1997: 4). A dual critique motivated their theoretical attempt: The first target of sexual difference feminism was phallocentrism. These feminists, however, criticized the notion of gender as well. According to Rita Felski (1997: 4-5), the appropriation of sexual difference vis-à-vis gender was rooted to affirm "the structural centrality of sexual division to the formation of human culture". However, the affirmation of sexual difference went hand in hand with the desire to emancipate the notion of feminine from the boundaries it was trapped in and provide this notion with an "alternative" and "utopian" characteristic.

For me, it is assertable that Balibar's attempt to emancipate the anthropological differences, and therefore the notion of human, from the binding of civic universalism while resisting the urge to discard the existence of the anthropological differences altogether has some significant similarities with the attempts of the sexual difference theorists. This comes to light through the preservation of the concept of anthropological differences and their transfiguration into scenes where the transhistorical desire to know is staged to expose the indeterminate character of these differences. For Balibar (2012: 217), the "uneasiness of the subject", which amounts to a form of indetermination, was the "conatus" of a politics within which the subject is freed from subjection - which is, in fact, a perpetual process. If it is arguable that there is a theoretical correspondence between Balibar's emphasis on indetermination and the attempt of decontenting the feminine of the sexual difference feminism, what would be the corresponding "conatus" of feminist politics, in particular the politics of an uneasy feminism? Since it is impossible to expand this discussion here, I will leave it for this moment to reflect upon the implications of both this question and

also Balibar's concept of human and its compatibilities and discontents with sexual difference feminism in further studies.

### **3.2. Balibar's Critique of Marx, or Man=Citizen**

After a detailed discussion about anthropological differences, it is time to return to the theoretical absence that is remarked at the beginning of this chapter. During one of his speeches, Althusser (1977) said, "For it is not words that determine their meaning, but their echoes." Silences, I think, are not exempt from this rule. Indeed, the silence within Marxist thought surrounding anthropological differences has resulted in critical theoretico-political crises that still exert their effects. For Balibar (2017: 281), Marx's thought fell short of conceptualizing the significance of these differences in general. According to him (2012: 227), however, instead of being conceived as defects that disturb the functioning of the universal, or civic universalism, it is required to conceive the anthropological differences "as intrinsic contradictions, which at the same time relate the universal to itself and open a gap - sometimes an abyss of inhumanity- within this transindividual relation called "the human"".

Balibar's criticism has led me to touch upon a phrase in *On the Jewish Question* that I think is rather related to this criticism, namely the phrase "the state as such". As will be recalled, Marx used this phrase to present the difference between the Christian state, which is the focus of Bauer's writing, and the matured form of "the political state", exemplified with reference to the United States. Drawing on Hegel, Marx (1992: 216-20) described the political state as a state-form that presents itself as a "universality" which is detached from the particularities of people's lives. This detachment of the state from the "particular elements" and its universalistic constitution precedes Marx's criticism, because Marx is not interested in exposing the defective character of this constitution, but rather its deceptive or rather mystificatory function. However, it is inevitable to enter into the realm of anthropological differences at the moment when it is questioned whether it is possible to speak of a universalization through detachment in such a pure form, or, whether there is a state-form that can be identified as "state as such". In a sense,

there is an externality in the phrase “the state as such,” as if the act of bracketing the particular elements is outside the discussion about the constitution of the modern state. Balibar appears to speak about precisely the realm that Marx’s criticism precedes. The fundamental problem constituting this realm is not the deceitful characteristic of the rights in a modern sense per se but the mechanisms that do not allow certain subjects to have these rights.

To explore this absence in depth, Balibar invites “Frantz [Fanon] and Mary [Wollstonecraft]” onto the theoretical stage. As it is obvious, these figures are called upon to discuss the ethnic and cultural and gender and sexual differences, and the anthropological differences in general, whose absence, in Balibar’s thought, amounts to the fundamental limitation of Marxism:

(...) Marx’s historical scene, with its dramaturgy of social roles and their human masks, is missing voices. (...) Nonetheless, the exclusion that mattered to Marx (whose forms he characterized, especially in his analyses of the violence of the “factory system,” by means of a phenomenology of difference modeled upon the “difference between manual and intellectual labor”) is both global and homogenizing. Marx tends to grasp the forms of subjectivity that he discovers through the politics of the exploited in the field of bourgeois universality in terms of a new empirico-speculative doublet: Either the subject is a “worker” under conditions of class domination or a “proletarian” who extracts himself from those conditions through a radical negativity that is essentially founded in objectivity. Other differences are condemned to be assimilated into the great phenomenology of the class struggle, appearing only as variants of an “absolute wrong,” to disappear from the political scene, or to remain voiceless; they are paradoxically excluded from exclusion (and thus from the vindication of the “right to have rights” that historically responds to this exclusion). (Balibar 2017: 281).

For Balibar (2017: 281-2), the materialization or vocalization of the conflicts that these differences have been faced through the varied forms of exclusion does not point at their particularistic characteristic; instead, what has become particularized or communitarianized is the universal itself as a result of the effectiveness of such forms of exclusion. In this framework, the disarticulation of these vocalizations into Marx(ism) is presented as both the reason for major ideational and practical impasses and the missing out on examining the liminal questions related to the figure of human.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> In an unsurprising manner, the reason behind Balibar’s expulsion from the French Communist Party is one of his articles on the Algerian question, “De Charonne à Vitry”, dated 1981. For a detailed

However, Balibar's criticism of Marx's thought is not limited to the lack of a profound theorization of anthropological differences in his writings. In a straight shot, his fundamental criticism targets one of the constitutive premises of *On the Jewish Question*, namely that there is a fundamental distinction between man and citizen. In the next section, I will get to the root of Balibar's chief criticism, which paves the way for theorizing the proposition of equaliberty.

### 3.2.1. Man/Citizen or Man=Citizen

To reveal the "antinomic" character of the universal intrinsic to the modern era, Balibar (2012: 209) aspires to think Marx and Foucault together. Even though it was not covered above within the context of anthropological differences, the inspiration that Balibar took from Foucault is apparent. Foucault's examinations demonstrate that, as a result of massive processes of institutionalization and knowledge production, the indeterminateness of a difference (between sick and healthy people, in Balibar's words), which is undeniable, acquires a rather determinate form and is conceived of as a contradiction between normal and abnormal or deviant. What is the place of Marx's criticism on civic universalism in Balibar's thought? In a sense, it can be argued that although Marx's criticism of civic universalism is vital for Balibar, it is in essence a negative contribution because the idea of equaliberty has its roots in the rejection of Marx's interpretation of the *Declaration*.

How do Marx and Balibar differ in their interpretations? First of all, the key point of division is about the attitude taken towards the relationship between men and citizen. According to Balibar, an established form of interpretation that aims to distinguish these two notions from each other became permanent in due course. In particular, Balibar targets the natural rights theorists' grounding of the "Rights of the Citizen" in relation to the foundational character of the "Rights of Man". For him, however, the proposal to put them in a relation of temporal sequencing could be considered fictitious. One of Balibar's most fundamental arguments with regard to the

---

discussion, please see: Toscano, A. (2018, February 1). The Name of Algeria: French Philosophy and the Subject of Decolonization. *Viewpoint Magazine*. <https://viewpointmag.com/2018/02/01/name-algeria-french-philosophy-subject-decolonization/>

*Declaration* emphasizes its unrelation with the theories of classical natural rights. Instead of being the bearer of these theories, Balibar insists that the *Declaration* amounts to the “irreversible opening of the crisis of classical natural right”. What is the dynamic of the crisis? In *Equaliberty*, Balibar explains the origin of the crisis that is the difference in the class character of these theories and the *Declaration*. According to him (2014: 43), the classical natural rights theories, which are rather complex and different from each other in terms of their explanations of the fundamental concepts, relate to “a rising social class, called the bourgeoisie”. On the other hand, the *Declaration*, simple in its structure, is rooted in a complex socio-political situation, hence related not only to a rising social class, but also to the highly conflictual combination of bourgeois and popular classes. As a consequence of this constitutive difference, their relation is discontinuous rather than continuous.

In this context, it is possible to encounter with attempts to think Balibar’s interpretation of the *Declaration* in conjunction with Claude Lefort’s interpretation of the meaning of 1789 due to his emphasis on discontinuity. For example, Ayten Gündoğdu (2014: 370) asserts that, both Balibar and Lefort abstain from theoretical tendencies that discuss the *Declaration* as the embodiment of the idea of natural rights or a “limit condition” which is confined within the juncture it comes to light. Despite the dissensus between the horizon of their interpretations of the *Declaration*, these two thinkers consider the *Declaration* as a constitutive moment within which a novel conception of rights emerged that will have vital future implications. According to Lefort, the constitutive character of 1789 was rooted in the transformation of sovereignty and its location, separated from embodied fixations and (un)settled in an empty place. Similarly, Lefort also saw the abstractness of the subject of the *Declaration* as a kind of effectual emptiness that enables the recreation of rights without the efficacy of “determinate, concrete subjects” (Gündoğdu 2014: 373-4).

Like Lefort, Balibar also criticizes Marx’s interpretation, which emphasizes that despite its apparent universalism, the *Declaration* perpetuates unequal conditions through its separation of public and private, and man and citizen. Hence, Marx asserts, there is an impassable cleavage between the formal character of the

*Declaration* and the conditions of the effectiveness of its formal character. Therefore, this historical text suffers from the same double life in which it traps its subjects. However, in Balibar's thought (1994: 50), the double life does not have to be interpreted as the consequence of a pseudo-universalism. Instead, the cleavage between its universal character and the "conditions" of this universality is intrinsically impassable. To explain the reason behind this divergence between Marx and Balibar, it is necessary to return to the debate on the relation between man and citizen.

As stated above, Balibar criticizes the classical theories of natural rights due to their attempt to separate man from citizen to establish the former concept as the foundation for the latter. However, Balibar (1994a: 46) claims that Marx's interpretation is also cursed with the same problem. As Marx insists on distinguishing the figure of man from the figure of citizen, "the subversive effects of a radically new idea" embedded in the *Declaration* are not discernible in *On the Jewish Question*. As could be recalled, the political emancipation developed through the formation of rights had been placed in a gradualist framework and evaluated as a partial emancipation, which will be or must be completed with the human emancipation in this work.

For Balibar, however, a gradualist comprehension of the *Declaration* is neither subversive nor true. In a rather radical gesture, Balibar (1994a: 44-7) sets forward "a double identification". In this schema, man and citizen, as well as equality and liberty, are identical. Balibar argues that within this framework, the identification of equality and liberty functions as the "condition" for the identification of man and citizen. At this point, two immediate questions arise: 1) What is the relation between the conception of citizenship that arises from these double identifications and the ancient conception of citizenship? and 2) On what grounds could these identifications be justified?

The answer to the first question is rather direct. Within the context of the ancient conception, there is no identification between these notions, in other words, it is not possible to speak of their "reversibility". Instead, what is prior is freedom, and

equality is valid for subjects that are free at the outset. In this framework, the boundaries of freedom or citizenship were drawn with a reference to “the anthropological limits of the political”. In brief, the citizen is a being in the spectrum of humanness positioned between subhuman and suprahuman (Balibar 1994: 45-6).

The answer to the second question is indirect, if not complicated. In Balibar’s view, those who refuse the identification of equality and liberty are the ones with the burden of providing justification for their position:

Let me further admit freely that, in such a case, a “proof” can only have a *negative* character, can only be a “refutation”: what in the case of the basic axioms of logic Aristotle called an *elenchos*. This is not an *a priori* proof. In fact, it is something stronger — a *negative a posteriori* proof. It amounts to asserting that: (a) there are no practical, historical circumstances or situations in which liberty (and also determinate liberties) could be suppressed, without equality being destroyed at the same time; and (b) conversely, there are no situations in which equality could be attacked without liberty being threatened. There is no such thing as equalitarian Despotism or equalitarian Totalitarianism, no such thing as unequal or unjust Democracy. Excesses of power and inequality necessarily converge: there are no counterexamples. If we look at the question from that angle, we see that the burden of proving the contrary -of providing counterfactual examples- now lies upon the adversaries of the proposition, who will therefore face an insurmountable challenge (Balibar 1994b: 106).

However, there is one last important aspect of the proposition of equaliberty in Balibar’s thought, concretized through the notion of mediation, which links the double identification (Man=Citizen and Equality=Liberty) to the subject of anthropological differences. In Balibar’s thought (1994b: 108), mediation is the form, or the “third term” that establishes a ground for the inscription of the proposition of equaliberty. It is possible to speak of two mediations within the framework of modern politics, namely, community and property, which are also divided in themselves as “national” and “proletarian” community, and “capital-” and “labor-property” according to Balibar (1994a: 50-54).

For him (1994a: 54), these divisions and their articulations correspond to the major ideologies of modern politics: socialism, liberalism, communism, and nationalism. Therefore, the term class struggle refers to the concretization of a specific form of

property, i.e., the labor-property, and the concretization of a specific form of community, i.e., the proletarian community.

However, I think the authentic aspect of Balibar's contribution is not rooted in conceptualizing class struggle as the articulation of these two forms of contradiction. In my view, its theoretical significance rests on the concept of "repressed contradictions", which, as Balibar (1994a: 55) suggests, are always embedded in unequal relationships of power, yet which have an externality vis-à-vis them. The duality between sexes, as well as body and mind, which is concretized in intellectual inequalities, constitutes the repressed contradictions of the scene of modern politics. In Balibar's thought, the attempt to tackle the question of their repressed character necessitates delving into the equation of man and citizen, in other words, to think about "the question of going beyond the abstract or generic concept of man". In this context, what would be the theoretical and political implications of such an attempt at rethinking? Balibar's answer to this question is twofold: To achieve a citizenship whose relation to anthropological differences is not one of subordination but rather one of overdetermination, it is vital to consider the conditions of the superimposition of man and citizen. How can this be achieved? Through generating an ideational and practical framework for conceiving the place of difference in equality (Balibar 1994a: 54-58). Balibar's suggestion in the context of sexual difference is as follows: "Equality here is not the neutralization of differences (equalization), but the condition and requirement of the diversification of freedoms (Balibar 1994a: 56)." Rather, regarding the division between body and mind, his suggestion is neutralization, due to the difference between the characteristics of these contradictions.

In terms of the place of anthropological differences, Balibar (1994a: 59) presents a trifurcated landscape. Each form of politics, ancient, modern, and present, placed these differences in a distinct manner vis-à-vis the notion of citizenship. Balibar asserts that the conception of citizenship is subjected to the enforcement of anthropological differences in the ancient context. In the modern context, this relation transforms into one of identification, and in the last context, the boundaries of this identification have been questioned. However, it is emphasized that such a

periodization does not amount to a teleological succession. There would be a certain conjuncture in which all these forms can be found, as well as contradictions related to these forms. Having said that, Balibar (1994a: 59) insists that the political problem peculiar to the present conjuncture is the “move from universal truth to singular truth” and the attempt to “inscribe the program and the very name of equaliberty in singularities”. So far, Balibar’s conceptualization of anthropological differences and their significance to the politics of emancipation has been covered. Based on his emphasis on the “antinomic” character of modern politics, the following section will discuss both the subject and horizon of Balibar’s proposition of equaliberty in brief.

### 3.3. Balibar’s Antinomies

In essence, one of the most prominent characteristics of his thought is that Balibar chooses to think within antinomies, in zones of conflict, rather than attempting to discard them. An exemplification of this mode of thinking can be found in the description of modern politics as an endless battle between two irreconcilable forms:

*Politics* itself, as it now emerges, is therefore internally divided. It is structurally *cleaved* between its own two antinomic aspects: a politics of *insurrection* in the broad sense, or permanent, protracted revolution; and a politics of *constitution*, or a politics of the State as institutional and social order. The *modern* concept of politics would never escape this intrinsic division and recover its unity. There could be no synthesis, only nostalgia for a lost unity. We necessarily face a permanent choice between “State and non-State” —State and Revolution, as Lenin would later phrase it— as the two poles of politics (Balibar 1994b: 108).

The fundamental initiator of the endless battle is rooted in the “hyperbolic character” of 1789, and the *Declaration* in particular (Balibar 1994b: 107). In this instance, the attribute of hyperbolic refers to the irreducibility of the double identifications initiated with modern politics to their existing, institutionalized forms. In a sense, Balibar (1995: 65) conceptualizes the actuated mode of the hyperbole as the “ideal universality”. In his opinion, an examination of universality would be insufficient if it only considered real and fictitious forms of universality, without addressing its ideal or symbolic form. Balibar emphasizes two components of the ideal universality: first, the varied ideational frameworks regarding emancipation; and

second, their irrepressible and repetitive character. In a sense, the concept of ideal universality represents collective efforts for emancipation throughout history. However, it is equally important to understand the reason for their universal character in Balibar's thought. In this context, to the extent that a collective or insurrectional attempt at emancipation acts contrary to a communitarian direction, in other words, if the effort is directed towards transforming existing power relations for the sake of all, rather than for the interest of the participants of this attempt alone, it deserves to be named as universalistic (Balibar 1995: 64-8).

According to Christiaan Boonen (2021: 925), this emphasis on the hyperbolic aspect of the ideal universality is, in fact, reveals the negative character of universality in Balibar's perspective. In Boonen's thought, Balibar's framework comprises initiatives that attempt to bridge the gap between the ideal and the real, hence the attempts of inclusion, but it also contains initiatives that challenge the very constitution of the institutional forms within which subjects attempt to be included. Here the question is about the limits of the second part of the sentence, in other words, the limits of the abovementioned challenge. For a prominent interpretation, the crucial distinction between Lefort and Balibar is that while both allow for pushing the limits of existing forms of right, in the case of Balibar, the extent of the push would seem more far-reaching: "[T]he more radical possibility invoked by Balibar's notion of "insurrection," which involves not simply opposing the established order but proposing and constituting a new one" (Gündoğdu 2014: 377).

Nevertheless, there are also critical perspectives that assert that in spite of the infinite character of democratization in Balibar's thought, it actually refers to a "bad infinity". Balibar, Tomba (2019: 65-67) argues, follows a "juridical understanding of universalism" that is trapped either in the stabilized moment of constitution or in the fervency of the constituent moment. In this framework, Balibar's entrapment is a consequence of his identification of the figures of man and citizen, which is Tomba's fundamental criticism. Due to this identification, even though Balibar's conception considers the constitution of a new order as it is asserted in Gündoğdu's work, the order in question is limited to "the juridical framework of the state" (2019: 66). Thus, neither a novel practice of politics concretized in "local self-government" nor a

subject of politics beyond the citizen-subject reveals itself within the boundaries of Balibar's theorization.

At this point, I think it would be helpful to emphasize a crucial point of Balibar's thought. It must be underlined that it is possible to speak of the different forms of "democratic institutions" in Balibar's framework, but unlike Tomba, the universalization of politics does not mean the reign of the non-representational mechanisms alone, but rather the intertwining of these varied forms due to the real character of universality in the present age:

I have argued that there are historically three main forms of democratic institutions: those based on representation, direct participation, and social conflict. (...) With social and political problems becoming increasingly global—one need only think of the consequences of climate change, which have become the central problem for humankind—we need various degrees of socialism and various combinations of democratic institutions at different levels, from the local to the global (Ribeiro & Mendes 2023).

Because of this difference, Tomba sees an unfulfilled promise, while Balibar sees the "dialectical unity" of equality and liberty and its oscillations when discussing 1789. In his view, thinking about revolutions, specifically the French Revolution, from the perspective of dialectical unity would allow us to set aside a progressive form of historiography that is discussed in the previous chapter. I think it is important to point out, however, that Tomba's and Balibar's criticisms of progressive historiography are different, which necessitates drawing a line between them.

The fundamental issue, for Balibar (Ribeiro & Mendes 2023), is the tension between equality and liberty, which, by taking an "insurrectional" form, underlies the attempts to inscribe equaliberty, but because it is by definition impossible, necessitates the idea of "permanent revolution". Such insurrectional forms "overcome the limitations of bourgeois constitutions", which I think is the point Tomba criticizes by insisting that it amounts to a "bad infinity" because the idea of permanence trivializes the idea of a qualitative break in the form of a political revolution within this context.

### 3.4. Conclusion

The examination of a fundamental relation has been left unarticulated in the previous chapter, namely, the relation between the overt exclusion of specific subjects from the *Declaration* and the critique of the partialness of the political emancipation that the *Declaration* brings about. For Balibar, the lack of articulation stemmed from a disregard for the significance of the anthropological differences in Marx's thought. Based upon this assertion, his theorization of these differences is discussed in this chapter to present the synchronicity of the varied forms of exclusion, domination, and exploitation within a certain socio-political conjuncture. In short, this chapter aimed to shed light on the following aspects of Balibar's thought: at first, modern politics, and universality are by definition antinomic, which means that there is always a tension between institutionalization and insurrection, which defines the core of democratization. Due to this, universality cannot be conceived in a form free from contradictions, tensions, and conflicts. Furthermore, Balibar's attempt to locate anthropological differences in a realm of questioning by taking them out of the realm of determination, naturalization, and institutionalization allows us to contemplate what it means to be human through a relational lens without getting caught up in an identitarian trap.

## CHAPTER 4

### BADIOU'S EVENTAL UNIVERSALITY

One of the most prominent participants of the heightened debate over the notion of universality in the late 1990s and the early 2000s was Alain Badiou. During this period, characterized by the concretization of the demise of the real experiences of socialism and the concomitant theoretical and ideological setback, Badiou (2003: 7) aimed at objecting to both the “false” or “empty universality” of the financialized capitalism and the simultaneous revivment of identitarianism that colonizes the realm of politics in France at the time (and as of today). However, his attempt to call the idea of universality back to the theoretico-political scene was in no relation to either the proceduralist conceptions of universalism or the attempts in the direction of placing the figure of citizen at the center of the political thought and practice. For these very reasons, it is not surprising that the central figure that lies at the heart of his comprehension of universality, Saint Paul, does not belong to the modern era. Without a doubt, Badiou was not alone in inviting Paul to the stage; philosophers like Jean-François Lyotard, Giorgio Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek also contributed to and/or preceded this gesture in their own works.

Among the prominent purposes of this chapter is to examine Badiou's understanding of the idea of universality in relation to the concept of difference, the tensions that this understanding brings along with it, and the changing theoretical scene of the debate about the *Declaration* that was covered in previous chapters. In this regard, I will first examine the relationship between difference(s) and universality, which is one of the leitmotifs of this thesis, as articulated in Badiou's thought. After pursuing this examination with a special focus on *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, I will introduce Elisabeth Paquette's criticism that points to the inadequacies in terms of articulating racial difference in Badiou's framework and

discuss the relevance of her criticism. In what follows, I will examine Jayne Svenungsson's criticism that underlines the lacuna in Badiou's theoretical framework regarding the differentiation of differences and consider the appropriateness of her proposal to close such a lacuna. Before concluding this discussion, I would like to consider the possibility of thinking Balibar's proposal to reconfigure the attempt of thinking anthropological differences as a transhistorical form of problematizing the figure of human along with Badiou's (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 182) explanation about "the creation of a generic point" in brief.

Afterwards, I will present the fundamental concepts of Badiou's political anthropology to address that a discussion about the *Declaration* and its universal character in this framework necessitates a transformed theoretical scene which brings concepts such as "human animality" and "immortality" along with it. After a discussion about the examination of the figure of man and the introduction of the figure of immortal, which is the embodiment of subjectivation, I will examine the eventual character of universality in his thought and the concepts of grace, faith, and love because they illustrate how Badiou perceives the durationality and universalizability of the truths.

#### **4.1. Badiou: An Abstract Communist?**

"At that time I criticized the Communists for forgetting our Negro characteristics. They acted like Communists, which was all right, but they acted like abstract Communists."

*An Interview with Aimé Césaire, conducted in 1967*

Aimé Césaire's letter to Maurice Thorez, the General Secretary of the French Communist Party (PCF), written in October 1956, is rather well known. In this resignation letter, Césaire speaks from a dual position: both as a member of the French Communist Party and "a man of color", which, for him, could not be subsumed under the membership of the PCF. In addition to the criticism of Stalinism, the letter aims at condemning the "fraternalism" of the PCF. In Césaire's (2010: 147-149) view, the Party approaches the colonial question without a proper theoretical and political understanding, and this inattentiveness is the consequence of mimicking

the conception of progress embedded in colonial thought. As a result, the Party does not regard members outside the metropole as comrades, hence, absolute equals, but as little brothers/sisters in need of guidance. PCF's fraternalism, Césaire argues, prevents both the bonds that colonized peoples would establish with each other and the flourishing of the communist practices that bear characteristics incidental to a specific locality and temporality:

This is not a desire to fight alone and a disdain for all alliances. It is a desire to distinguish between alliance and subordination, solidarity and resignation. It is exactly the latter of these pairs that threatens us in some of the glaring flaws we find in the members of the French Communist Party: their inveterate assimilationism; their unconscious chauvinism; their fairly simplistic faith, which they share with bourgeois Europeans, in the omnilateral superiority of the West; their belief that evolution as it took place in Europe is the only evolution possible, the only kind desirable, the kind the whole world must undergo; to sum up, their rarely avowed but real belief in civilization with a capital C and progress with a capital P (as evidenced by their hostility to what they disdainfully call "cultural relativism") (Césaire's 2010: 149).

The letter's fame, however, is not solely due to the criticisms that Césaire expresses. Instead, an affirmation of the idea of universality accompanies such criticisms. Beyond any doubt, this comprehension is free from the false or fraternalistic character of the vision of communism that the PCF personifies. Césaire's universality is the universality of absolute equals, which possesses the theoretical and political strength to cope with the difficulties arising from the difference of contradictions.

Could Badiou's communism be identified as "abstract"? Does Césaire's criticism directed at the PCF apply to him as well? Surely there are critics of Badiou who either define his position as Eurocentric or point out the lack of nuance in his accounts when it comes to distinguishing differences. In the following section, I will describe the place of differences, as well as what it means to be indifferent to differences in Badiou's thought. In what follows, I will give space to the criticisms of Elisabeth Paquette, who points out the absence of an affirmative idea of racial identity in Badiou's thought, and the reasons and repercussions of such an absence, as well as Jayne Svenungsson, who emphasizes the lacuna with regard to the

conceptual distinctions between different differences in his theoretical-political framework.

#### **4.1.1. Paul's Indifference: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile"**

As will be discussed below, Badiou's understanding of difference and universality has been criticized for disregarding the effects of the suppression of racial differences, hence evading the need to affirm "a positive account of racial identity" that is composed of both cultural and also political elements (Paquette 2020: 66; 77-78). However, I will argue that in order to properly understand Badiou's approach to the question of difference and his proposition of being indifferent to differences, it is necessary to focus on his special work on the notion of universality.

The starting point of this work, *Saint Paul*, is the absence of "the militant figure" in the realm of politics in our current conjuncture. Therefore, Badiou attempts to think about the conditions of existence of such a figure by putting this apostle and his endeavors in the center. His interest in Paul stems from his incessant desire and will to convey the gospel beyond its place of birth. In this respect, Paul corresponds to "a Lenin for whom Christ will have been the equivocal Marx" (Badiou 2003: 2). Surely this attempt necessitates the reworking of the doctrine with respect to both spatial and experiential variables. It is arguable that Paul's importance and uniqueness for Badiou rests in his endurance and the form that this endurance took in the face of such variables. Two prominent characteristics of Paul are put forward in Badiou's work: first, this figure is "ex-centered", and second, his position vis-à-vis the differences is one of traversal, "neither nor," or indifference. What does to be "ex-centered" mean in this context? According to Badiou (2003: 19), Paul's detachment and distance from "the Jerusalemite "center"", carrying out the mission in distant lands, and the risks that Paul takes in terms of conflicting with the powerful figures in the Church correspond to this "ex-centered" character. There has been a prominent materialization of these conflicts in the incident at Antioch and the Jerusalem conference, which was organized to offer a solution and revealed the fundamentals of the Paulinian indifference explicitly.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> According to the writings of Luke and Paul, there emerges a conflict in Antioch as a result of the proliferation of the teachings that insist on the necessity of circumcision in the conversion of Gentiles

The dispute over the conditions for being a Christian subject is central to this conference. For the Judeo-Christians, a Christian subject should meet the requirements, which include circumcision and other traditional ritualistic elements. In this line of thought, there is no rupture between “the Christ-event” and the “Jewish culture”. As a result of this characteristic, Badiou (2003: 23) considers the Judeo-Christian position to be “dialectical” instead of having a ruptural characteristic. In Paul’s thought, however, there is a strict distinction between the particularities of an event and the conditions of its universalization:

In his eyes, the event renders prior markings obsolete, and the new universality bears no privileged relation to the Jewish community. Certainly, the components of the event, its location, everything it mobilizes, have this community as their site. Paul himself is entirely of Jewish culture and cites the Old Testament far more frequently than the putative words of the living Christ. But although the event depends on its site *in its being*, it must be independent of it *in its truth effects*. Thus, it is not that communitarian marking (circumcision, rites, the meticulous observance of the Law) is indefensible or erroneous. It is that the postevental imperative of truth renders the latter *indifferent* (which is worse). It has no signification, whether positive or negative. Paul is not opposed to circumcision. His rigorous assertion is “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing” (Cor. 1.7.19) (Badiou 2003: 23).

Paul’s position at the Jerusalem conference reveals that being indifferent does not mean overlooking a difference to favor the dominant over the non-dominant element. Throughout the conference, Badiou (2003: 22) highlights that “Titus, an uncircumcised follower” accompanies Paul. Consequently, Paul’s gesture of indifference cannot be identified as an attempt at a false universalization because, instead of seeing a dominant figure as a synecdoche, as if it corresponded to the whole, Paul seeks equalization. Badiou discusses the second characteristic of Paul with an example concerning his attitude towards sexual differences and inequalities that is concretized in Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female” (Badiou 2003: 9). At first, the Paulinian indifference is defined as “the traversal of differences” and not the

---

into Christianity. In response, Paul, who supports the non-necessity of circumcision, visits Jerusalem to discuss this conflict with the leading figures of the church and a council convenes. During this meeting, ritualistic practices and criteria for inclusion to this religion were discussed. For a detailed examination, please see (Taylor 1992).

negation and overlooking of differences. This is important because, as stated above in the context of being “ex-centered”, Paul is intent on resisting the withdrawal of the Christ-event into its birthplace, and as a consequence, circulates it through the places (and differences) that are strangers to this place. Badiou (2003: 103) asserts that this is the sole possible path of its “resubjectivat[ion]” in Paul’s thought. Therefore, Paul cannot escape from the question of sexual difference. So, how does Paul deal with this trouble? For Badiou (2003: 104-106), Paul aims to create a condition that will allow his “universalizing egalitarianism” to operate. What is Paul’s egalitarianism? It is the egalitarianism that is concretized in the formula of “neither nor” (Badiou 2003: 9). There is no doubt that the desperate inequality between these terms (Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female) necessitates an intervention, and so Paul applies the method of “subsequent symmetrization”. More clearly, Paul subjects men to the exact conditions women are subjected to make his proposed egalitarianism function. Here, the crucial point is that Paul does not assume an abstract equality between the terms of differences. Once again, it is important to emphasize that these two characteristics of Paul, i.e., ex-centeredness and egalitarian formula, are the fundamental reasons for Badiou’s attempt to rework this figure as one of “our contemporary”. Badiou interprets Paul with all these burning questions in his mind and analogizes his practices to those of Lenin, within a context in which the heroic subject of the revolutionary era is lost and the “communitarization” is consolidated in the realm of politics. What Badiou tells us when we read him with the burning questions of ours? While Paul carries the crucial characteristics of being ex-centered and adhering to the formula of “neither nor” that is followed with a certain method of symmetrization, the existence of these qualities in Badiou’s own theoretical framework constitutes another question. Could Badiou, while appreciating Paul, establish similar instruments in his work for being indifferent to differences? Jayne Svenungsson’s criticism of Badiou might help us to elaborate on this issue later in this chapter.

There will not be a discussion of Svenungsson’s viewpoint there, but it is meaningful to note that one of her fundamental criticisms of Badiou is that there is not enough room for the examination of structural inequalities in his thought, which necessitates distinguishing differences from one another because some differences are intertwined

with histories of oppression, dominance, and exploitation. While a lengthy discussion about Badiou's approach to the question of sexual differences and inequalities would be impossible for now, a brief example might be explicative here. While contemplating upon feminism, Badiou (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 180) emphasizes that the creation of a realm that is "beyond the old forms of the difference" is situated at the core of this theoretico-political project. It is not the complete rejection of the sexual difference itself, or the annihilation of the current dominant part of the contradiction, but the abolition of the existing form that is at stake here. In Badiou's view, this process does not amount to a mere negation, but rather should be seen as "the creation of a generic point" (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 182). As a result of this process, which is described as a "generic process", the unequal conditions between the terms of the contradiction had been abolished, but the difference is still there. In the following sections, I will discuss the relation between Badiou's notions of generic and generic process, and Balibar's proposal to think of the anthropological differences as a realm for questioning the meaning of human(ness) in brief.

#### **4.1.2. The Criticism of Paul's Indifference**

In light of Badiou's interpretation of Saint Paul, it is time to revisit the above-mentioned question: Could Badiou's communism be identified as "abstract"? According to Elisabeth Paquette, the author of *Universal Emancipation: Race Beyond Badiou*, the answer is a nuanced "Yes". Paquette's (2020: 65-66) initial criticism is that Badiou is "inattentive" to the racial question even though it is one of the most crucial conundrums of Marxism as a theoretical and political project. In place of an elaborative conceptualization over race and racial question, there is only a negative conception of racial identity in his thought, Paquette suggests. Within this framework, race, as a category of thought and politics, is regarded as "unnecessary". For Paquette, it is not possible to discard the racial identities and their "positive" aspect for politics of emancipation. However, Badiou's theoretical position does not allow him to incorporate such an affirmative conception because his idea of universality is "over and against difference" (Paquette 2020: 87). In Paquette's framework (2020: 93), the position in question is defined as the "politics of

indifference” and because it involves the abandonment of the identitarian categories, it is criticized as an inadequate framework to make sense of the political movements that are mobilized around such categories.

In other words, Paquette reproduces Césaire’s criticisms, but this time, Badiou is under fire, not Thorez. Is Paquette’s criticism regarding Badiou’s relation to the racial question legitimate? Throughout this section, I aim to answer this question, and in this respect, it is first necessary to define how the politics of indifference is framed in her work. Identities are tantamount to differences in Badiou’s work, according to Paquette (2020: 30), which includes these notions’ dual comprehension (and criticism). First, the notion of identity is well compatible with the necessities of financialized capitalism and its “monetary abstraction” as explained in detail in *Saint Paul*. Instead of requiring uniformity, capital symphonizes with the prolific identity categories (Badiou 2003: 6-7). Second, for Badiou (2003: 11), there is an unrelation between the notion of identity and the truth procedures: “For if it is true that every truth erupts as singular, its singularity is immediately universalizable. Universalizable singularity necessarily breaks with identitarian singularity.” Hence, the crucial question in terms of a politics of emancipation is to demarcate these two forms of singularity from each other. This is where Paquette discusses Badiou’s approach to race and gender to comprehend the (non)importance that is attached to them in his thought. Badiou’s well-quoted answer to a question that Peter Hallward poses presents his point of view:

When I hear people say “we are oppressed as blacks, as women,” I have only one problem: what exactly is meant by “black” or “women”? If this or that particular identity is put into play in the struggle against oppression, against the state, my only problem is with the exact political meaning of the identity being promoted. Can this identity, in itself, function in a progressive fashion, that is, other than as a property invented by the oppressors themselves? (Badiou & Hallward 1998: 118).

For Paquette (2020: 31-32), there is a direct relation between Badiou’s answer and his criticism of the notion of representation. Because representation and the horizon of politics accompanying this notion amounts to the “State-based ways of counting”, it does not deserve to be identified as emancipatory. Badiou (& Hallward 1998: 118-

119) differentiates the “identitarian” or “syndical status” and the “political status” of a category. When the purpose is the reincorporation of a category into a situation, and not the abolishment of the situation itself, then, it amounts to the identitarian or syndicalist usage of the category in question. To acquire a political characteristic, a category should be defined not through its particularity but in its relation “to all”. This is what the politics of indifference amounts to. In Paquette’s view (2020: 35-37), the Badiouian position has three fundamental characteristics: at first, the politics of indifference aspires to the total transformation of the situation and not its reformation, second, it necessitates universalization, and third, it bases on the idea of “generic humanity”. Paquette (2020: 38) points out that, under one condition, the name of a particularity can be used as an emancipatory category in his framework. This condition is the materialization of this name through “a political event, or a process toward political emancipation”. Like a matryoshka doll, this condition contains another condition in itself: For Badiou (2016: 24), this particular name needs to be spelled in the context of war, or a “violent opposition”, to possess an emancipatory meaning. Except for this oppositional situation, there remains a hiatus between truth and particularities:

But in order for people to become gripped by truth, it is imperative that universality not present itself under the aspect of a particularity. Differences can be transcended only if benevolence with regard to customs and opinions presents itself as *an indifference that tolerates differences* (Badiou 2003: 99).

As stated above, Paquette (2020: 77) criticizes an indifferent position towards differences, which she equates to identities, and proposes an affirmative interpretation of the notion of identity, and “a positive conception of race” in particular. For the author, the inclusion of an affirmative conception is crucial not to be drawn into the vortex of Eurocentrism, and thus not to propose a deficient idea of emancipation. To present such a conception, Paquette draws inspiration from the critical theories of race. Within the literature that Paquette (2020: 78-79) focuses on, racism is described as a system of oppression, domination, and exploitation that includes the constitution of the hierarchical racial categories and also “the suppression of differences”. If racism continues to exist not only with the constructed categories of racial hierarchization but also with the suppression of the categories of

difference, then Paquette (2020: 79-87) concludes that the politics of emancipation must affirm such suppressed categories and propose “race as a meaningful category” to avoid becoming assimilationist and Eurocentric. However, Paquette insists, Badiou’s thought does not have such an affirmative or positive horizon with regard to differences and is not capable of conceiving the existence of the “racial identity” besides the constructed hierarchical conceptions of race, thus carries the risk of falling into the trap of Eurocentrism.

At this point, I will begin with the criticism of Eurocentrism to the examination of Paquette’s approach to Badiou. Returning to Césaire’s letter, which is also a reference point for her, it is apparent that at the core of a Eurocentrist attitude, which Césaire (2010: 150) illustrates with the notion of “fraternalism”, there is the constant demarcation of the concrete and the abstract, the periphery and the metropole, to the detriment of the first component, and to the benefit of the latter component which draws its strength from the generalization of a false abstract(ion). What form did this abstraction take in the context of PCF? It took the form of a particular idea of social and political progress that is exemplified by Europe, which was effective enough to result in a specific idea of Marxism. However, it had no theoretical, political, or organizational instrument to deal with the question of colonialism. As Césaire highlighted, PCF’s prioritization of a “progressive” conception of history resulted in a severe demarcation:

Or again, amounting to the same thing, I say that there will be no communism unique to each of the colonial countries subject to France as long as the rue St-Georges offices —the offices of the French Communist Party’s colonial branch, the perfect counterpart of the Ministry of Overseas France on rue Oudinot— persist in thinking of our countries as mission fields or as countries under mandate (Césaire 2010: 150).

At this point, it is hard to resist the temptation to analogize the position of the administrators of the PCF with those of the prominent figures of the Church at the Jerusalem conference, as well as to compare the conflict between Césaire and Thorez with the conflict that led to the organization of the Jerusalem conference. While the question in the latter context is about determining the conditions for being a Christian subject, the question in the former context is about the conditions for being the

subject of Marxism. However, in light of the explanation with regard to Paul, I will argue that it is impossible to criticize the Badiouian position for being open to Eurocentrism. It is impossible not only because Badiou regards Paul's "ex-centered" character as a vital characteristic of the militant subject, but it is impossible also because Badiou's generic process is not based upon a false abstraction, instead, instrumentalized to represent all. Paulinian indifference that Badiou asserts is not "against difference" but aims at the traversal of differences for the universalization of its egalitarianism. As Badiou shows in his interpretation of the Jerusalem conference as well as feminist politics, an indifferent position does not amount to the suppression of the non-dominant element and the generalization of the dominant one.

I think it is also crucial to comment on Paquette's emphasis on the importance of a "positive conception of race". In her view (2020: 87), its importance results from the fact that it is possible "to maintain difference to avoid patterns of Eurocentrism" through such a conception. Within this line of thought, a positive conception of race or racial identity is required to resist the decisiveness of "whiteness". In a sense, this is the fundamental critique directed at Badiou. Paquette asserts that instead of emancipating the non-colonized aspects of the identities, which include elements such as collective memory, history, joy, pride, creativity, etc., Badiou displaces the category of identity as a whole on behalf of emancipation and considers it nonpolitical (Paquette 2020: 77-78; 160). At this point, I will argue that the absence of such a positive conception in Badiou's thought is related to the "ex-centered" and "universalizable" character of truths that is covered above. Not a figure that embodies a positive conception (of race, etc.), but a figure that is subjectivized through being incorporated into a truth procedure is at stake here. To illustrate this distinction, I will refer to a crucial distinction that the Black Panther Party pointed out.

As Haider (2018: 13-14) discusses in detail, one of the prominent occupations of the Panthers was to differentiate their theoretico-political position from the other nationalist movements of that period. A major irreconcilable difference between the Panthers and others, whose standpoint was labeled as "cultural" or "pork-chop nationalism", was about a core question, namely, whether the horizon of the struggle

is structured around the aim of embracing and acknowledging the Black identity as a cultural element or whether the struggle seeks emancipation from whole structures of oppression, domination, and exploitation. For the Panthers, there was no room for doubt and the latter path was the correct one to follow. In the words of Huey P. Newton, which Haider underlines, “to draw a line of demarcation” was indispensable to assert their difference from the position of “the black bourgeoisie”:

As Newton pointed out, reactionary nationalism put forth an ideology of racial identity, but it was also based on a material phenomenon. Desegregation had made it possible for black businessmen and politicians to enter into the American power structure on a scale that had not been possible before, and these elites were able to use racial solidarity as a means of covering up their class positions. If they claimed to represent a unitary racial community with a unified interest, they could suppress the demands of black working people whose interests were, in reality, entirely different from theirs (Haider 2018: 18).

As opposed to the ideological standpoint of the bourgeoisie camp, which was identified as potential “enemies” (Newton 1968: 4-5), Panthers pursued a “cross-racial” and solidaristic struggle with the non-Black organizations that shared the same horizon of emancipation with them. Within this framework, it is clear that the line drawn by the Panthers is not identitarian, that is, it is not based on pre-given elements. Instead, it is a line that is drawn throughout the materialization of their struggle. Therefore, it is a political line that is grounded on the aspiration of emancipation from both racism and capitalism rather than the framework of a racial identity. I think Panthers’ line of demarcation could be understood through Badiou’s conception of “subjectivation” and its infinite character.

According to Badiou (2010: 3), it is impossible to think of the “Idea of communism” without its subjective aspect. What kind of a subject and process of becoming a subject, i.e., subjectivation are at stake in his thought? In this framework, a subject is someone who is transfigured through “a political truth procedure”. In Badiou’s words, such a transfiguration can be described as “incorporation” because the human animal deserves to be named as a subject when it is inserted into a truth procedure. In a sense, subjectivation is a process within which the predominant parameters of human animality are being abandoned and replaced with the parameters of a truth

procedure. Here, I want to underline the “infinitezation” as the most paramount of these parameters.

For Badiou (2010: 6-7), the placement of the notions of event and “‘State’ or ‘state of the situation’” in the axis of possibility and impossibility can be helpful to understand them. While the constitutive characteristic of the event is its capacity to give room to “new possibilities”, the “‘State’ or ‘state of the situation’” is definable through its blockage of such possibilities. Hence, Badiou asserts, whereas the attempts to preserve the existing structure of the capitalist state are in accordance with a Statist perspective, its abandonment necessitates an openness to the possibilities that points at both the beyond of the capitalist market economy and its administrative and ideological structures. As inscribing into a truth procedure amounts to persevering in “the consequences of an event”, a subject is someone who is not content with the limitation of possibilities and instead aims at their “infinitezation”. At this point, the critical character of the concept of truth procedure, and hence the “Idea of communism” in Badiou’s (2010: 2) thought is that it is both localized, in other words, “historical”, and also “universal”. There is no abstract conception in this framework, but rather an “Idea” that takes different historical shapes. In a sense, the constitutive characteristic of this Idea is not its abstractness, but its radical rejection of the State. Since the Idea is built upon the aim of the concretization of what is deemed impossible from the perspective of the State, it incessantly strives for the removal of this perspective, which Badiou defines as the “subtraction of power from the State” (2010: 12).

Does not subjectivation whose foremost characteristic is its radical distance or subtractive stance from the State amount to the creation of political bonds? I will argue that the elements that were stated above (collective memory, history, joy, pride, creativity) which Paquette regards as belonging to a positive conception of race, in essence, belong to bonds which acquire different names in different contexts, such as comradeship, sisterhood, etc. At this point, I would like to retell a scene that Ross narrates in *Communal Luxury*. After the defeat of the Paris Commune, the Communards who were not massacred were exiled to New Caledonia. There was an uprising in Algeria at the same time as the Commune, known as “Kabyle” or

“Mokrani uprising”. Like the Communards, the defeated Algerian insurgents were also exiled to this archipelago. Ross quotes a passage from the memoirs of a Communard with regard to the arrival of these insurgents to exile:

“The night approached; somber and silent, the defeated of Algeria and the defeated of the Commune sat side by side, thinking of those they loved, of the unraveling of their existence and the destruction of their dream of liberty (Allemane 1981; as cited in Ross 2015: 53).”

Regardless of whether there is a constructed political bond between them, this soulful quotation illustrates the fact that the defeated Communards and Algerian insurgents have more in common with each other than those with whom they share a racial identity. In a sense, these bonds transcend what is given; they are bonds created and recreated within the struggle, and therefore, cannot be confined within the framework of identities. Politics of emancipation cannot be based on a “positive” conception of identity, but rather on subjectivization that aims at the “infinitezation” of new possibilities. It is indeed Badiou who, in *Black: The Brilliance of a Non-Color*, interprets the relationship between the Panthers and the Weatherman<sup>9</sup> as a path towards “political universalism”. For him, two main attitudes can be identified in the face of color-based discrimination. “Black is beautiful” is the first attitude, which aims to present the positive aspects of Black identity. It is at stake in the second attitude to distance oneself from the “symbolic extension” of any color-related affirmation. In a sense, it can be thought of as a position of indifference.

Nevertheless, the existence of differences cannot be avoided, and there are differences among differences, which makes it crucial to consider the procedures of differentiation and their theoretico-political consequences. In the next section, I will address Paulinian indifference first through the lens of Jayne Svenungsson’s criticisms and then Balibar’s account of the anthropological differences in brief.

#### **4.1.3. Thinking Difference in Badiou with Svenungsson**

In the previous section, I set out to show that Badiou’s indifference towards differences cannot be interpreted as an attempt at false or pseudo universalization.

---

<sup>9</sup> Founded under the strong influence of 1968, the Weatherman or the Weather Underground aimed at abolishing both imperialism and class-based society and forged solidaristic ties with the Black Panther Party.

Because Badiou's work is not concerned with the suppression of differences but with their traversal through a generic process, I claimed that such a critique, which is concretized in the criticism of Eurocentrism, is based upon a flawed perspective. As it is obvious, however, the critique of Paquette's criticism does not exempt Badiou from being the target of other relevant critical perspectives. One such remarkable criticism can be found in Jayne Svenungsson's writing on *Saint Paul*.

According to Svenungsson (2021: 5), Badiou's focus on this prominent figure of Christianity provides him with a substantial theoretical repertoire. As the ardent critic of the confinement of the Gospel's message both through particularization (via the prioritization of Jewishness) or subordination to the pre-established legal or philosophical "generalities" (Badiou 2003: 14-15), Paul appears as a perfect analogical figure within Badiou's writing. However, Svenungsson asserts that for all of Badiou's (and other prominent theoreticians) initiatives to reconstitute the idea of universality in the wake of the millennium, it is not possible to argue that the universalist stance is the fundamental current within the politics of emancipation. In a sense, it would be an exaggeration to assert that there is a direct determinative relation between theoretical and political practice, but Svenungsson (2021: 6) stresses that Badiou's inadequacy in considering "particular experiences of oppression" weakens his proposal and attempt to reconstitute universality. In her view, there is no proper theorization of the "difference between differences" in Badiou's thought, which leads him to melt all the unassimilable forms of difference into the same pot and criticize them through the presentation of the complementarity between the manifestations of various differences and the functioning of financialized capitalism. With a reference to this passage in *Saint Paul*, Svenungsson illustrates Badiou's inattentiveness:

What inexhaustible potential for mercantile investments in this upsurge — taking the form of communities demanding recognition and so-called cultural singularities— of women, homosexuals, the disabled, Arabs! And these infinite combinations of predicative traits, what a godsend! Black homosexuals, disabled Serbs, Catholic pedophiles, moderate Muslims, married priests, ecologist yuppies, the submissive unemployed, prematurely aged youth! Each time, a social image authorizes new products, specialized magazines, improved shopping malls, "free" radio stations, targeted

advertising networks, and finally, heady “public debates” at peak viewing times. Deleuze put it perfectly: capitalist deterritorialization requires a constant reterritorialization (Badiou 2003: 10).

For Svenungsson, Badiou is unable to distinguish incomparable subject positions and experiences from each one either due to the latent irreconcilableness between the manifestation of differences and the concept of universal in his thought or because he “confuses difference with particularism” (Marty 2007: 27-28, as cited in Svenungsson 2021: 8). According to the author, however, the adoption of an adequate criteria to differentiate differences is a requisite for politics of emancipation. In a similar fashion to McGowan (2020: 185), Svenungsson (2021: 14) draws attention that there is an attempt to create confusion around the slogan “Black Lives Matter” by producing counter slogans such as “White Lives Matter”. To confront such attempts of pacification, a “compass” is needed.

Svenungsson (2021: 13-14) proposes the idea of “radical incarnation” as a foundation to differentiate differences, that is, to comprehend whether or not a claim is based on a genuine experience of oppression, domination, or exploitation. This line of thinking presents Christ’s image as “a broken, bruised, and suffering human body” as the constituent element of a universalistic perspective. Such an image built on “the sensual, embodied or incarnate level of common human life” allows us to comprehend the element that traverses all living beings. Svenungsson asserts that if Badiou’s proposal to affirm the Paulinian indifference to differences is articulated with the perspective of “radical incarnation”, it can be possible to discern genuine and pseudo claims of difference. It can be said that such a proposal of articulation relies on the idea of the shared vulnerability of all living beings, including both human and non-human ones, each equal in their vulnerability. Harmonizing Badiou’s thought with the idea of a shared vulnerability as the basis of universalization, however, would become, at best, a hopeless and, at worst, an incompatible endeavor.

There is a strict distinction between the conceptions of Man as “an immortal” and as “a living organism pure and simple” in Badiou’s thought (2001: 11-12). Even though humans are part of the “animal universe,” their relationship to truth and truth processes cannot be found in the intersection set shared with other living beings

(Badiou & Hallward 1998: 128). The characteristic that is unique to man and does not belong to other beings within this universe is the potential of “subjectivation” or to be “an immortal”, which have the same meaning and are inherent in all humans (Badiou 2001: 12). In Badiou’s thought, the attempt to discuss man with a reference to its liveliness as an organism amounts to conceiving man as a victimized figure which cannot get through the process of subjectivation.

In *Ethics*, Badiou (2001: 11) discusses the direct and indirect consequences of this victimized conception in detail. Even in the most horrific conditions, like a concentration camp, there is a possibility that differentiates man from a victim, according to Badiou. While the potential to be incorporated into a truth procedure is open to all, the reduction of man to its bare existence results in a stark contrast between victims and their saviors. This is the logic that lies behind the idea of humanitarian interventionism. One more criticism can be made of the ethical conception based on the vulnerable or victim character of the human. For Badiou (2001: 13-14), the starting point of such a position is to be “against an Evil we recognize a priori”. In contrast, Badiou suggests starting with an Idea or “Good” that the subject would be faithful to because to be inscribed into humanity means to be able to think and act on new possibilities. For these reasons, I will argue that Svenungsson’s proposal is not compatible with the Badiouian framework.

However, I think Svenungsson’s (2021: 6) criticism about the absence of the examination of “particular experiences of oppression” in his thought can be seen as worthwhile to think upon. For the author, it is without a doubt that Badiou is critical of exploitative and oppressive power structures. However, Svenungsson (2021: 9) asserts, “he renounces the critical tools for making difference between differences – for distinguishing, for example, between the ethical status of black homosexual people and that of Catholic pedophiles”. Svenungsson argues that the proposal that Badiou puts forward in *Black: The Brilliance of a Non-Color* also supports her criticism. It is proposed in this book that a politics that deserves to be called emancipatory should leave behind “any use of so-called colors”: “The maxim would then become: to put an end to any use of so-called colors in all forms of deliberation and collective action. We need to establish once and for all that a politics of

emancipation has nothing to do with colors – in terms of norms and hierarchies, of course, but also in terms of objectivity (Badiou 2017).” I think the problematic aspect that needs attention (or criticism) here is the lack of a proposal for a mechanism to enable the functioning of the egalitarian formula, like Paul’s above-mentioned method of “subsequent symmetrisation”.

At this point, I will ask whether we can conceive of Badiou’s insistence on the Paulinian indifference with a reference to Balibar’s discussion of anthropological differences. To discuss the relevance of such a relation, I want to return to Badiou’s interpretation of feminism. As stated above, Badiou (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 182) affirms the horizon of feminism, which centralizes the aim of rooting the dominant structuration of sexual difference out to be able to reconstruct the difference or “to find the generic point”:

To find the generic point of the contradiction or of a difference is to find the way to go beyond the difference, and not only to treat the point of opposition between the terms of the difference, but to create a common space which is beyond the difference - that is, beyond the difference in its old form, such that it is not the resolution of the contradiction or the suppression of the difference. It is, rather, the complete transformation of the form of the difference, of the way the difference exists. And I think this is the creation of a generic point, because to do this we always have to understand clearly the common genericness of the two terms of the difference, and it is not so easy, for example, to find exactly what is the common point, the generic common point, of men and women. There is a false solution that consists in saying that man and woman are equally human, or something along those lines. Precisely because it is not easy there is the temptation to reference something like equal rights in the sense that a woman is exactly the same thing as a man, or has to be exactly the same thing as a man. But that is not really the generic process. The generic process is to find the common generic point that is beyond the old forms, which is the creation of something like a new humanity (Badiou & Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 182).

In a sense, the emphasis Svenungsson makes on Badiou’s inattentiveness in terms of scrutinizing the structures of dominance that are based upon the anthropological differences which were discussed in the preceding chapter has merit. Having said that, Badiou’s emphasis on the creation of a generic point allows us to think that his thought proposes an affirmative aspect for conceiving such differences as the

possible constituent elements of “a new humanity” when these differences are freed from the agonistic or contradictory frameworks in which they are situated in.

Therefore, I propose that the Paulinian indifference asserted in *Saint Paul* can be articulated with Balibar’s analysis of anthropological differences, as both of them leave the door open for the imagination of novel forms of social relations based on these differences, despite the irreconcilable theoretical and political differences between Badiou and Balibar, which I will touch on in the last section. In this context, I would like to recall Balibar’s “philosophical thesis” concerning the role of the interrogations on the anthropological differences for human beings: “[I]n the idea of the human as such, there is essentially *nothing else* except for this insistent question regarding differences” (2020: 104-105). On the one hand, such questionings are instrumentalized as cogs in the wheel of ideology, however, on the other hand, the desire for interrogation is a “transhistorical” quest to comprehend the human being in all its complexity. All in all, I think both Badiou’s emphasis on the generic point as a creation and Balibar’s differentiation of the unassimilable aspect of the questioning of differences within human societies would point out the possibility of incorporating anthropological differences into the comprehension of universality to arrive at a conception that does not suppress but articulates the idea of difference(s).

#### **4.2. Rights Between Human Animality and Immortality**

After a detailed discussion of Badiou’s idea of indifference to differences, criticisms directed at this idea, and the proposal to associate Badiou’s position on differences with Balibar’s examination of anthropological differences, it is time to consider how Badiou conceives of bourgeois universalism concretized in the figure of citizen. It would be recalled that Marx’s interpretation of the relationship between man and citizen was based on their disjunction, whereas Balibar’s interpretation emphasized their identification. In a sense, Badiou’s position is a return to Marx’s disjunction thesis, but with metamorphosed conceptions of history, politics, and subject.

To understand his interpretation of the disjunction in question, it is essential to present the foundational premise of Badiou’s “political anthropology”. Based on an

Aristotelian theme, which corresponds to the distinction between “human life” and the life pursued on the trail of “the highest element within us”, Badiou draws a strict distinction between “human animal” and “immortal” (Watkin 2015: 44). As Christopher Watkin (2015: 43-45) emphasizes, the focus Badiou places on Aristotle’s distinction in *Nicomachean Ethics*, leads him to distance himself from the concept of *zoon politikon*. As opposed to the implicit equalization of human and animal, which is the core presupposition of this concept, Badiou aims to activate an element of transcendence or irreducibility. In Watkin’s interpretation, transcendence is concretized through the potential to be incorporated into a truth process that presents the unique character of humans within the set of living beings:

In Badiou’s own language the choice is between animality and communism, a ‘communism of the idea’ that, like Aristotle’s immortal, adds a third term, unmoved and unmoving, to the ever-changing circulation of bodies and languages. This third term locates Badiouian immortality as a peculiarly human affair because it relies on a specifically human capacity for thought. Badiou defines the human and the political in terms of this capacity for thought (Watkin 2015: 46).

Of course, Badiou’s interpretation of bourgeois universalism is based on the fundamental categories of the political anthropology in question. For Badiou (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 178-179), therefore, there is either “the rights of the infinite” or “the right to be a human animal”. For him, the figure of the human animal, the main character of “capitalist anthropology”, has two characteristics; the first is that it is conceived as an animal in pursuit of their “self-interest”, and the second is that it is situated “before the market”. Apart from being a part of a truth process, which amounts to the process of “becoming-subject” in Badiou’s (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 177) thought and identified as to be an “infinite” being, there is no possible path to get free from the stage that the “capitalist anthropology” sets.

There are two crucial aspects of Badiou’s interpretation of “capitalist anthropology”. First, Badiou states that because its fundamental assumptions are based upon the demands of capitalism, which necessitates the use of violence to perpetuate itself, it is “an ideology of war”. Second, Badiou insists that the idea of “becoming-subject”

should not be misidentified with to be in a position of constant negation. In Badiou's (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 179) thought, the subject is not an oppositional one, but rather affirmation lies at the core of this process of becoming: "The rights of the infinite are not the rights of negation; that would be a return to the Hegelian vision. It is not simply a question of being 'against' the market and the 'yuppie' world." Affirmation points at the creation of a "generic" point which amounts to the advent of a novel articulation.

In fact, Badiou's distance from the notion of negation results from his interpretation of dialectics. The conception of dialectics peculiar to the 19th century, Badiou (& Hallward 2003: 123-124) argues, incorporated an idea of progress, which constituted the superimposition of "politics and history" and resulted in the assumption that the subject of politics could be derived from the anticipated succession. A century later, however, the idea of progress is interrupted by decisionism and "the force of political will" that dominate the realm of politics, as seen in the prominence of the party-form within the politics of emancipation. During that period, dialectics was conceived as "the antagonism, and hence the negativity", a perspective which Badiou considers ineffective in the present time.

Badiou's distinction between the main figure of "capitalist anthropology" and the figure of immortal activated through a truth process is what distinguishes him from Balibar. In a similar vein to Marx, Badiou regards the framework embodied in the *Declaration* as a deceit, where the figure of the "market animal" lies at the bottom of its ideological framework which is structured around the sacralized idea of rights. Where Badiou sees deceit, Balibar sees the antinomic character of universality, which oscillates between moments of insurrection and institutionalization, and whose conatus lies within this oscillation.

Despite the agreement on the disidentification of the man and citizen, Badiou's thought, and Marxism are also at cross purposes. For Badiou (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 174), the equalization of the name of "proletariat" with the idea of a total emancipation deserves to be labeled as either "too metaphysical or too dialectical". The metaphysical or dialectical element in such a conception is the

anticipation that is attached to the name of “proletariat”. In Badiou’s understanding (2015: 45-47), however, there is no such anticipation. As stated above, Badiou abandons the idea of dialectics that is peculiar to the 19th or the 20th centuries, instead, focuses on the invention of “a new way of thinking and doing collective action”, in other words, “a politics of truth”.

At this point, Badiou (2015: 55-56) clarifies the idea of “political universality” that is embedded in his thought through a comeback to the notion of generic. Generic appears as a creation that enables us to restructure the present order of things within a framework in which neither contradiction nor negation have a place. However, generic is not supposed to mean a “general or total” idea of emancipation, Badiou asserts. It would be helpful at this point to illustrate with an example. Throughout a discussion about the character of the political practice of *L’Organisation politique*<sup>10</sup> on sans-papiers, Badiou (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 174-175) emphasizes that one of the fundamental differences between them and other political organizations that also dealt with the same issue is that *L’Organisation politique* chooses to frame the struggle of sans-papiers with the term “worker” rather than “foreigner”. Hence, *L’Organisation politique* moves sans-papiers out of a debate about difference and embeds them in a realm of universality through the reconfiguration of the question at hand.

#### **4.2.1. Evental Universality or “the Thief in the Night”**

It is now time to discuss the evental character of Badiou’s universalism and the conception of subject embedded in this proposal. If it does not have an antinomic character due to the rejection of the idea of the identification of man and citizen or based upon a name like the “proletariat” that connotes the anticipation of a total emancipation, how has universality been conceived in Badiou’s thought? Once again, I will turn to *Saint Paul* for thinking on this question. The core argument Badiou (2003: 109-111) presents is that universality “*produces* a sameness and an equality”. The crucial point in his emphasis is that these are not presupposed, but

---

<sup>10</sup> *L’Organisation politique* (Organisation Politique) is a collective that was founded in 1984-1985. With Sylvain Lazarus and Natacha Michel, Badiou was a prominent figure in this organization, which is regarded as the concretization of his concept of “a politics without party” (Hallward 2003: 43).

rather produced through the traversal of differences. For him, such a position deserves to be defined as “nonconformist”, and the subject is the one who endures not to conform and instead perseveres for the sake of the universal.

Grace, faith, and love will be the three themes that I will focus on to delve into Badiou’s interpretation of Paul. The militant nature of Paul deserves scrutinization, according to Badiou (2003: 2), because it has become lost in the present time. What are the known elements of Paul’s life? He was a Jew, a Roman citizen, and also someone who was responsible for the violence that Christians were subjected to at the time. What was the turning point of Paul’s life? In the narrative, while he was traveling to Damascus in search of the Christians, Jesus appeared to him, and in consequence of such a sudden encounter, Paul turned into a Christian who devoted his life to the proliferation of this religion (Badiou 2003: 16). The significance of this figure in Badiou’s thought is that Paul presents the essential characteristics of both the event and the “subjective figure” that is faithful to the event.

For a clearer explanation, Badiou (2003: 49-50) compares the interpretation of Paul and Pascal regarding Christ’s resurrection. While Pascal conceives this event as a “mediation,” Paul comprehends it with a reference to its “self-sufficient” character. It is Pascal who is searching for proof, while Paul is predicated on faith. In a consistent manner with the critique of the conception of dialectics that is peculiar to the 19th and 20th centuries, Badiou interprets the event in question based on a non-dialectical argumentation:

Grace, consequently, is not a “moment” of the Absolute. It is affirmation without preliminary negation; it is what comes upon us in caesura of the law. It is pure and simple *encounter*. [...] This de-dialectization of the Christ-event allows us to extract a formal, wholly secularized conception of grace from the mythological core. Everything hinges on knowing whether an ordinary existence, breaking with time’s cruel routine, encounters the material chance of serving a truth, thereby becoming, through subjective division and beyond the human animal’s survival imperatives, an immortal (Badiou 2003: 66).

The theme of distance that Paul put between law and grace is another vital element in Badiou’s interpretation (2003: 76-78). In order for truth to persist, law should be distanced since the fundamental characteristic of truth is that it is “offered to all”

(Hallward 2003: xxvii), in other words, it is universalizable, while law is particularistic. Nevertheless, Badiou (2003: 87-92) finds another definition of law in Paul, which is the consequence of faithfulness and is called “love”. It’s a question of law versus law, or the “statist” law versus the “nonliteral” law of love which ensures that truth becomes universalized and does not withdraw into the boundaries of the faithful subject. In a sense, love can be defined as an animating force, which provides the universalization of the truth that the event sparks off. What kind of love is spoken of? According to Badiou, Paul’s love does not dissolve the subject before the loved one; rather, it is founded on “self-love”, since the self is the consequence of the evental encounter and of the fidelity shown to it. In a word, the subject is a figure that the truth of the event traverses. However, the condition of being a subject is the companionship of love to the traversal in question: “This also means there is no instantaneous salvation; grace itself is no more than the indication of a possibility. The subject has to be given in his labor, and not only in his sudden emergence. “Love” is the name of that labor. Truth for Paul is never anything but “faith working through love” (Gal. 5.6) (Badiou 2003: 91-92).”

However, there is a well-founded criticism that targets Badiou’s affirmation of Paul as the concretization of a militant position that aims at the universalization of a truth that is set off as a result of an event. For example, James D. Ingram (2005: 568-569) underlines that Badiou’s comprehension of transformation is liable to encounter significant difficulties at the moment when it is tested. According to Ingram’s criticism, the comprehension of the universalizable character of a truth is vulnerable in the face of the situation of concretization. Therefore, Badiou’s theoretical framework enables us to conceptualize Paul, but not the church, and revolution, but not its institutionalization. For Ingram (2005: 571), what lies at the root of such a weakness is Badiou’s “attempt to combine radical subjectivism with abstract formalism”. In essence, this critique asserts that no transformation can be achieved through a complete break from the situation, and such a comprehension amounts to an impossible apprehension.

Jayne Svenungsson (2021: 5-7) is another critic who targets Badiou for the same theoretico-political reason that Ingram emphasizes. According to Svenungsson,

Badiou's overemphasis on Paul's distance from law and overvaluation of grace can be interpreted as the indication of a soft spot in his thought. Badiou does not examine the concrete conditions that precede and enable both the event and the subject that is traversed through the event. In Badiou's framework, the material character of the encounter that Paul experienced on the road to Damascus is not explained with structural, causative, or historical terms. Such an approach, according to Svenungsson, comprehends change only as a "radical disruption" and should be named as "voluntarist".

Towards the end, it is important to underline that the absence of a structural, causal, or historical explanation in Badiou's thought is attributed to his deviation from Marxism. Nick Hewlett (2006: 378-387) claims, for example, that a) the replacement of antagonism with subtraction, b) the overemphasis on faith rather than intention, and c) the confinement of politics to the moments of rupture are consequences of distancing from Marxism, which result in an inadequate explanation with regard to political change, social formations, and the relationship between the constituents of a social formation. Hewlett insists that the abandonment of Marx's theory of history leads Badiou to propose a "stop-go" approach to history as a result of his inability to comprehend the "movement" in it. In response to such criticisms, Badiou (2003: 111) insists that the sine qua non of being a subject is to show faith to an event, even when it is not there and "will come like a thief in the night".

Instead of responding to these criticisms with a concluding argument, I will leave the tension open with regards to Badiou's thought at this point. It is Badiou's configuration and discussion of a current problem with an affirmative perspective that I find inspirational and prolific about his attempt, which is why Badiou appears as one of the two central figures of this thesis. Instead of getting stuck into a merely oppositional perspective in the face of the colonization of the realm of politics with both the identitarian positions that are compatible with the financialized capitalism and the concomitant consolidation of an exclusionist form of politics, Badiou puts the question of subjectivization and the absence of the subject at the center of his discussion. It is difficult to periodize such a recent period, but Badiou provides us with a way to think about both the questions that still persist in our conjuncture as of

the time when *Saint Paul* was written, as well as the new burning questions that we are facing today, thanks to his interpretation of Paul. As his explanation about the concept of love in Paul's thought and practice proposes, if the holding of truths necessitates perseverance, it is crucial to incessantly think about and work towards the conditions of an idea of universality, which includes the creation of the adequate mechanisms for the functioning of the formula of "neither nor". It is what Badiou's reading of Paul taught to me: Emancipation has been, is and will continue to be laborious and the subject is the one who endures such laboriousness.

### **4.3. Conclusion**

For the purpose of the continuation of the discussion with regard to the relation between the idea of universality and its contentious relation to differences, Badiou's problematization of this relationship is examined with reference to the respective criticisms of Paquette and Svenungsson. After a critical evaluation of Paquette's criticism, I focused on Svenungsson's approach about the absence of a well-framed differentiation of differences in Badiou's thought and questioned the possibilities of thinking Balibar's notion of anthropological differences with Badiou's notion of generic processes. In what follows, however, I turned back to Badiou's interpretation of bourgeois universalism and intended to present how the terms of the debate are reconfigured in the theoretical scene that Badiou sets. At this point, it is discussed that while Badiou's theoretical framework refutes the idea of the identification of man and citizen differently from Balibar and in a way similar to Marx, the notions of political change and subject undergo a significant transformation when we move from Marx to Badiou. In the last section, I tried to examine the fundamental concepts, like grace, faith, and love, that Badiou focuses on throughout his specialized work on universality, *Saint Paul*, and present the limitations of his discussion that several critics pointed to.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION: THINKING UNIVERSALITY WITH BALIBAR AND BADIOU

Undoubtedly, each historical period comes with distinct theoretical and political conundrums. At the beginning of this thesis, it was addressed that the variedness of the contradictions within capitalist societies stimulated a convulsive discussion about the articulation of the diverse currents and actors of the politics of emancipation. It can be asserted that the fundamental tension that traversed the theoretical and political problem in question was related to the hardships in the comprehension of the relations between different structures of exploitation, domination, and oppression. In a sense, it was also an attempt to question the subject of the politics of emancipation in a context when the real experiences of socialism were on the rocks.

In fact, the prevalent discussion on the notion of universality in the left-wing theoretical circles of the late 1990s and the early 2000s can be regarded as the consequence of an aftershock, one after all the experiences had been washed up onto the shore and a new theoretical and political terrain had to be reconstituted. In such a conjuncture, within which the ideo-political power of left-wing thought was shaken, and the multiculturalist challenge was hegemonized, the attempt to rethink universality and its relation to notions such as difference and identity appeared as a theoretical prerequisite.

Although rooted in varied (and conflicting) theoretico-political genealogies, both Susan F. Buck-Morss' *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, the compilation of Laclau, Butler and Žižek's articles produced in consequence of an initiative of dialogue on universality, as well as Seyla Benhabib's insistence on not to discard the philosophical validity of this notion alongside Jürgen Habermas would be seen as the repercussions of the same problematic.

As we approach recent times, it is seen that a vivid debate about the resurgence of fascism has appeared. With the rise of political parties, figures, and movements with far-right agendas, multiple conceptualizations have emerged to describe this phenomenon, such as “post-fascism”, “late-fascism”, “neo-fascism”, etc. The examination of the emergent literature on fascism in our present time is outside the scope of this project. However, I want to underline a specific aspect of this phenomenon through which the meaning of a renewed attempt to focus on the notion of universality will take on a novel significance. In Enzo Traverso’s (2019: 40) words, it is the equalization of both exclusionist and non-exclusionist political positions that are related to either a difference or an identity under the label of ‘identity politics’ in a form as if there are no inequalities between the actors that are situated in these positions. According to Traverso, the juxtaposition of the far-right and decolonial political parties in France with a reference to their identity-related character or the circulation of idioms such as “anti-white racism” within the political realm are examples of such a non-differentiation and amounts to “a perverse way of legitimising racism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia”. Todd McGowan (2020: 184-185) is another theorist who asserted that the notion of identity politics has been instrumentalized to trivialize progressive movements such as Black Lives Matter and obscure their universalist character. In McGowan’s thought, the phenomenon in question functions through the creation of pseudo-antagonistic contradictions which are represented with slogans like “White Lives Matter” or “All Lives Matter”.

Gender is another terrain that the emergent far-right and/or fascistic movements have plundered with the purpose of manufacturing pseudo-antagonisms. As Judith Butler (2024: 15) scrutinized in their recent book in detail, “the anti-gender ideology movements” have started to conceive gender as a catastrophe and led to the manufacture of a world of panic, fear, and anxiety around this notion. In Butler’s thought, the attack on gender is a sort of disorientation or “an invitation to join a collective dream, perhaps a psychosis” in the face of the real and rather probable oncoming catastrophes, such as intense precarization or climate crisis. It is the same scene of psychosis that McGowan described in the context of BLM, in which the critics of identity politics aim at not universalization but incessant particularization, as well as the domination of the always already prevailing subject positions, as if the

ones who are under attack or deprived of fundamental rights belong to such positions.

For me, the pseudo-criticism of identity politics with the intention of the (re)fortification of the dominant and unequal structures and relations of power is a crucial element that necessitates a rethinking of universality in the present conjuncture. Throughout the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the fundamental impulse behind the attempt to rethink universality was to propose a theoretico-political path that got stuck in neither an impotent repetition of traditional forms of organization or conceptions of political subjectivity nor a mediocre identitarianism. In the meantime, our current impulse is to think on a theoretical-political horizon that consists of both constructing the categories of thinking that distinguish between genuine and pseudo criticisms of identity politics and discussing a concept of universality that allows for differences to be inscribed into.

In line with this purpose, I followed a tripartite path throughout the thesis which is based upon the close reading of the notion of universality in specific works of three philosophical figures: Marx, Balibar, and Badiou. In a sense, Marx's interpretation of the constitution of bourgeois universality which is concretized in *On the Jewish Question* served as an introduction for opening up the problematic with regard to universality and the dissentive place of difference(s) in the conceivability of this notion. In this section, it was addressed that the strict distinction between man and citizen and the spuriousness of the latter figure for the concealment of the initial figure of "capitalist anthropology" was at the heart of Marx's polemic with Bruno Bauer. For all the theoretical worthiness of Marx's interpretation, there were little ideational apparatuses to address the question of difference (either gender or sexual, ethnic or cultural, and other forms of differences) in his discussion with Bauer. I attempted to explain the source of such a lacuna with a reference to Wendy Brown's critique of the progressive historiography and proposed a periodization within Marx's thought.

At this point, I jumped from Marx's theoretical scene to Balibar's to examine the conceptual repertoire that is created to stimulate a discussion about the place of

differences within the notion of universality. In fact, Balibar's conceptualization with regard to anthropological differences provided an invaluable explanatory power to discuss the unevenness of bourgeois universality, which is concretized in the historical document of the *Declaration* and through its aftereffects. I tried to discuss that Balibar's crucial theoretical move in the context of differences is first, distinguishing the anthropological differences from those that do not have a direct relation to the question of the boundaries of what it means to be a human, and then proposing a recontextualization of anthropological differences by taking them out from the exclusionist genealogies in which they are rooted, and turning them into instances to comprehend what it means to be human through their reinscription into the transhistorical "desire to know" (2020a: 5-6; 2020b: 103-105).

When Balibar discusses the *Declaration*, however, there emerges an irreconcilable gap between his interpretations and Marx's. In Balibar's (1994a: 44-7) view, the distinctive characteristic of the *Declaration* is rooted in the double identification of man and citizen, as well as equality and liberty. According to this line of thought, the fissures between these notions, far from amounting to an illusion as it was asserted in *On the Jewish Question*, are the actuators of universality, which have always been and always will be antinomic. Therefore, the tension between institutionalization and insurrection cannot be resolved; it is instead a desirable element for the "democratization of democracy" (Balibar 2008: 526). However, the shift from the Marxist formulae of Man/Citizen to the Man=Citizen in Balibar's framework brings along severe criticism. Tomba's (2019: 66) interpretation of Balibar's proposal as "a bad infinity" is among the most prominent examples of such criticism. According to this critique, equaliberty and the antinomic universality that such a notion implies are locked within a "juridical framework" in which both the state and its representational apparatuses are a constant even though they can be challenged.

How does Badiou configure the formula that had a transformation in Balibar's framework? As a result of the jump from Balibar to Badiou, we are turning again to the formula of Man/Citizen, but with a different understanding of history and political subjectivity than what the early Marx envisioned. In the same manner as Marx, Badiou depicts the central figure of "capitalist anthropology" with a reference

to their selfish character, who becomes intelligible through their insertion into the market. In Badiou's interpretation, however, the terms of the doublet transform. In fact, the exact distinction is not made between man and citizen, but between the human animal and the immortal or infinite being (Watkin 2015: 44). This is the point where Badiou drifts apart from both Marx and Balibar. As it is examined in Chapter 2, despite the sharp distinction between man and citizen, the early Marx's interpretation had left the door open for a probable interpretation of successiveness. It is obvious that there is no room for such an idea of progression in Badiou's theoretical framework. On the contrary, Badiou faced severe criticism due to the constitutiveness of the concept of event and the inadequate explanatoriness of his theoretical framework in terms of examining political change apart from the episodes of rupture. In a sense, if Balibar's interpretation of the *Declaration* as the scene of a double identification results in "a bad infinity", Badiou's strict differentiation had the risk of being interpreted as the representation of "a pure voluntarism" (Bensaïd 2004: 101). Without arriving at a conclusion, I addressed such criticisms with the aim of presenting the tensions embedded in Badiou's thought.

Despite the irreconcilability between Balibar and Badiou with respect to their interpretation of the doublet in question, I am suggesting that it would be prolific to think the Pauline indifference to difference with Balibar's conceptualization of anthropological differences. Before a discussion about whether it is possible to relate them together, I presented Elisabeth Paquette's criticisms directed at Badiou and tried to demonstrate that it is not plausible to criticize Badiou as being Eurocentric based on the notion of indifference and the political position that such a notion implies. With the help of a close reading of *Saint Paul*, I suggested that far from concealing the relations and structures of power or amounting to an identification with the dominant parties in the context of a difference, Badiou's insistence on the "ex-centered" character of Paul and the particular importance gave to Paul's position in the Jerusalem Conference attest that Badiou tries to tackle with the question of difference(s). At this juncture, however, I proposed that incorporating Balibar's proposal to examine both the role of the anthropological differences in the context of the perpetuation of the different relations of exploitation, domination, and oppression and also their "not-yet" potentialities to expand the boundaries of the meaning of to

be a human would enhance Badiou's proposal about the traversal of differences, which gives rise to the probable misinterpretations due to its reticence about the concrete examination of the differences, their instrumentalizations and socio-political effects.

In sum, despite all the theoretical and political divisions between Balibar and Badiou (and of course without overlooking them), I intended to focus not only on their points of division but also the probable points in which that these two prolific philosophers that contemplate upon the conundrums of the present time would encounter and enhance our perspective. Having said that, it is required to acknowledge that because of the close reading of Badiou and Balibar, in a way to limit the project with their specialized works on the notion of universality, this work suffers from the lack of insights and discussions that a more comprehensive attempt of interpretation would provide. As I am well aware, discussing the oeuvres of these two philosophers would provide a more detailed and persuasive framework. Despite the fact that this would be an imperfect effort, I wanted to undertake this experimental journey to comprehend the probable as well as improbable aspects of thinking Badiou and Balibar together in the context of the examination of universality and its relation to difference due to the crucial importance of this concept in the current catastrophic condition of the world.

That being said, I would like to briefly address the topics this work inspired me for further studies. First, thinking on the relation between universality that is articulated for the sake of emancipatory politics and intersectionality as discussed in feminist and queer literature can be prolific. In what ways and to what extent can these two frameworks, dealing with the question of difference(s) and constructing a collective horizon of emancipation, shed light on each other? At this point, the significant level of discussion in feminist and queer literature regarding the different experiences of gender can provide a significant amount of insight and concreteness for the discussion regarding an emancipatory form of universality.

Another topic that always came to mind during writing this thesis, but I was unable to address, was the probable relationship between the concept of anthropological

difference and posthuman literature. What would be the implications of Balibar's relational proposal when it comes to thinking about the boundaries between human and non-human beings? In addition, it might also be interesting to trace the adventures of the category of "anthropological" in Balibar's thought from the beginning. Despite all the attractiveness of these questions, I had to postpone them for further studies.

Last but not least, it would be interesting to explore the relationship between the categories of difference in Balibar's and Badiou's thought with that of difference feminism. Delving into this limited literature could enrich this work because it would allow us to conceive the comprehension of a specific concretization of difference in their frameworks. Like the other two topics, I look forward to pursuing such an examination as soon as possible.

To conclude, I would like to return to the motivation behind discussing universality with a particular focus on its relationship to differences. While aiming at understanding the capillaries of the uneasiness that I spoke of at the beginning, I gradually started to grasp how an emancipatory conception of universality differs from a bourgeois conception of universality that is structured as an abstraction and involves implicit and explicit forms of violence that is the product of state and capital. Within the same period, encountering the theoretical attempts that concretizes the meaningfulness of universality as an emancipatory horizon for diverse episodes of rebellion against domination (such as the George Floyd Uprising) intensified my conviction about the research question that was addressed here. I will therefore finish with Jodi Dean's remarks on the "divisive" characteristic of a non-bourgeois conception and practice of universality in the context of global solidarity for Palestine:

Palestine names a political subject. A rich literature can be enlisted to fill out the idea of Palestinian political subjectivity. Key points might include: the centrality of resistance to the imagining of a national identity in the wake of the Nakba; the specificity of Palestinian religious diversity (Muslim, Christian, Jewish); and the dispersion of Palestinians across Israel, the occupied territories, and the diaspora. More compelling is the provocative

claim that we are all Palestinians. This claim should not be understood as that kind of sentimental identification that says all forms of suffering are variations of the same suffering so we should all get along. Rather, it's the political slogan of radical universal emancipation that responds to the subject as an effect of the Palestinian cause. Not everyone speaks for Palestine, but Palestine speaks for everyone (Dean 2024).



## REFERENCES

Althusser, L. (1977). On the Twenty-Second Congress of the French Communist Party. *New Left Review*, 1 (104).

Badiou, A. (2001). *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. Verso.

Badiou, A. (2003). *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*. Stanford University Press.

Badiou, A. (2010). The Idea of Communism. In C. Douzinas & S. Žižek (Eds.), *The Idea of Communism*. Verso.

Badiou, A. (2015). *Philosophy for Militants*. Verso.

Badiou, A. (2016). Twenty-Four Notes on the Uses of the Word “People”. In *What Is A People?* (pp. 21-31). Columbia University Press.

Badiou, A. (2017). *Black: The Brilliance of a Non-Color*. Polity Press.

Badiou, A. & Blechman, M. & Chari, A. & Hasan, R. (2012). Human Rights Are the Rights of the Infinite: An Interview with Alain Badiou\*. *Historical Materialism*, 20(4), pp. 162-186. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1569206X-12341235>

Badiou, A. & Hallward, P. (1998). Politics and Philosophy: An Interview with Alain Badiou. *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 3(3), pp. 113-133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09697259808572002>

Badiou, A. & Hallward, P. (2003). Beyond Formalisation: An Interview. *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 8(2), pp. 111-136. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0969725032000162611>

- Baker, K. M. (1994). The Idea of a Declaration of Rights. In D. V. Kley (Ed.), *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789*. Stanford University Press.
- Balibar, É. (1994a). *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx*. Routledge.
- Balibar, É. (1994b). Man and Citizen: Who's Who?\*, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 2 (2), 99-114.
- Balibar, É. (1995). Ambiguous Universality. *differences*, 7 (1), 48–74.  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-7-1-48>
- Balibar, E. (2008). Historical Dilemmas of Democracy and Their Contemporary Relevance for Citizenship. *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society*, 20(4), 522-538, 10.1080/08935690802299363.
- Balibar, É. (2012). Civic Universalism and Its Internal Exclusions: The Issue of Anthropological Difference. *boundary 2*, 39 (1), 207–229.  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/01903659-1506301>
- Balibar, É. (2014). *Equaliberty: Political Essays*. Duke University Press.
- Balibar, É. (2017). *Citizen Subject: Foundations for Philosophical Anthropology*. Fordham University Press.
- Balibar, É. (2020a). Ontological difference, anthropological difference, and equal liberty. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 28 (1), 1-12.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ejop.12512>
- Balibar, É. (2020b). *On Universals: Constructing and Deconstructing Community*. Fordham University Press.
- Bassi, S. & LaFleur, G. (2022). Introduction: TERFs, Gender-Critical Movements, and Postfascist Feminisms. *TSQ*, 9(3), 311-333.  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-9836008>

Beauvoir, S. (1956). *The Second Sex*. Jonathan Cape.

Bensaïd, D. (2004). Alain Badiou and the Miracle of the Event. In P. Hallward (Ed.), *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, (pp. 94-105). Continuum.

Bohrer, A. J. (2019). *Marxism and Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality under Contemporary Capitalism*. Columbia University Press.

Boonen, C. (2021). Étienne Balibar on the dialectic of universal citizenship. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 48 (6), 904-933.

Bosteels, B. (2023). Universality and Its Discontents. In Marc James L. (Ed.), *Identity Trumps Socialism: The Class and Identity Debate after Neoliberalism* (pp. 59-78). Routledge.

Brown, W. (1995). Rights and Identity in Late Modernity: Revisiting the “Jewish Question”. In A. Sarat & T. R. Kearns (Eds.), *Identities, Politics, and Rights*. The University of Michigan Press.

Butler, J. (2024). *Who's Afraid of Gender?*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Césaire, A. (2010). Letter to Maurice Thorez. *Social Text*, 28(2), pp. 145-152.  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-2009-072>

Dean, J. (1996). *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism after Identity Politics*. University of California Press.

Dean, J. (2024, September 16). Palestine speaks for everyone. *Verso*.  
<https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/blogs/news/palestine-speaks-for-everyone?srsId=AfmBOopEYTjOfBAYv7YkS45anBDinlhIXXYRuZl6V73kRTByMyxOwkdl>

Dubois, L. (2004). *Avengers of the New World : The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. Harvard University Press.

- Felski, R. (1997). The Doxa of Difference. *Signs*, 23 (1), 1-21.
- Fraser, N. (2022). *Cannibal Capitalism: How our System is Devouring Democracy, Care, and the Planet – and What We Can Do About It*. Verso.
- Goikoetxea, J. (2024). Rethinking gender, race, and class from the concept of Labor-Interview with Nancy Fraser. *Capital & Class*, 48(2), 303-317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03098168241234119>
- Grüner, E. (2020). *The Haitian Revolution: Capitalism, Slavery, and Counter-Modernity*. Polity Press.
- Gündoğdu, A. (2014). A Revolution in Rights: Reflections on the Democratic Invention of the Rights of Man. *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, 10 (3), 367-379.
- Haider, A. (2018). *Mistaken Identity: Mass Movements and Racial Ideology*. Verso.
- Hallward, P. (2003). *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Hamza, A. & Ruda, F. (2019). *Interview with Alenka Zupančič: Philosophy or Psychoanalysis? Yes, please!*. *Crisis and Critique*. <https://www.crisiscritique.org/storage/app/media/2019-04-02/zupancic.pdf>
- Hewlett, N. (2006). Politics as Thought? The Paradoxes of Alain Badiou's Theory of Politics. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 5, pp. 371–404. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cpt.9300275>
- Ingram, J. D. (2005). Can Universalism Still Be Radical? Alain Badiou's Politics of Truth. *Constellations*, 12(4), pp. 561-573.
- Kapoor, I. & Zalloua, Z. (2022). *Universal Politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Kouvelakis, S. (2005). The Marxian Critique of Citizenship: For a Rereading of *On the Jewish Question*. *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 104 (4), 707–721. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-104-4-707>

- Laclau, E. (1992). Universalism, Particularism, and the Question of Identity. *October*, Vol. 61, 83-90.
- Léger, M. J. (2023). Introduction: The Politics of Emancipatory Universality. In M. J. Léger (Ed.), *Identity Trumps Socialism: The Class and Identity Debate After Neoliberalism*, pp. 1-26. Routledge.
- Löwy, M. (1989). 'The Poetry of the Past': Marx and the French Revolution. *New Left Review*, I/177, 111-124.
- Marx, K. (1992). *Early Writings*. Penguin Books.
- McGowan, T. (2020). *Universality and Identity Politics*. Columbia University Press.
- Nesbitt, N. (2008). *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment*. University of Virginia Press.
- Nesbitt, N. (2009). Alter-Rights: Haiti and the singularization of universal human rights, 1804-2004. *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 12 (1), 93-108.
- Newton, H. P. (1968). "SDS: Publication: "Huey Newton Talks to the Movement"", *Kent State University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives*, accessed August 10, 2024, <http://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/3176>.
- Paquette, E. (2020). *Universal Emancipation: Race Beyond Badiou*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Poulantzas, N. (2017, December 18). The State, Social Movements, Party: Interview with Nicos Poulantzas (1979). *Viewpoint Magazine*. <https://viewpointmag.com/2017/12/18/state-social-movements-party-interview-nicos-%20poulantzas-1979/>
- Rancière, J. (2009). *The Emancipated Spectator*. Verso.

- Rancière, J. (2023). Politics, Identification and Subjectivization. In M. J. Léger (Ed.), *Identity Trumps Socialism: The Class and Identity Debate after Neoliberalism* (pp. 35-40). Routledge.
- Ribeiro, V. M. & Mendes, A. P. (2023, March 12). “Étienne Balibar: Socialism and Democracy Are Intrinsically Related Ideas”. Jacobin. <https://jacobin.com/2023/12/etienne-balibar-socialism-liberty-equality-democracy-theory-marx>
- Roberts, J. (2018). *The Reasoning of Unreason: Universalism, Capitalism and Disenlightenment*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Roberts, W. C. (2019). Marx’s Social Republic: Political not Metaphysical. *Historical Materialism*, 27(2), 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1569206X-00001870>
- Ross, K. (2015). *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*. Verso.
- Scott, J. W. (2005). *Parité!: Sexual Equality and the Crisis of French Universalism*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Shoikhedbrod, I. (2019). *Revisiting Marx’s Critique of Liberalism: Rethinking Justice, Legality and Rights*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Singham, S. M. (1994). Betwixt Cattle and Men: Jews, Blacks, and Women, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man. In D. V. Kley (Ed.), *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789*. Stanford University Press.
- Svenungsson, J. (2021). Radical Incarnation: The Dangers and Promises of Christian Universalism in the Wake of Badiou’s Saint Paul. *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology*, 76(1), pp. 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0039338X.2021.1946421>
- Taylor, N. (1992). *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity*. JSOT Press.

- Tomba, M. (2015). Emancipation as Therapy: Bauer and Marx on the Jewish Question. In M. Quante & A. Mohseni (Eds.), *Die linken Hegelianer: Studien zum Verhältnis von Religion und Politik im Vormärz*. Brill.
- Tomba, M. (2019). *Insurgent Universality An Alternative Legacy of Modernity*. Oxford University Press.
- Toscano, A. (2018, February 1). The Name of Algeria: French Philosophy and the Subject of Decolonization. *Viewpoint*. <https://viewpointmag.com/2018/02/01/name-algeria-french-philosophy-subject-decolonization/>
- Toscano, A. (2021). Incipient Fascism: Black Radical Perspectives. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.4015>.
- Traverso, E. (2019). *The New Faces of Fascism: Populism and the Far Right*. Verso.
- Watkin, C. (2015). Badiou and Nancy: Political Animals. In S. Dejanovic (Ed.), *Nancy and the Political* (pp. 43-65). Edinburgh University Press.

## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Evrensel özgürleşme tasavvurunun ve söz konusu tasavvurun somutlaşmasının önünde, kapitalist toplumlarda farklı niteliklere sahip ezme, ezilme ve sömürü ilişkilerinin varlığı başta olmak üzere pek çok açmazın bulunduğu ifade edilebilir. Bu durum, özgürleştirici siyasetin nasıl evrensel bir nitelik kazanabileceğine dair hararetli teorik ve politik tartışmaları beraberinde getirmiştir. Nitekim, feminist ve kuir hareketlerin kesişimsellik fikrini odağa alan tartışmaları, emek kavramını ırk, sınıf ve cinsiyet kategorileriyle birlikte düşünmek üzere işlevlendiren öneriler, yahut evrenselliği özgürleştirici siyasetin esas ufku olarak (farklı kavramsal çerçeve ve literatürleri temel alacak şekilde) inşa etmeyi amaçlayan girişimler, bahse konu açmazları aşma arzusundaki düşünsel ve pratik konuların farklı veçheleri olarak görülebilir.

Bu tartışma ve girişimlere ilaveten, hem kapitalist toplumdaki çelişkilerin çokluluğunu kavramsallaştırmak hem de (bu durumun kaçınılmaz neticesi olarak) özgürleştirici siyasetin bağlam ve aktörlerinin çokluluğunu eklemek üzere teorik ve politik bir üretkenlik sergilemekten uzak, sınıf ve kimlik kategorilerini verimsiz bir ikiliğin tarafları olarak inşa eden, “ekonomik talepler” ve “diğer talepler” arasındaki ayrımı, çelişkilerin çokluluğu ve eş zamanlılığına ilişkin teorik bir kavrayışın yerine ikame eden tutumlar da mevcuttur. Bu tür bir konunun, kimlik kategorilerine dair tüm siyasallaşma biçimlerini sol siyaseti güçsüzleştirmek ve odağını servet dağılımındaki eşitsizliklerden uzaklaştırmak üzere üretilen bir taktik olarak ele aldığı öne sürülebilir (Léger 2023: 1-2). Bu çalışmada ise kimliğin ve kimlik temelli siyasallaşma biçimlerinin sol siyasetin odağını dağıtıcı kategoriler olarak ele alınmayıp söz konusu kategorilerin özgürleştirici bir siyasal tahayyüle sahip özneler arasındaki mevcut ve muhtemel ilişkiler üzerine nüanslı bir şekilde düşünmek için belirli teorik ayrımlara tabi tutulması gereken birer problematik alanı

olarak çerçevesi gerektiği öne sürülecek ve evrenselliğin bu gerilimli zemine anlamlı bir katkı sunacak şekilde düşünülüp düşünülemediği tartışılacaktır.

Evrenselliğin, bilhassa da 1990'lı yılların sonu ve 2000'li yılların başında eleştirel teori ve Marksizm alanındaki önemli teorik tartışma başlıklarından biri olduğunu öne sürmek mümkündür. Nitekim, Susan F. Buck-Morss'un *Hegel, Haiti ve Evrensel Tarih* adlı eseri, Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Žižek ve Judith Butler'ın *Olumsuzluk, Hegemonya, Evrensellik* üst başlığıyla bir araya getirilen diyalogu, Seyla Benhabib'in Jürgen Habermas ile birlikte bu kavramın felsefi önem ve geçerliliğine işaret eden çalışmaları gibi, oldukça farklı ve zaman zaman çatışan teorik ve politik eğilimlerin aynı temanın çeşitlemeleri olduğu görülebilir. Bununla birlikte, evrenselliği merkeze alan teorik tartışmaların, tüm canlılığına rağmen etkisiz olduğuna işaret eden, söz konusu teorik çabanın evrenselliği daha radikal bir siyasal ufkun ikamesi olarak inşa ettiğini öne süren konumlardan da söz edilebilir (Bosteels 2023: 59-60).

Bu çalışmada ise mevcut konjonktürde evrenselliğin, sözünü ettiğimiz döneme damga vuran çokkültürlülük bağlamından farklı bir bağlama yerleştirilerek yeniden düşünülmesi gerektiği vurgulanacak ve evrenselliğe dair tartışmaları bir ikame olarak değerlendiren bakış açısı reddedilecektir. Peki, sözünü ettiğimiz güncel bağlamın ayırt edici nitelikleri nelerdir? Bilindiği üzere, uzun süredir aşırı sağın ve faşizmin çağdaş tezahürleri hakkında dikkat çekici kavramsallaştırma çabaları ve tartışmalar sürmektedir. İlgili literatürde söz konusu fenomeni post-faşizm, geç faşizm, neo-faşizm, vb. kavramlarla ele alan yaklaşımlar mevcuttur. Her ne kadar oluşmakta olan bu literatüre dair detaylı bir inceleme bu çalışmanın sınırları dışında olsa da, ilgili literatürde saptanan bir eğilime işaret ederek evrensellik üzerine düşünmenin güncel gerekliliğine dikkat çekmeyi amaçlıyorum. Nedir bu eğilim? Enzo Traverso'nun ifadesiyle, herhangi bir farka yahut kimliğe dair dışlayıcı ve dışlayıcı olmayan tüm siyasal konumlanmaların bu konumlar arasında herhangi bir ayrım yokmuşçasına "kimlik siyaseti" adlandırması çerçevesinde eşitlenmeleri bu eğilimin göstergelerinden bir tanesidir (2019: 40). Traverso'ya göre Fransa'da dekolonyal ve aşırı sağ partilerin kimlikle ilişkili niteliklerine dair bir vurguyla yan yana düşünülmesi yahut "beyaz karşıtı ırkçılık" benzeri ifadelerin kamusal alandaki

kullanımları söz konusu ayrımsızlığın örnekleridir. Todd McGowan “kimlik siyaseti” adlandırmasının Black Lives Matter (Siyah Hayatlar Değerlidir) gibi ilerici hareketleri önemsizleştirmek ve bu hareketlerin evrenselci karakterini gölgelemek üzere işlevlendirildiğini öne süren bir başka düşünürdür. McGowan’a göre, söz konusu eğilim White Lives Matter (Beyaz Hayatlar Değerlidir) yahut All Lives Matter (Tüm Hayatlar Değerlidir) gibi sloganlarla temsil edilen sahte antagonistik çelişkiler yaratarak somutlaşır (2020: 177-180).

Toplumsal cinsiyetin aşırı sağ ve/ya da faşizan hareketlerin sahte antagonistik çelişkiler üretmek üzere kullandığı bir başka zemin olduğu ifade edilebilir. Judith Butler’ın *Who’s Afraid of Gender?* kitabında ele aldığı üzere, toplumsal cinsiyet karşıtı hareketler bu kavramı panik ve korku üretmek üzere işlevlendirmektedir. Butler, toplumsal cinsiyet kavramına dönük saldırıların yoğun güvencesizlik ve iklim felaketi gibi mevcut ve yaklaşmakta olan krizlerin karşısına konan “kolektif bir hayale, daha da muhtemel, bir psikoza katılma daveti” olarak ele alınması gerektiğini belirtmektedir (2024: 15). Bahse konu sahne, McGowan’ın Black Lives Matter bağlamında işaret ettiği gibi, All Lives Matter sloganını üreterek “kimlik siyaseti” eleştirisinde bulunanların, evrenselliği değil daimi bir tikelleşmeyi amaçladıkları sahnenin toplumsal cinsiyet bağlamındaki çeşitlemesi olarak görülebilir.

“Kimlik siyaseti” eleştirisini eşitsizlik üreten yapı ve ilişkilerin tahkimatı için işlevlendiren bu eğilimin, içinde bulunduğumuz konjonktürde evrensellik üzerine tekrar düşünme zorunluluğunu beraberinde getirdiğini iddia edeceğim. Yeni binyılın başında evrensellik üzerine düşünmenin ardındaki temel itki, hem siyasal özneye ve geleneksel örgütlenme biçimlerine dair güçsüzleştirici tekrarların hem de sınırlı bir ufka sahip kimlikçi bir tutumun ötesine uzanacak teorik ve politik bir güzergâh sunmaktı. Mevcut durumda ise, bu itkinin, hem kimlik siyasetine dönük özgürleştirici ve özgürleştirici olmayan konumların ürettiği eleştirileri ayırt etmeyi mümkün kılacak hem de farklılıkları kaydedebilecek bir evrenselliği tartışmayı imkânlı hale getirecek kategorilerin inşasını içeren teorik ve politik bir ufuk üzerine düşünmek olduğunu öne sürebiliriz.

Bu çerçevede ışığında, söz konusu çalışmada üç felsefi figürün, Karl Marx, Étienne Balibar ve Alain Badiou’nun, evrenselliğe odaklanan metinlerinin incelenmesini esas

alan bir hat takip edilmiştir. Esasen, Marx'ın *Yahudi Sorunu Üzerine* metninde somutlaşan burjuva evrenselliğinin inşasına dair yorumunun, evrenselliğe ve onun fark(lar)la çatışmalı ilişkisine dair sorunsalı açması amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmanın giriş bölümünü takip eden bölümünde temel olarak burjuva evrenselliğinin nasıl inşa edildiği ve karakteri incelenmektedir. Bu doğrultuda, Fransız Devrimi bağlamında taşıdığı önem ve modern siyaset üzerinde yarattığı kalıcı etki dolayısıyla *İnsan ve Yurttaş Hakları Bildirgesi* metnine odaklanılmıştır. Söz konusu metnin burjuva evrenselliğinin inşasındaki kurucu niteliği, ortaya çıkış sürecindeki ayırım noktaları ve evrensel karakterinin en başından beri dışarıda bırakılan özneler bakımından yarattığı gerilim ve paradokslar *Bildirge*'nin odağa alınmasının başlıca sebepleri olarak sıralanabilir. Çalışmada, *Bildirge*'nin evrenselci karakterine dönük iki temel eleştirel hatta yer verilmiştir. Bunlardan ilki, *Bildirge*'nin eşitsiz niteliğine dikkat çekerek Yahudiler, köleler ve kadınlar başta olmak üzere hangi toplumsal grupların metnin evrenselci vaatlerinden sürgün edildiğini inceleyen konudur. İkinci hat ise *Bildirge*'nin açıkça dışlayıcı karakterinden çok örtük niteliklerini irdeleyen Marksist konudur. *Yahudi Sorunu Üzerine*'de Marx, Bruno Bauer'le sürdürdüğü tartışmada, politik özgürleşmenin “kısmi” ve “aldatıcı” karakterini, özgürleşmenin tastamam ve dolayimsız biçimi olan insan özgürleşmesinden ayırır fakat Marx'a göre politik özgürleşmenin kısmiliği onun açıkça dışlayıcı karakterinde yatmamaktadır. Herhangi bir aleni dışlamanın söz konusu olmadığı koşullarda dahi, politik özgürleşmenin dolaylı karakteri nedeniyle netice, bir kimsenin yaşamının bireysel ve toplumsal unsurları arasında oluşacak bir yarıktan ibarettir (Marx 1992: 220-221).

Marx ile Bauer arasındaki tartışmanın ve Marx'ın politik özgürleşme ve insan özgürleşmesi arasındaki ayrımının temelinde Bauer'ın Yahudilerin politik özgürleşmesinin gerektirdiklerine dair iddiaları bulunur. Marx için, Bauer'in nazarında Yahudilerin politik özgürleşmesi hem Yahudilerin hem de devletin “dinden özgürleşmesi” ile gerçekleşebilir. Marx, ilgili argümanın Bauer'in düşüncesinde farklı özgürleşme biçimleri arasındaki ayrımsızlıktan ve “tam olarak devlet” fikrine dair hatalı bir kavrayıştan kaynaklandığını düşünür. Sözü edilen çerçevede devlet evrensel bir karaktere sahip görünse de Marx bu evrenselliğin sahteliğine işaret eder. Sahtedir çünkü öznenin türsel varlığı bu hayatın maddi bileşenlerinin etkilerinden azade değildir (1992: 219-220).

Burjuva evrenselliğine dönük Marksist eleştirinin tüm etkililiğine rağmen, Marx'ın düşüncesi de farkın bu düşüncedeki konumuna odaklanan, dekolonyal ve feminist eleştirilere konu olmuştur. Hem söz konusu eleştirilerin kazandığı önem hem de 20. yüzyılda evrenselliği temsil ettiği öne sürülebilecek siyasal projelerin uğradığı yenilginin, en temelde iki eğilime kapı araladığı ifade edilebilir: Bunlardan ilki, tikelci bir siyasal ufuk, diğeri Marksizmin farka dair açmazları üzerine eleştirel bir tutumla düşünerek evrenselliği siyasal düşünce ve pratiğin odağına yerleştirmeyi amaçlayan konumdur. Nitekim bu çalışma da evrensellik ve fark(lar) arasındaki gerilime odaklanarak bu ilişkinin Balibar ve Badiou'nun ilgili metinlerinde nasıl ele alındığını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Nitekim çalışmanın takip eden bölümü şu soruyla açılmaktadır: *Bildirge*'ye dönük iki eleştirel hattın birbiriyle ilişkisi nedir? Burjuva evrenselliğinin Yahudileri, köleleri, kadınları ve başkaca toplumsal grupları sürgün eden sahte karakteriyle Marx'ın *Yahudi Sorunu Üzerine* metninde somutlanan eleştirisi birbirine nasıl eklenir? Metnin üçüncü bölümünde bu soru üzerine düşünmek üzere Balibar'ın burjuva evrenselliğinin temel niteliklerine dair yorumuna odaklanılarak antropolojik fark kavramının düşünürün yaklaşımındaki önemine dikkat çekilmiştir. Bu incelemeyi Balibar'ın Marx'ın *Bildirge* hakkındaki yorumuna dair eleştirisi ve geliştirdiği eşitliközgürlük fikrine dair tartışma takip etmektedir.

Balibar, modern siyasetin iki temel niteliği olduğunu ifade eder (2012: 207-8). İlki, evrensellik fikrinin farklı bir temelde inşası ve buna eşlik eden tabi kılma biçimlerinin ortaya çıkışıdır. Bu çerçevede kopuş niteliğindeki öge, insan ve yurttaşın özdeş kategoriler olarak tariflenerek yurttaşlığın evrenselleştirilmesidir. Balibar'ın düşüncesinde söz konusu özdeşlik, çeşitli öznelerin “doğal farklarla” tanımlandığı işaretleme/damgalama ile bozular. Bu çerçevede “farkların doğallaştırılması” insan figürünün ve kaçınılmaz olarak söz konusu özdeşliğin parçalanmasının zeminini oluşturur. Düşünüre göre herhangi bir farkın doğallaştırılması ve/ya da “özselleştirilmesi” ile ayrımcılığa, dışlamaya ve tahakküme maruz kalma durumu arasında doğrudan bir ilişki mevcuttur. Bu da farkın bir işaret/damga olarak değil, nötr bir nitelik olarak görüldüğü durumlarda, ilgili farkın tahakküm ve benzeri ezilme biçimlerine maruz kalmasının çok daha az ihtimal

dahilinde olduđu anlamına gelir. Balibar için bu doğallaştırma süreci ancak ona itiraz edildiğinde gün ışığına çıktığı için sadece geçmişe dönük olarak kavranabilir.

Balibar, burjuva evrenselliğinin farkla ilişkisi üzerine düşünürken yönünü antropolojik farklara çevirir. Peki, bu kavramla kastedilen nedir? İlk olarak, söz konusu kavram evrenselliğın modern biçimine özgü ayrımcılık, dışlama ve tahakküm biçimlerini anlamlandırmak üzere işlevlendirildiğinden, Balibar tüm fark biçimleriyle değil, halihazırda evrensel bir karaktere sahip farklarla ilgilenir (2020a: 5). Bir başka deyişle, antropolojik farklar, varlığından söz etmeksizin insanın temsil edilemeyeceği farklardır. Düşünür maskülen ve feminen, normal ve patolojik, çocuk ve yetişkin, vb. farkların bu şekilde kavranabileceğini öne sürer (2012: 209). Bu noktada Balibar'ın altını çizdiği husus şudur: Antropolojik farklar karmaşık ve çok katmanlı kavramsallaştırma, bilgi üretimi ve kurumsallaşma süreçleri neticesinde sözü edilen pratikleri gerekçelendirerek insan ve yurttaş arasındaki özdeşliği imha etmek üzere işlevlendirilse de, bu farkların varlığı gerçekte bu süreçleri önceler. Dolayısıyla, düşünüre göre, ayrımcılık, dışlama ve tahakkümü mümkün kılan farkın kendisi değil, onun doğallaştırılmasıdır. Bununla birlikte, Balibar, antropolojik farkları baştan sona sıralamanın mümkün olmadığını da ifade eder. Bu farkların insan ve yurttaş arasındaki özdeşliği ortadan kaldırmak üzere işlevlendirildikleri ancak bu durumun neticesi olan ayrımcılık, dışlama ve tahakküm biçimlerine itiraz edildiği anda faş olduğundan, henüz açığa çıkmamış antropolojik farklardan söz etmek pekâlâ mümkündür. Antropolojik farklara ilişkin bir diğer tanımlayıcı nitelik, bu farkları ne “silmenin” ne de “tanımlamanın” mümkün olmasıdır (2020b: 98). Bu ne anlama gelir? Söz konusu farkların varlığını göz ardı etmek de onların sınırlarını keskin şekilde saptamak da mümkün değildir. Örnek vermek gerekirse, hasta ve sağlıklı insanlar arasındaki farkın varlığı reddedilemez, bununla birlikte, bu farkın varlığı kendi başına normal ve anormal, vb. ikiliklerin inşasını beraberinde getirmez (2020a: 5).

Balibar, sözünü ettiğimiz farkların, insan ve yurttaş arasında inşa edilen özdeşliği ihlal etmek üzere “ötekiliği” insan fikrinin içine kaydetmeyi amaçladığını belirtir. Bununla birlikte, Balibar'ın düşüncesinde antropolojik farklar yalnızca ayrımcılığın, dışlamanın ve tahakkümün hüküm sürdüğü sahnede çıkmaz karşımıza. Düşünür, bu

farkların “bireyleri tanımlamak” üzere araçsallaştırılmadığı durumlarda, “ilişkisel” bir zeminin inşa olabileceğini öne sürer. Bu tür bir alanda, yukarıda sözü edilen antropolojik farkları tanımlaya dair imkânsızlık, “İnsan nedir?” sorusuna dair bir soruşturmaya kapı aralayan bir kaynağa dönüşebilir çünkü Balibar için “[İ]nsan, insan olma biçimlerine dair farklı yol ve olasılıkların kendisi için daima bir soruşturma konusu olduğu varlıktır” (2020b: 104). Nitekim, bu daimiliğe tarih ötesi bir “bilme arzusu”nun kaynaklık ettiğine işaret eder. Bu arzunun beraberinde getirdiği ve antropolojik farklara dönük sabitleme, nesneleştirme yahut doğallaştırma girişiminde bulunmayan her inceleme, Balibar’a göre, bir “huzursuzluk” doğurur. Bu ilişkisel bağlam, ikiliklerin ötesine geçerek “antropolojik farkların tekil biçimleri”nin keşfedilebileceği bir zemine eşdeğerdir (2012: 228). Fakat bu tekil biçimlerin Balibar’ın düşüncesinde kimlik kategorilerine denk düşmediği ifade edilmelidir. Balibar, burjuva evrenselliğinin inşa ederek araçsallaştırdığı antropolojik fark tahayyülünün karşısına bir başka sabitlik yerleştirme arzusunda değildir. Aksine, düşünürün açmaya çalıştığı zemin, “her daim kendinden de farklılaşacak bir fark” fikrine tekabül eder (2020a: 9).

Balibar’ın antropolojik farklara dair çizdiği çerçeveden *Bildirge*’ye ve Marx’ın *Bildirge* hakkındaki yorumuna dair değerlendirmelerine uzandığımızda ise düşünürün doğal hak teorisyenleri başta olmak üzere insan ve yurttaş figürleri arasında bir ayrıma işaret eden tüm yorumları reddederek özdeşlik fikrini esas aldığını görebiliriz. Balibar, *Yahudi Sorunu Üzerine* metninin de benzer bir problemle malul olduğunu iddia ederek Marx’ın bu iki figür arasındaki ayrıma dair ısrarının *Bildirge*’deki “radikal biçimde yeni fikri” gölgelediğine dikkat çeker. Bunun yerine, Balibar “ikili bir özdeşlik”ten söz eder (1994a: 44-7). Bu çerçevede insan ve yurttaş, eşitlik ve özgürlük birbirine özdeştir. Nitekim, eşitlik ve özgürlüğün özdeşliği insan ve yurttaş özdeşliğinin “koşulu” olarak değerlendirilir.

Bununla birlikte, Balibar için modern siyasetin daima içsel olarak bölünmüş olduğu ifade edilmelidir. Bir yanda daima tekerrür halindeki ayaklanmacı bir moment, öte yanda, daima kurumsal tesisi içeren kurucu bir moment söz konusudur (1994b: 108). Bu durum, 1789’un ve *Bildirge*’nin “hiperbolik” niteliğinden kaynaklanır. Düşünür, sözünü ettiği insan ve yurttaş, eşitlik ve özgürlük arasındaki ikili özdeşliğin hiçbir

mevcut kurumsal biçime indirgenemeyecek bu niteliğinin söz konusu bölünmeye temel teşkil ettiğini belirtir. Balibar için “hiperbolik” niteliğin hareket halindeki durumu “ideal evrensellik” olarak kavramsallaştırılabilir (1995: 65). Zira evrenselliğin ideal yahut sembolik biçimine değinmeksizin yalnızca gerçek ve hayali biçimlerinden söz eden bir inceleme eksik kalacaktır. Balibar ideal evrensellekle tarih boyunca özgürleşme amacı doğrultusunda sürdürülen kolektif çabalara ve bu çabaların tekrarlı karakterine dikkat çekmektedir. Özgürleşme amacı taşıyan kolektif ve ayaklanmacı bir çaba, mevcut eşitsiz güç ilişkilerini yalnızca bu çabanın sürdürücüleri adına değil, herkes adına ortadan kaldırmayı amaçladığı takdirde ideal evrensellik tanımına denk düşecektir. Bununla birlikte, Balibar’ın çizdiği çerçevenin ve evrenselliğe atfettiği antinomik karakterin “kötü sonsuz” a hapsediğine dair eleştirilerin mevcut olduğunun da altını çizmek gerekmektedir. Örneğin, Massimiliano Tomba’ya göre Balibar’ın inşa ettiği teorik çerçeve devleti ve onun temsile dayalı aygıtlarını tartışacak bir zemin sunmamaktadır (2019: 66).

Çalışmanın bir sonraki bölümünün odağında Badiou’nun *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* metninde somutlaşan evrensellik anlayışı, bu anlayışın fark kavramıyla ilişkisi ve son olarak da *Bildirge*’ye dair tartışmanın düşünürün teorik çerçevesindeki konumu bulunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, ilk olarak Badiou’nun *Saint Paul* kitabında açıkladığı fark karşısında indifferans olma tutumunun anlamı incelenmiştir. Ardından, Elisabeth Paquette’in Badiou’nun düşüncesinde ırksal farkın konumuna dair eleştirileri irdelenmiş ve Paquette’in eleştirilerinin geçerliliği tartışılmıştır. Devamında, Jayne Svenungsson’ın Badiou’nun teorik çerçevesinde farklar arasındaki farklılara dair kategorilerin noksanlığına işaret eden eleştirisine odaklanılarak Svenungsson’ın söz konusu boşluğu doldurmak üzere sunduğu önerinin Badiou’nun düşüncesiyle uyumlu olup olmadığı sorgulanmıştır. Bu tartışma, Badiou’nun (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 182) “jenerik bir noktanın yaratımı” fikriyle Balibar’ın antropolojik farkları insan figürünün sınırlarını tartışacak şekilde yeniden düşünmenin mümkün olup olmadığına dair sorgulamasının bir arada kavranmasının imkânlılığına dair bir soruyla son bulmaktadır.

Peki, Balibar’ın çizdiği çerçeveden Badiou’nun çerçevesine uzandığımızda insan ve yurttaş arasındaki ilişki nasıl bir dönüşüm geçirir? Bu sıçrayışla birlikte bir kez daha

insan ve yurttaş arasındaki ayrıma geri dönsük de erken Marx'taki tarih ve özne kavrayışından farklı bir kavrayışla karşılaşırız. Tıpkı Marx gibi Badiou da “kapitalist antropoloji”nin ana karakterini bencil ve ancak piyasaya kaydolduğu takdirde mevcut olan bir figür olarak tarif eder. Bununla birlikte, Badiou'nun yorumunda her iki kavram da dönüşüm geçirir; gerçekte, düşünürün teorik evreninde insan ve yurttaş arasındaki ayrımdan değil, insan-hayvan ile ölümsüz yahut sonsuz varlık arasındaki ayrımdan söz edilir (& Blechman & Chari & Hasan 2012: 178-179). Bu fark Badiou'nun hem Marx hem de Balibar'la ayrıştığı noktaya tekabül etmektedir. İkinci bölümde incelendiği gibi insan ve yurttaş arasındaki keskin ayrıma rağmen, erken Marx'ın yorumunun olası bir art ardalığa kapı aralayabileceğine dair değerlendirmeler mevcuttur. Bununla birlikte, Badiou'nun teorik çerçevesinde bu tür bir ilerleme fikrine hiçbir şekilde yer olmadığı şüphesizdir. Aksine, Badiou, olay fikrinin teorik çerçevesindeki kurucu niteliği dolayısıyla perspektifinin kopuş süreçleri dışındaki siyasal değişimleri incelemeye imkân tanıyacak açıklayıcılıktan yoksun olduğunu öne süren eleştirilerle sık sık karşılaşmaktadır (Ingram 2005: 571 & Hewlett 2006: 378-387). Bir bakıma, eğer Balibar'ın *Bildirge* hakkındaki yorumu Tomba'nın işaret ettiği gibi “kötü sonsuz” a hapsolmekle sonuçlanıyorsa, Badiou'nun keskin ayrımı “saf bir voluntarizm” (Bensaïd 2004: 101) temsili olarak yorumlanma riski taşımaktadır. Badiou'nun düşüncesinin beraberinde getirdiği gerilimleri serimlemek amacıyla söz konusu eleştirilere yer verilmiştir.

Çalışmada, Balibar ve Badiou'nun insan ve yurttaş ikiliğine dair yorumları arasındaki uzlaşmazlığa karşın, Badiou'nun Paul figürünü esas alarak betimlediği indifferans tutumunu Balibar'ın antropolojik farklara dair incelemesiyle birlikte düşünmenin verimli olabileceği iddia edilmektedir. Bununla birlikte, bu tür bir çabanın imkânlılığına dair bir tartışmadan önce, Elisabeth Paquette'in Badiou'ya yönelik eleştirilerine yer verilmiş ve Badiou'yu indifferans kavramı ve bu kavramın işaret ettiği siyasal tutum temel alınarak Avrupa merkezci olmakla eleştirilenin mümkün olmadığı açıklanmak istenmiştir. Badiou'nun *Saint Paul* metninde Paul figürünün merkezsiz niteliği ve Kudüs Konseyi'ndeki konumuna verdiği özel önem, düşünürün, herhangi bir fark bağlamında güç ilişkileri ve yapılarını önemsizleştirmeksizin yahut hâkim bir tarafla özdeşleşmeksizin ele aldığını ortaya koymaktadır. İlgili eleştirilere verilen cevapları takiben, Balibar'ın antropolojik

farkların farklı sömürü ve tahakküm ilişkilerinin sürdürülmesindeki rollerinin yanı sıra insan figürünün sınırlarını genişletebilecek keşfe açık potansiyellerine işaret eden önerisiyle Badiou'nun farkları kat etmeye ilişkin önerisinin birlikte ele alınabileceği ifade edilmektedir. Bu tür bir birlikte okuma çabasının, Badiou'nun metninde farklara, onların işlevlendirilme biçimlerine ve toplumsal ve politik etkilerine dair suskunluğun tetiklediği eleştirel değerlendirmelere katkı sunabileceği düşünülmektedir.

Özetle, çalışma, Balibar ve Badiou arasındaki tüm teorik ve politik uzlaşmazlıklara rağmen (ve bu uzlaşmazlıkları görmezden gelmeksizin), söz konusu iki düşünürün yalnızca ayırım noktalarına değil, olası karşılaşma zeminlerine de odaklanmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada Badiou ve Balibar'ın evrenselliğe dair metinlerine odaklanması, düşünürlerin çerçevelerini daha bütünlüklü bir biçimde tartışmak konusunda belirli sınırlılıkları beraberinde getirmiştir. Bununla birlikte, öngördüğüm tüm sınırlılıklara rağmen, küresel kapitalist sistemin mevcut durumu evrenselliğe ve onun farkla(rla) ilişkisine dair bir incelemeyi yakıcı bir biçimde gerektirdiğinden, Badiou ve Balibar'ın bu çerçevede birbirine yaklaşabileceği noktaları irdeleyecek bir çalışmanın anlamlı olacağına dair kanımı sürdürdüm.

## B. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

(Please fill out this form on computer. Double click on the boxes to fill them)

### ENSTİTÜ / INSTITUTE

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Social Sciences

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Applied Mathematics

Enformatik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Informatics

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Marine Sciences

### YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : Özcan

Adı / Name : Büşra

Bölümü / Department : Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi / Political Science and Public Administration

**TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English): ÖZGÜRLEŞTİRİCİ SİYASET İÇİN EVRENSELLİĞİN İZİNDE: ÉTIENNE BALIBAR VE ALAIN BADIOU İLE BİRLİKTE DÜŞÜNMEK / IN SEARCH OF UNIVERSALITY FOR POLITICS OF EMANCIPATION: THINKING WITH ÉTIENNE BALIBAR AND ALAIN BADIOU**

**TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE:** Yüksek Lisans / Master  Doktora / PhD

1. **Tezin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılacaktır. / Release the entire work immediately for access worldwide.**
2. **Tez iki yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır. / Secure the entire work for patent and/or proprietary purposes for a period of two years. \***
3. **Tez altı ay süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır. / Secure the entire work for period of six months. \***

\* Enstitü Yönetim Kurulu kararının basılı kopyası teze birlikte kütüphaneye teslim edilecektir. / A copy of the decision of the Institute Administrative Committee will be delivered to the library together with the printed thesis.

Yazarın imzası / Signature ..... Tarih / Date .....

(Kütüphaneye teslim ettiğiniz tarih. Elle doldurulacaktır.)  
(Library submission date. Please fill out by hand.)

Tezin son sayfasıdır. / This is the last page of the thesis/dissertation.