I have entitled this contribution 'Ambiguous Universality' because I intend to show that no discussion about universality (and, consequently, no discussion about its contraries or opposites; particularity, difference, singularity) can usefully proceed with a 'univocal' concept of 'the universal'. Such a discussion has to take into account the concept's insurmountable equivocity. In a sense, this is a commonplace, which every great philosophy has tried to clarify, but also to reduce, notably by integrating modes or modalities of the universal within a single dialectical progression: just think of Hegel's schema of integration of juridical ('abstract' or 'formal') universality within moral (or 'subjective') universality, itself integrated within 'ethical' or 'concrete' (i.e. social and historical) universality, to become finally a moment in the realization of 'the Absolute'. Our experience with thinking and building institutions has been, however, that such integrative patterns are not able to 'reconcile' or completely 'mediate' the conflicting concepts and experiences of universality. This situation does not seem to me to imply that we should give up the notion of universality, or view it as a mystification or an 'idol', or to establish instead one of its opposites in the position of a 'MasterWord' of philosophy (such as the Singular, or Difference, or the Particular). Rather, I shall argue that it should lead us to accept the scattered meaning of the universal, and elaborate the passages between its different modalities. The philosophical project would thus become to articulate these differences, to seek an 'intelligible order' between them - which is always, in the last instance, a matter of ethical and political choice rather than pure speculative or theoretical construction.

In the following pages, I shall gather my remarks around three successive points of view on the question of universality: universality as 'reality' which, as we shall see, leads to questioning again the representations of unity and diversity; universality as 'fiction' which seems to me the right way to discuss the institutional combinations of seeming 'opposites', such as universalism and particularism; finally, universality as a 'symbol' which, for reasons that I shall explain later, I would also call 'ideal universality'. My terminology is a tentative one; it could be transformed if other terms prove clearer or more accurate. It has also to take into account the fact that each of these 'moments' is itself, in many respects, a contradictory one.

**Ambiguous Universality**

**Universal as Reality**

Let us start with real universality. I take it in the sense of an actual interdependency between the various 'units' which, together, build what we call the world: institutions, groups, individuals, but also, more profoundly, the various processes which involve institutions, groups and individuals: the circulation of commodities and people, the political negotiations, the juridical contracts, the communication of news and cultural patterns, and so on.

This interdependency has an extensive aspect: the 'limits' or 'extremities of the world' have now been reached by various modes of exploration, or the expansion of dominant, unified technologies and institutions have incorporated 'all parts of the world'. It has above all an intensive aspect: more aspects of the life of the constitutive units are dependent on what other units have been doing in the past, or are currently doing. Another - perhaps more concrete - formulation for this intensive aspect could be expressed by saying that interdependence is reaching the individual himself or herself in a direct manner, not only through the institutions or communities to which he or she belongs. Of course, the extensive and intensive aspects are interdependent. It is the extensive aspect which is
concerned when colonization included all inhabited territories, when the world is actually divided into nation-states belonging to the single ‘United Nations Organization’, or communication networks can broadcast the same programmes everywhere. It is the intensive aspect which is concerned when every individual’s wage and skill become dependent on competitors anywhere on the world market, but also when educational curricula must include the learning of international languages, or sanitary regulations must control the individual’s food and sexual habits because of the spread of world epidemics (AIDS).

Many readers will say: ‘real’ universality in this sense is nothing really new. It did not always exist, to be sure: there was a time when ‘the world’ as an entity was not conceivable, except in physical or cosmological terms. But it has existed at least since the emergence of the ‘modern world’; therefore it has been the permanent background of what we call modernity. This is certainly true. I will therefore make my point more clearly. There have been stages in the extension and intensification of real universality, until ‘in the end’, a decisive threshold was crossed, which made it irreversible (we might also say: which makes it impossible to achieve any proper ‘delinking’, or to imagine any return to ‘autarky’ within the world system); and a moment has also come when utopian figures of universality have become obsolete by their very nature. By utopian figures I mean any intellectual plans of establishing universality by connecting humankind with itself, creating a ‘cosmopolis’ – which was always imagined at the same time as an implementation of certain moral values, precisely ‘universalistic’ values. This impossibility did not arise because it proved impossible to connect the world as a single space, but exactly for the opposite reason: because this connection of humankind with itself was already achieved, because it was behind us. The two aspects are therefore bound together, as a matter of fact. But this fact is acknowledged belatedly and reluctantly. Why? Perhaps because, though it does not mark the ‘end of history’, it nevertheless marks the practical end of ‘cosmopolitical’ utopias, because it involves acknowledging that real universality, or globalization, already achieves the goal which was conceived as ‘the unification of mankind’, albeit certainly without implementing most of the moral (or ‘humanistic’) values which utopias represented as either a precondition or an immediate consequence of this unification.

In other terms, we could say that it is no longer a question of creating ‘the (true) world’, or of the ‘unity of the world’, but of transfonning it from within. It is no accident if we are reminded here of a celebrated phrase from Marx’s Theses on Feuerbach: The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it. A world which has to be transformed is an ‘actually existing’ world, a real universality. No-doubt Marx had an acute perception that real universality was well on its way towards realization, which he associated with the establishment of a single ‘division of labour’ and a process of ‘commodification’ of all social relations. At the same time, however, he associated this idea with a ‘radical simplification’ of social structures, a withering away of traditional forms of domination which, he thought, would be reduced to the pure exploitation of wage labour, leading to the final antagonism of individuality and capitalism all over the world, and hence towards a ‘catastrophic’ overcoming of alienation in communisim, or a reconciliation of man with himself. This, perhaps, is the paradoxical figure of Marx: the last utopian announcing the end of the very possibility of utopias.

But real universality in today’s world is by no means restricted to the global expansion of economic structures. It has also become political (with the progressive emergence of transnational strategies, of political ‘subjects’ irreducible to local agencies, based on a single territory), and cultural and communicative (with dominant networks and countercultural initiatives dialectically interacting across traditional borders). As a consequence, the analytical schema that seems best adapted to interpreting the expressions of this world-politics is the Hobbesian one of a ‘war of all against all’, rather than a Marxian-Hegelian schema of growing antagonism between symmetrical forces. The Hobbesian schema, however, reaches its limits when it is a question of getting to the next step: namely, the possibility of controlling the conflictual elements by settling above them some juridical and political single authority, be it through coercion or general consent. A ‘world Leviathan’, or a worldwide
‘rational central rule’, seems incompatible with the complexity we are facing: new modes of regulation are needed if we are not to be doomed to an eternal ‘Behemoth’.

Let me now add some remarks about the figure of the ‘complex world system’ in this sense. The geographical and geopolitical pattern of the world has been subjected to considerable modifications. The very term ‘globalization’ still reminds us of a process in which it was the ‘centre’ (in fact made up of rival powers) which was incorporating successive ‘peripheries’ and outer regions (Wall- erstein’s ‘external arenas’) within the limits of its domination. This process took the form of subjecting states and societies, importing goods and men, exploiting manpower and natural resources, exporting languages, techniques, and institutions (ultimately the nation-state itself). What we are now experiencing is the ‘backlash’ effect of this process. It is not the suppression of domination and economic inequalities (perhaps it could be said that the polarization of wealth and misery, power and dependency, has reached unprecedented levels) but the multiplication of centres, forming a network rather than a ‘core’ area. And it is the reverse movement which projects elements of the former periphery into the ‘central’ societies.

Above all, the phenomenon of transnational migrations acquires a new quality. It is here, particularly, that a precise historical analysis is required in order to avoid simplistic ‘Eurocentric’ or ‘Western’ prejudices. As the Mexican sociologist Pablo Gonzalez Casanova remarked at a recent conference in Paris, colonial and ‘Third World’ countries have long experienced what we in the ‘North’ now call *multiculturalism*. Far from being ‘backward’ in this respect, they were showing the way. It becomes clear that this highly conflictual and also evolutionary pattern was not a transitory one, a provisional (albeit massive) ‘exception’ on the road to modernization (mainly conceived as ‘westernization’): it is the general situation in the era of real universality. Whether or not this will be compatible with the simple continuation of the political and cultural forms which had emerged with European (and North American) hegemony, notably the (more or less completely sovereign) nation-state and (more or less unified) national culture, is exactly what is at stake in current debates on ‘the New World Order’, on dominant and dominated languages, religious and literary standards in education, and so on.

I would like to emphasize the latent transformation which the notion of minority is undergoing in this situation. ‘Minority’ is a complex notion which refers to either a juridical or a sociopolitical realm.

Juridically speaking, ‘minorities’ are those human individuals and groups who are subjected to the more or less ‘protective’ authority of full citizens: the classic example being that of children with respect to their parents. It is mainly in this sense that Immanuel Kant, in a famous text, defined the global process of emancipation of humankind which he called *Aujkumgang* ‘man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity’. Clearly, other groups have long been maintained in a minority status: women, servants, colonized peoples, and ‘coloured’ people in racial states (not to mention slaves), and there is no doubt that, in spite of winning formal equality one after the other, none of them has totally achieved complete equality, or *parity*, in terms of rights and duties, access to responsibilities, social prestige, and so forth.

The other meaning is more a question of administration and statistics: it refers to the fact that religious and/or ethnic groups are living among a ‘majoritarian’ population — usually in the framework of some national or imperial state — where they are segregated, or subjected to some special legislation, or protected, but also where their collective ‘identity’ is threatened with assimilation to the majoritarian — that is, dominant — identity. Here I would like to emphasize the following fact. By definition, ‘minority’ in this sense, whether or not it was associated with a status of juridical minority, was considered an *exceptional* phenomenon. More precisely, it was a *normalized exception*. Nationalism and nation-building politics had led to a double-edged situation. On the one hand, it was considered ‘normal’ that a nation-state be ‘ethically’ (if not religiously) homogeneous, above all from the point of view of the official language (which had all sorts of cultural effects, since it was the language of law, politics, education, administration, etc.). On the other hand, it was precisely because political entities were
generally conceived of as nation-states that minorities officially existed – that is to say, populations were formally classified according to their 'national' or 'ethnic' (sometimes also religious) membership, and individuals were identified with their 'common' majoritarian or minoritarian status, in spite of all their other differences and likenesses. The very existence of minorities, together with their more or less inferior status, was a state construct, a strict correlate of the nation-form.

Real universality produces a very ambivalent effect on this situation. It generalizes minority status, first of all in the sense that there are now ‘minorities’ everywhere, be they of ancient or recent origin – not only of local descent, but from virtually all over the world. However, the distinction between ‘minorities’ and ‘majorities’ becomes blurred in a number of ways. First of all, it is blurred because a growing number of individuals and groups are not easily inscribed in one single ethnic (or cultural, linguistic, even religious) identity. I emphasize this point, which is highly sensitive politically. ‘Commutitarian’ discourse (including the extreme form claiming ‘ethnic purity’), which can arise from both dominant and dominated groups, mainly emphasizes the fact that societies have become more heterogeneous – that there are more and more ‘others’ permanently settled among the ‘national’ population; more ‘Hispanic’ people who are not likely simply to adopt the dominant ‘Anglo-Saxon’ culture in the US; more ‘Islamic’ people who are not likely to abandon or hide their languages and beliefs in Western Europe, and so on. But this is obviously only one side of the coin, the other side being that among these ‘others’, and among the ‘nationals’ as well (notably through intermarriage), **more and more individuals are not classifiable**: marrying partners from different ‘cultures’ and ‘races,’ living across the fictitious boundaries of communities, experiencing a divided or multiple ‘self’, experiencing different languages and memberships according to the private and public circumstances. These phenomena are anything but marginal. We might summarize them by saying that, as minorities proliferate, what ‘minority’ means becomes rather obscure – unless it is forcefully imposed: at very high human cost (as we observe today, tragically, in ex-Yugoslavia).

Another way of signalling this contradictory process refers to the effect of supra-national constructions, however precarious they may be. Take the case of Western Europe. In each nation-state you will find ‘minorities’ with respect to the ‘majoritarian’ population – although their definition is anything but standardized, because they are either linguistic or religious (or vaguely attributed to some traditional linguistic, religious, cultural differences); either settled on some specific territory or scattered throughout the country, either of ancient descent or recent settlement (‘immigrants’) enjoying either full citizenship or the status of foreigners; coming either from neighbouring countries or from distant areas, and so on. Now, if you consider the global pattern from a European point of view, it may appear that the ‘majorities’ themselves are minorities, or that the linguistic, religious, cultural attributes that characterize them have no absolute privilege on the global stage. Even those populations which are represented politically by a strong state (English, French, German) are no longer absolute points of reference. At the same time, cultural characteristics which were ‘minoritarian’ in each nation-state – for example, the Muslim religious and cultural background – provide a common interest, and become potential links between populations of different origin within the emerging political entity of ‘Europe’. It becomes difficult to give a rational justification for the fact that, among the various intertwining cultural groups which form the ethnic and social pattern of ‘Europe’ as a whole, contributing to its economic and cultural life, or to the functioning of its institutions, some enjoy a privileged status, while others are discriminated against. ‘Apartheid’, which was hardly visible on the national stage, becomes apparent on the supra-national one: but these levels are becoming less and less distinct. Indeed, this is a situation which leads significant parts of the ‘majoritarian’ groups to feel threatened with reduction to a lower status, especially in a situation of economic crisis, where the ‘national-social’ (so-called welfare) state is partly dismantled. Openly or not, ideologies of ‘ethnic cleansing’, however arbitrary from the historical point of view, are likely to develop within national boundaries or at a continental level.

With all its narrowness and peculiarities, this pattern could be
taken as a model of what is emerging on a world scale: minorities without stable or unquestionable majorities. It also draws our attention to the most explosive contradiction of real universality: the combination of ethnic differences and social inequalities within a global pattern of internal exclusion.

As a combined result of colonialism, imperial rule and national class struggles, a process of (at least partial) social integration, together with a dominant tendency towards cultural assimilation, had taken place within the boundaries of the more ‘developed nations of the ‘core’, while major status differences and acute social polarization were concentrated in the ‘periphery’. To a large extent, socialist and anti-imperialist regimes had been attempts at filling this gap, fighting against ‘external exclusion’. Now the simple division between developed and underdeveloped areas inherited from imperialism is blurred: economic polarization in the world system is less directly expressed in territorial structures; class differences and ethnic discriminations are conjoined or overdetermined in a similar way in both North and South; ‘internal exclusion’ replaces external separations everywhere. Something like a world ‘underclass’ emerges, whereas, at the other extreme, a new transnational class of privileged rulers acquire common interests and language. This is undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the new outbreak of racism threatening to overwhelm humanistic values: always admitting — as I have argued elsewhere (Balibar and Wallerstein) — that racism is not a simple excess of identity feelings or xenophobia, but more specifically linked with internal exclusion, that is hostility and discrimination among populations which are not really separated, but belong to the same society and are culturally mixed with one another.

The immediate prospects may appear rather grim — not to mention the long-term resolution of the contradiction, which would require basic transformations of the social and economic structures. From a theoretical point of view, however, things could be summarized as follows: real universality is a stage in history where, for the first time, ‘humankind’ as a single web of interrelationships is no longer an ideal or utopian notion but an actual condition for every individual; nevertheless, far from representing a situation of mutual recognition, it actually coincides with a generalized pattern of conflicts, hierarchies and exclusions. It is not even a situation in which individuals communicate at least virtually with each other, but much more one where global communication networks provide every individual with a distorted image or a stereotype of all the others, either as ‘kin’ or as ‘aliens’, thus raising gigantic obstacles to any dialogue. ‘Identities’ are less isolated and more incompatible, less univocal and more antagonistic.

Universalit as Fiction

Let us now examine a quite different concept, which I call fictive universality. Of course there is some degree of arbitrariness in any terminology. Misunderstandings can be avoided only in the progressive elaboration of the argument. When I say that universality should also be considered ‘fictive’, I am not suggesting that it does not exist, that it is a mere possibility, a ghost or an idea as opposed to the world of facts. Ideal universality will come later. The kind of ‘fiction’ I want to deal with has to do with very effective processes, above all institutions and representations: I take it, therefore, in the sense of ‘constructed reality’. On the other hand, I want to avoid the common idea that every identity, be it personal or collective, could be considered a ‘construct’ in the same general sense, because this classical relativistic view — so it seems to me — leads to a levelling of the historical processes which create and hierarchize forms of identity and individuality, so that some of them become more ‘basic’ than others, and form a common background to their becoming complementary or incompatible. Such distinctions seem to me all the more necessary when the nonnative structures of identity and individuality, or the institutions which produce a common representation of ‘what it means to be a person’, to ‘be oneself’, or to be a ‘subject’ and the institutions which continuously enforce these representations upon human beings through education and social experience, are put into question: what is some times referred to as a ‘crisis’ of values. What is at stake is precisely the ‘non-natural’ but also ‘non-arbitrary’ character of subjective norms and patterns of individuality.
There is indeed a long tradition in the social sciences dealing with fictive universality in this sense. For my present purpose, however, I find a philosophical reference more useful: Hegel’s construction of an ‘ethical’ notion of the individual (what he called Stättlichkeit). This is probably because Hegel, dependent as he was on a particular set of social values (those of the ‘modern state’ or the ‘Rechtsstaat’ which found its ‘rational’ shape in Western Europe towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, after the ‘bourgeois revolutions’), was acutely aware of the conflict, and therefore the analogies and incompatibilities, between two conflicting realizations of universality: the religious and the national-political. In a sense it could be said that Hegel’s dialectic of history had no other object than precisely explaining how one great historical ‘fiction’, that of the universalistic church, could be substituted by another historical ‘fiction’, that of the secular, rational institutions of the state (in practice, the nation-state), with equally universalistic aims.

To be sure, Hegel’s view of this process was associated with the idea that historical development necessarily leads from religious universality to political universality (in Hegelian terms, religious universality is ‘rational’ only an sich, or in alienated form, whereas political universality is ‘rational’ fur sich, or consciously). In other words, he saw it as an irreversible progress. Therefore political universality, notwithstanding its fictive character, should appear as an absolute. What we are experiencing today is clearly a relativization of this view, which goes along with impressive phenomena of ‘religious revival’. I would rather say: we are finding that political universality itself displays internal contradictions, while the contradictions of religion are still alive; or we are finding that the ‘crisis’ of religious hegemonies remains open to new developments, while the ‘crisis’ of the nation-form is already developing, with no predictable end. But this critique of Hegel’s conception of linear progress does not negate the relevance of his analytical construction. In fact, on the contrary, what I have called ‘fictive universality’ could also be labelled ‘Hegelian universality’.

What makes the Hegelian construction so very relevant is the fact that it transcends any formal opposition between ‘holism’ and ‘individualism’. What Hegel is concerned with is the intrinsic relationship between the construction of hegemony, or total ideology, and autonomous individuality, or the person. Both universalistic religions and national state-building rely upon total ideologies, encompassing a number of different ‘identities’ and ‘memberships’. They claim to represent universality as such, but they are opposed to totalitarian world-views, where all individuals are supposed to adopt one and the same system of beliefs, or follow compulsory rules, for the sake of salvation and identification with some common essence. They are pluralistic by nature. This amounts to saying that total ideologies are intrinsically connected with the recognition (and before that, the institution) of the individual as a relatively autonomous entity: not one which is absolutely free from particular identities and memberships, but one which is never reducible to them, which ideally and also practically (in the day-to-day working of basic institutions, such as sacraments, marriage, courts, education, elections, etc.) transcends the limitations and qualifications of particular identities and memberships. This is precisely what should be understood as (fictive) universality: not the idea that the common nature of individuals is given or already there, but, rather, the fact that it is produced inasmuch as particular identities are relativized, and become mediations for the realization of a superior and more abstract goal.

What I want to show, therefore, by very schematically outlining a kind of Hegelian dialectic of hegemony, is both that this figure is very effective, and that it has a very strict prerequisite, which can lead to its crisis and internal collapse under other material conditions (notably economic ones). It is very effective because individuality itself is always an institution; it has to be represented and acknowledged; this can be achieved only if the individual is released from a strict membership or a ‘fusion’ within his or her Gemeinschaft, thus becoming able to adopt various social roles, to ‘play’ on several memberships, or to ‘shift identity’ in order to perform different social functions, while remaining a member of a superior community, or a ‘subject’. It has its problematic prerequisites, however, because it is connected with the imposition of normality, a normal or standard way of life and set of beliefs (a ‘dominant’ practical
ideology), which has to be maintained for successive generations - at least for the overwhelming majority, or the 'mainstream', across class and other barriers.

Universal religions achieved both results: this explains why they still provide 'ideal types' of hegemony. They did not suppress loyalties to the family, professional status, ethnic belongings and racial differences, social and political hierarchies, and so on. On the contrary - with the exception of 'apocalyptic' movements and crises - they depicted absolute reciprocity among the faithful, or perfect love of one's neighbour, as a transcendent goal, which could be reached only after death (or after the Last Judgement): a matter of hope, not of political strategy. But they urged individuals to live their particular lives internally (and, as much as possible, externally) according to the transcendent goal of salvation, or to put it better - according to rules which were supposed to fit this ideal. This set up the symbolic framework which allowed particular institutions to become 'Christian' (or 'Islamic') institutions, to be lived and represented as indirect means or mediations towards final salvation. Thus particular institutions, communities and reciprocities were reestablished or transformed, but always integrated within a totality. An individual could be recognized as a member of his or her various communities (family, profession, neighbourhood); he or she could act according to their obligations or enjoy their privileges or accept their burdens - as a father or a mother, a soldier or a priest, a master or a servant, a Frenchman or a German, and so on - inasmuch as his or her various practices were sacralized or sanctified, and there were particular rites for all the corresponding circumstances. But the reverse was also true: any of these qualifications and practices, whether distributed among different social groups or successively performed by the same individuals, could be experienced as intrinsic mediations of the religious life.

The same is true for national hegemony, wherever it was achieved in the form of building an independent state which succeeded in 'nationalizing' the main aspects of social life and culture: this is the most concrete meaning we can give to the notion of secularization. From a religious point of view, national hegemony is often seen as pure uniformization, if not as totalitarian; just as, from a secular national point of view, religious hegemony is seen as incompatible with individual autonomy. Indeed, both hegemonies have different views of what is essential to human personality. They also have different, symmetrical points d'honneur which are supposed to reveal the supreme value which they try to create. In the case of universal religions, the point d'honneur is peace among nations, the recognition of a supra-national community by all political powers. In the case of the nation-state, it is, rather, peace or tolerance among the various religious dominations (and more generally, on this model: the various ideologies), in the name of citizenship and legal order. In fact, both are pluralistic from their own point of view, that is, within their own limits. Nation-states adopt various means (according to their particular history, which is generally conflict-ridden and bloody) to make peace among religions, regional identities or ethnic memberships, and class loyalties. Usually these means have nothing to do with real or strict equality; they are permeated with relations of force, but they are successful inasmuch as they allow particular communities and networks not only to become integrated in the 'total community' (national citizenship), but, much more, to work as its mediations. Recognized differences, or otherness-within-the-limits-of-citizenship, become the essential mediation of national membership.

Of course, you could wonder why I have called this mechanism 'universalality'. Or you could say: it is universal only because of its 'false consciousness', because a Church or a State, as an institution of power needs a legitimizing discourse in which its own peculiarity or one-sidedness is masked and transfigured through the representation of 'ideological' goals and values. This aspect undoubtedly exists. It was emphasized by the Marxist critique, and it is revived whenever a 'radical' discourse criticizes the state, the school system, the legal system, and so forth, viewing them as so many means of domination in the service of a ruling class or group (be it the group of capitalists, or imperialists, or white men, or males, and so on). But it can work, and create a 'consensus' or a 'hegemony', only because it is rooted in a more elementary structure, which is truly universalistic. I think that such a structure always exists when a second-order community - or a 'Terminal Court of Appeal'. as
Ernest Gellner calls it is raised above ‘traditional’ or ‘natural’ or ‘primary’ memberships, addressing their members qua individuals that is, whenever immediate memberships are virtually deconstructed and reconstructed as organic parts of the whole. Seen from outside (from the ‘absolute’ standpoint of world history), totality itself can certainly appear to be highly particularistic there are several universal-religions, or rival interpretations of religious universality, just as there are several nation-states and nationalist ideologies, each of them claiming to embody universal values (each claiming, one way or another, to be the ‘elect nation’ or to be destined to lead humankind on the road of progress, justice, etc.) Nothing is more clearly particularistic in this sense than institutional claims of universality.

The true universalistic element, however, lies in the internal process of individualization: virtual deconstruction and reconstruction of primary identities. And it is all the more effective when it has been achieved through difficult and violent conflicts, where oppression and revolt have threatened the hegemonic structure with internal collapse. ‘Individualized individuals’ do not exist by nature: they are created through the conflictual (dis)integration of primary memberships – that is to say, when individuals can view the wider community as a liberating agency, which frees them from belonging to one single group, or possessing a single, undifferentiated, massive identity. It is universalistic because, in a typical ‘short circuit’, it is working both from above and from below with respect to ‘particular’ groups and communities. Of course, the corresponding experience is by nature ambivalent: it can also – it has to be – lived as denaturalization, ‘coercion’ of affective ties and natural sentiments in the name of ‘Reason’, of ‘Shared Notions’. This is indeed exactly what ideologies and standards of education are in the business of explaining and implementing.

This process has been working since the very beginnings of state structures. It is a decisive means of integration, or community building, because it produces or enhances individual subjectivity – that is, both a loyalty directed towards a more abstract, or symbolic, or (in Benedict Anderson’s terms) ‘imagined’ community, and a distance between private life and social life, individual initiative and collective duties (a ‘moral’, rather than ‘ritual’, obedience: one in which conviction and conscience are more important than custom and ‘natural’ authority). In my view there is no doubt that Hegel was right: ‘private life’ and ‘private conscience’ become autonomous precisely as a consequence of this subsumption and transformation of ‘natural’ memberships or primary ‘cultures’ under the law of the state, and remain tied to it. Or – to put it better – private life and conscience can become a matter of conflict between the interests of particular communities and the public interests of the state, but only because every ‘subject’ has already been distanitzated from his or her immediate membership (even before his individual birth) through the existence of the state or public sphere. In modern states, this constitution of subjectivity, which is a permanent tension between memberships and citizenship, takes the form of individual property, personal choice of profession and opinions, ‘free play’ of alternative loyalties offered by churches, family and school, political parties and unions, or in more abstract terms, a ‘complex equality’, which altogether form a ‘civil society’, supported and loosely controlled by the state but not identified with its central apparatus, as Locke, Hegel, Tocqueville, Gramsci, and Michael Walzer have explained, each in his own way.

Fictive or total universality is effective as a means of integration – it demonstrates its own universality, so to speak – because it leads dominated groups to struggle against discrimination or inequality in the very name of the superior values of the community: the legal and ethical values of the state itself (notably: justice). This is clearly the case when, in the name of equal opportunity for all human individuals, feminist movements attack the discriminative ‘patriarchal’ laws and customs which protect the authoritarian structure of the male-dominated family, while extending it to the whole professional and cultural realm. It is also the case when dominated ethnic groups or religious denominations demand equality in the name of the pluralistic or liberal values which the state officially incorporates in its constitution. And it was clearly demonstrated throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the way class struggles forced the nation-state to acknowledge specific rights of labour and incorporate them into the constitutional order. The process was Marxist,
but the result was ‘Hegelian’. By taking part in the organized class struggle (and first of all by imposing their right to ‘join forces’ against exploitation), workers ceased to form a simple dominated ‘internally excluded’ mass; they individualized themselves, and created new mediations for the state. To confront the hegemonic structure by denouncing the gap or contradiction between its official values and its actual practice – with greater or lesser success – is the most effective way of enforcing its universality.

Now we should not forget the counterpart of this form of universality: it is indeed normalization. This, of course, is where things become more ambiguous. Hegemony liberates the individual from immediate membership, but which individual? It requires and develops subjectivity, but which subjectivity? One which is compatible with normality. Within the boundaries of fictive universality, a free individual (enjoying freedom of conscience and initiative, and also, in a more material sense, such liberties as possession of personal belonging, a right to privacy, and a right to speak on the public stage, to be educationally and professionally competitive, and so on) has to be ‘normal’ in several senses. He or she has to be mentally healthy, that is, to conform to ways of reasoning and private behaviour which do not disturb the standard patterns of communication. He or she has to conform to the dominant sexual patterns (or, if this is not the case, to hide his or her sexual habits, therefore leading a schizophrenic existence; or, in the very ‘best’ circumstances, to live them openly, albeit in the framework of some stigmatized subculture). He or she has to be moral or conscientious and, of course, obey the legal rules against criminal behaviour. In saying all this, I am not taking a moral stance pro or contra the existence of the normal subject, I am simply reiterating that normality is the standard price to be paid for the universalistic liberation of the individual from immediate subjection to primary communities. For normality is not the simple fact of adopting customs and obeying rules or laws: it means internalizing representations of the ‘human type’ or the ‘human subject’ (not exactly an essence, but a norm and a standard way of behaving) in order to be recognized as a person in one’s own right – to become presentable (fit to be seen) in order to be represented. To become responsible (fit to be answered) in order to be respected.

This allows us to understand why the key structures of hegemony – the deep structures of ‘hegemonic’ reason – are always family structures, educational and judicial institutions: not so much because they inculcate dominant opinions or maintain authoritarian traditions, but because they immediately display the symbolic patterns of normality and responsibility in everyday life: the normal sexual difference and complementarity of genders, the normal hierarchy of intellectual capacities and models of rational discourse, the normal distinction between honesty and criminality, or between fair and illegal ways of acquiring power and wealth (in short, what the moral tradition called ‘natural law’). This is not to say that in a ‘normal’ society everybody is ‘normal’, or that there is no deviance or hypocrisy, but that anyone who is not ‘normal’ has to be segregated or repressed or excluded, or to hide himself or herself, or to play a double game one way or another. This is the latent condition which allows otherness or difference to become integrated within a ‘total’ ideology or hegemony. It also reveals what remains the internal obsession of every hegemony: neither the simple fact of conflicts, not even radical social antagonisms, however threatening they can be for the ruling classes; nor, on the other hand, the existence of ‘deviant’ groups, or ‘radical movements’ directed against moral and cultural norms, but, rather, the combination of both which takes place whenever individuality can be claimed only on condition of challenging the social forms (or rules) of normality. But this leads me to examine another concept of universality, which I call ideal universality.

**Universality as a Symbol**

Again, some misunderstandings should be avoided here. Instead of ‘symbolic’, perhaps I should say ‘ideal’ or ‘idealistic’ universality, because what is at stake is not another degree of fiction. It is, rather, the fact that universality also exists as an ideal, in the form of
of the dominated.,

Perhaps it should be suggested that, in fact, 'fictive' universality could never exist without a latent reference to 'ideal' universality or, as Jacques Derrida might put it, some spectre which can never be deconstructed. Justice as an institution may not only require that subjectivity be formed when individuals 'internalize' common or universal values. It may also require, at a deeper level, to be rooted in some open or latent insurrection, which gave subjectivity its 'infinite' character or (against every form of social status) equated it with a quest for 'absolute' liberty.

In Marxist terms, this would be the problem of how dominant ideologies are constituted with respect to the 'consciousness' of dominant and dominated people. Marx's original formulation (in *Th e German Ideology*) asserting that 'the dominant ideology is always the ideology of the dominant class', is hardly tenable: not only does it make ideology a mere duplicate or reflection of economic power (thus making it impossible to understand how 'ideological' domination can contribute to 'real' domination, or add something to it), but precludes the possibility of explaining how any social consent or consensus can be forced, except by trick, mystification, deception, and so on — that is, categories borrowed from a fantastic psychol-
gy. The alternative seems to be to reverse the pattern, and propose the (only apparently) paradoxical idea that the necessary condition for an ideology to become dominant is that it should elaborate the values and claims of the 'social majority', become the discourse of the dominated (distorted or inverted as it may appear). 'Society', or the dominant forces in society, can speak to the masses in the language of universalistic values (rights, justice, equality, welfare, progress, . . .), because in this language a kernel remains which came from the masses themselves, and is returned to them.

This formulation, however, certainly does not eliminate every mystery, if only because the authentic discourse of the dominated, 'prior' to any hegemonic use, cannot be isolated as such. It appears mainly as a 'forgotten' origin, or is testified to not so much by actual words as by practical resistance, the irreducible 'being there' of the dominated. . . . The actual relationship between dominant

and dominated in the field of ideology must remain ambivalent in history, but there is undoubtedly a meaning of universality which is intrinsically linked with the notion of insurrection, in the broad sense ('insurgents' are those who collectively rebel against domination in the name of freedom and equality). This meaning I call ideal universality — not only because it supports all the idealistic philosophies which view the course of history as a general process of emancipation, a realization of the idea of man (or the human essence, or the classless society, etc.), but because it introduces the notion of the unconditional into the realm of politics.

A crucial example — perhaps the only one, if we admit that it could be formulated several times in different places and epochs, and in different words — is the proposition concerning human rights which is expressed in the classical 'bourgeois' eighteenth-century Declarations or Bills. More precisely, it is the proposition which reverses the traditional relationship between subjection and citizenship, and justifies the universal extension of political (civic) rights (or the general equivalence of 'citizen' and 'man', in classical terminology), by explaining that equality and liberty are inseparable — in some sense identical — notions. I call this proposition 'equality' or, better, as a demand.

Again, universality in this sense has both an extensive and an intensive aspect. The extensive aspect lies in the fact that human rights cannot be limited or restricted in their application: there is an inherent contradiction in the idea that not every human being enjoys rights which are constitutive of humanity. Hence the process-lytic or expansive aspect of the ideal of equaliberty (which, as a discourse, can cover very different practices). Expansion can be interpreted in a geographical sense, but above all in a sociological one, meaning that no group is 'by nature' outside the claim of rights. Of course, this is all the more revealing when, in political,
social or domestic institutions, certain ‘categories’ or ‘classes’ are relegated to minority status, while the principle itself remains asserted: workers, women, slaves or servants, foreigners, ‘minorities’ in general. But this brings us to the intensive aspect, which is the really decisive one. I think that this intensive universality can be identified with the critical effect of any discourse in which it is stated that equality and liberty are not distinct concepts, or that a ‘contradiction’ opposing the requisites of liberty and of equality is ruled out in principle (they therefore do not have to be ‘reconciled’ through the institution of a preferential order or a reciprocal limitation). In more practical terms, if no equality can be achieved without liberty, then the reverse is also true: no liberty can be achieved without equality.6

Such a proposition is dialectical by nature. It undoubtedly has a positive content: to indicate that freedom and equality will proceed pan passu (remain blocked or progress) in ‘cities’ or societies, be they national or transnational. It can, however, be shown to be true or absolutely justified only negatively, by refuting its own negations (or by displaying its internal negativity): this amounts to defining ‘liberty’ or freedom as non-coercion, and equality or ‘parity’ as non-discrimination, both notions being open to various definitions according to ancient and novel experiences of constraint and discrimination. The proposition then becomes: abolishing or fighting discrimination also implies abolishing or fighting constraint and coercion. In this sense, the ‘insurrectional’ content of ideal universality becomes manifest.

From this negativity follows the intersubjective – or, better, transindividual – character of ideal universality. Rights to equality and liberty are indeed individual; only individuals can claim and support them. But the abolition of both coercion and discrimination (which we may call emancipation) is always clearly a collective process, which can be achieved only if many individuals (virtually all of them) unite and join forces against oppression and social inequality. In other words, equality is never something that can be bestowed or distributed; it has to be won. There is a direct connection here with what Hannah Arendt called ‘a right to acquire rights’, as distinct from enjoying this or that already existing right which is guaranteed by law. The ‘right to rights’ clearly is not (or not primarily) a moral notion; it is a political one. It describes a process which started with resistance and ends in the actual exercise of a ‘constituent power’, whichever particular historical form this may take. It should therefore also be called a right to politics, in the broad sense, meaning that nobody can be properly emancipated from outside or from above, but only by his or her own (collective) activity. This is precisely what rebels or insurgents from various democratic revolutions in the past have claimed (what they are still claiming, if there are revolutions in our own time).

Let me press the point that such a concept of universality is ideal – which is not to say that it does not play an active role (or that there are no processes of emancipation). What we observe, rather, is that the ideal of nondiscrimination and non-coercion is ‘immortal’ or irrepressible, that it is revived again and again in different situations, but also that it has shifted continually throughout history. We all know that, although the American and French Revolutions declared that all men (meaning: human beings) were ‘free and equal by birthright’, the resulting social and political orders were permeated with a number of restrictions, discriminations, and authoritarian aspects, beginning with the exclusion of women and wage-labourers from full citizenship. In short, they were clearly contradictory with respect to their own universalistic principle. Moreover, the slogans of the workers’ movement, at the beginning, were a revival of equaliberty, or the universal right to politics. Suffice it here to remember the phrases in the Inaugural Address of the First International (1864): ‘the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves’.

But the clearest modern example is the feminist or women’s liberation movement, which is also a movement for equality, arising from the evidence that a paternalistic or protective granting of rights and opportunities to women by the will of men is a contradiction in terms. As a consequence, it is not simply a ‘political movement’ (with ethical and social dimensions), it is also a transformation of politics in essence, or a transformation of the relationship between genders which is reflected in existing political practice.

An emancipatory movement in this sense has a symbolic and
universalistic dimension per se: although at first it mobilizes members of the oppressed group, it can achieve its goals only if it becomes a general movement, if it aims at changing the whole fabric of society. Inasmuch as women struggling for parity transform resistance into politics, they are not trying to win particular rights for a ‘community’, which would be the ‘community of women’. From the emancipatory standpoint, gender is not a community. Or perhaps I should say that the only gender which is a community is the masculine, inasmuch as males establish institutions and develop practices to protect old privileges (and I should add: by doing so, males virtually transform ‘political society’ into an affective community, where processes of identification can take place). As Susan Wolf rightly argues, there is nothing like a ‘women’ culture’ in this sense in which anthropologists talk about the culture of a community (be it ethnic or social/professional). On the other hand, however, every community is structured around a certain form of relationship between genders, specific forms of sexual, affective, and economic subjection. Hence it must be recognized that the position of women (both the ‘real’ position in the division of activities and distribution of powers, and the ‘symbolic’ position which is presented in discourse) is a structural element which determines the character of every culture, be it the culture of a particular group, a social movement, or a whole society with its inherited civilization.

Women’s struggle for parity, therefore, being a complex struggle for nondifferentiation within non-discrimination, creates a solidarity (or achieves citizenship) without creating a community. In Jean-Claude Milner’s terms, women are typically a ‘paradoxical class’: neither united by the imaginary of resemblance, of ‘natural’ kinship, nor called by some symbolic voice, which would allow them to view themselves as an ‘elect’ group. Rather, this struggle virtually transforms the community. It is therefore immediately universalistic, and this allows us to imagine that it could transform the very notion of politics, including forms of authority and representation, which suddenly appear particularistic (not to speak of the forms of nationhood, including their typical connection with warfare).

I think that this kind of argument has a critical impact on discussions about ‘minorities’ ‘minority rights’, and also – at least indirectly – ‘multiculturalism’ and cultural conflicts. The ambivalent story of conjunctural unity and long-term divergences between the emancipatory struggles of women and the movements of national, ethnic or cultural liberation (not to speak of religious revival) has never, to my knowledge, been written in a comprehensive manner. The contradictions are not less important here than they were (and are) between working-class struggle and feminism, especially where the former has become a defensive movement which aims at protecting a ‘working-class culture’ within the broader framework of national hegemony.

This, however, should not lead us to simplistic conclusions. On the one hand, we should admit that the contradiction is not merely empirical, or accidental. It is a contradiction in the principles themselves. As a consequence, we should not keep using such notions as ‘minority’ and ‘difference’ in a manner which is itself undifferentiated. If women are a ‘minority’, this cannot be in the same sense as cultural, religious and ethnic minorities. If they are considered to be the ‘majority’, or to represent the interests of the majority in a given period, this cannot be in the same sense in which, when I was discussing ‘real universality’, I said that new transnational cultures are becoming potentially majoritarian in a world of increasing migrations and mixtures.

On the other hand, however, this recognition of the inner tension between ‘differences’ which lies at the root of many disappointing results of utopian discourses about the ‘new citizenship’ cannot lead us to the proposition that ‘cultural’ struggles, expressing a demand for autonomy, or recognition, or equality of communities which have long been excluded from political representation, and are still torn between opposing politics of exclusion and assimilation (like communities of migrants), are particularistic by their very nature. According to circumstances, they can have a universalistic component, clearly, in all the three directions which I have been examining. From the point of view of real universality, first, because they can play a direct role in challenging the ‘internal exclusion’ on a world scale that continuously recreates racism. From the point of view of fictive universality, second, because
they can constitute a struggle for broadening the spectrum of pluralism, and therefore expanding subjectivity, or challenging the ways of life and thought which have raised above society the self-image of some historically privileged group, under the name of ‘reason’. From the point of view of ideal universality, finally, because discrimination between cultures (not only class cultures, but also ethnic cultures from West and East, North and South, etc.) is usually also (and perhaps first and foremost) a way of reproducing intellectual difference and hierarchies, or a de facto privileging of those men, women, and above all children, who are more ‘congenial’ to established standards of communication. This is something which has always been conflictual in national societies (with their colonial and imperial dependencies), but it becomes truly explosive in a transnational environment. Once again we realize that in politics there are realities, fictions and ideals, but there are no essences.

The threefold meaning of universality which I have described is aporetic (at least, so it seems to me). There is no ‘final answer’. But each point can have some practical implications.

I distinguished, in a somewhat Lacanian way, three instances of universality: universality as reality, universality as fiction, and universality as a symbol (a man ideal). They are never isolated, independent of one another, but they remain irreducible, and make sense in different realms.

Real universality is a process which creates a single ‘world’ by multiplying the interdependencies between the units – be they economic, political or cultural – that form the network of social activities today. What is now called ‘globalization’ is only the backlash of an age-old process, constantly fostered by capitalist expansion, which started with the constitution of rival national units, at least in the core of the world-economy. They are still with us today – very much so – but they can no longer provide models for the world-scale institutions and community-building processes now on the horizon. I suggested that this has not only political but also philosophical consequences, because it renders obsolete the classical cosmopolitan utopias which relied upon the idea of a spiritual realm beyond state institutions, since these intellectual constructions have now been virtually overtaken by real universalization itself. Above all, I insisted on two points. First, that globalization exacerbates minority status, but at the same time makes it more difficult for a growing number of individuals or groups to become classified within simple denominations of identities. Second, that the immediate – and probably lasting – effect of the blurring of borders between nations, empires, and former ‘blocs’ is a dramatic increase in interethnic or pseudoethnic conflicts, mainly expressed and stereotyped in cultural terms. I could rephrase the whole thing by saying that in this context identities are more than ever used as strategies, both defensive and aggressive, and this means imposing such identities both upon others and upon oneself. The kind of strategies we are confronted with could not be understood if we did not constantly remember that the play of difference is underpinned and overdetermined by the general pattern of inequalities, both old (notably those coming from colonialism and imperialism) and new inequalities, arising from the at least partial disintegration of national-social states. As a consequence, the politics of identity or the strategies of identity defence are ultimately means of resisting inequality, or universality as inequality. But the reverse is also true: we cannot imagine that the struggle against inequalities in a ‘globalized’ world will ever solve the problem of cultural diversity, and therefore put an end to resistance to uniformization and homogenization. How can we universalize resistance without reinforcing the insistence on exclusive identity and otherness which the system already produces and instrumentalizes?

There is no ‘given’ theoretical solution to this riddle. We may very cautiously imagine that the practical solution arises progressively from the fact that not all cultural diversities are ethnic. There are indeed new, post-ethnic or post-national, cultural identities emerging, just as there are old cultural identities reviving (e.g. religious). We may also derive hope from the fact that diversities other than cultural are competing with them in the self-identification of individuals (above all, gender identities and sexual diversities; there are excellent indications of this in Connolly).
The other two concepts of universality which I distinguished are fictive universalities and ideal universalities. By fictive universalities I mean the kind of universality which was involved in the constitution of social hegemonies, and therefore always based upon the existence of state institutions, be they traditional and religious, or modern and secular. The ambivalence of universalities here takes the form of a typical combination (as Hegel would say) between the liberation of individual subjectivity from narrow communitarian bonds, and the imposition of a normal—pattern of individual behaviour. I stressed the fact that although — or, rather, because — this is constructed, there is a true element of universality here: namely, the fact that a political hegemony, which in the modern world has taken the 'secular' form of national citizenship, creates the possibility for individuals to escape the 'impossible' oscillation or contradiction between two impossible extremes: an absolute reduction of personal identity to one role or membership, and a permanent floating — we might call it postmodern — between multiple contingent identities offered by the 'cultural market'. But the very high price to be paid for that (some believe they pay it easily; others become aware of the real cost) is not only normality, but also exclusion: in the form of both internal exclusion — suppression of one's own desires and potential — and external exclusion — suppression of deviant behaviour and groups. There is no doubt in my mind that the kind of substantial collective identity which is created by the functioning of hegemonic institutions (what I have called fictive ethnicity in the case of the nation-state, or an imaginary community beyond 'private' or 'particular' membership [see Balibar and Wallerstein]) is a key structure of the whole system of normalization and exclusion, precisely because it is (or was once) a powerful instrument for opening a space for liberties, especially in the form of social struggles and democratic demands. Hence the permanent tension of this historical form of citizenship. Now the crucial problem emerges precisely when the process of globalization makes it progressively more impossible to organize hegemony (purely) within the national framework, or requires, if democracy is to be preserved or reconstructed, that it take post-national or transnational forms. We should not underestimate the fact that this is the main reason why fictive universalities in this sense regress towards particularism, or national identity virtually monistic character — its (even limited) pluralist capacities become another form of one-dimensional identity.

Finally, I called ideal universalities the subversive element which the philosophers called negativity. It may have been necessary to ground any political hegemony historically on the experience of revolution in the broad sense, or popular insurrection. But on the other hand, such a negativity goes beyond any institutional citizenship, by posing the infinite question of equality and liberty together, or the impossibility of actually achieving freedom without equality, or equality without liberty. I insisted on the fact that such an ideal of universality, which has emerged again and again throughout history (and therefore seems to be irrepressible), is transindividual by nature. It is a question not of speaking the established language of politics, of 'playing the game' according to its well-known rules, but of collectively breaking through the limits of public communication by means of a new language. The best examples in this sense are those of the 'paradoxical classes' which claim the rights of a 'particular' group not in the name of this very peculiarity, but because its discrimination or exclusion appears to involve a negation of human universality as such: the classical proletariat, and women, engaged in a movement for parity or equality-indifference. I do not exclude the possibility that other social movements have a universal component in this sense — that is, aim at removing some universal discrimination by asserting the rights of (and to) some fundamental difference. But I want to emphasize that there is no pre-established harmony between such different 'ideals', although each of them undoubtedly embodies one aspect of universality. Possibly we should admit that in a very deep sense (affecting the very notion of 'humankind'), the ideal universal is multiple by nature — not in the sense of being 'relative', less than unconditional, bound to compromise, but, rather, in the sense of being always-already beyond any simple or 'absolute' unity, and therefore a permanent source of conflict. This has obvious practical consequence, notably the non-existence of any spontaneous or 'natural' force of heterogeneous 'minorities' against the dominant universality, or the 'system' as
such. This in turn does not mean that unity (or common goals) cannot be constructed in given circumstances. But here we come back to the question of choice, and the *szek or finitude of choice*, which I mentioned when I was discussing the ambivalence of ideals. It is the same problem. Philosophy can give a name to it, but philosophy cannot solve it.

**Notes**

This essay is an abridged and slightly revised version of the paper presented on 18 February 1994 at the Conference 'Cultural Diversity: On Democracy, Community and Citizenship'. The Bohem Foundation, New York. An amended and expanded version was published in Etienne Balibar, La *Crainte des masses, Politique et philosophie avant et après Marx* (Paris: Galilée, 1997).

1. This was also part of the lesson taught by such anthropologists as Roger Bastide a generation ago.

2. As laid out in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, and mainly his *Philosophy of Right*, 3rd Part (§§142-360).

3. This is not to say that there are no movements in history which aim at 'messianic' identification of individual minds on a religious or national basis. But precisely these movements are 'excessive' and partial; they are hardly compatible with social 'normality' and the building of institutions in the long run – with the 'routinization of charisma', as Weber put it. On the notion of 'pluralism' as a national name for hegemony in American history, see Zunz.

4. This last case is clearly decisive: class loyalties, especially working-class loyalty, becomes a decisive pillar of national hegemony as soon as it is transformed into a particular 'culture' and a political 'opinion' or set of opinions within the political system, whose contribution to the national history or spirit is officially recognized in the (national-) social state. The ideological process of hegemonic integration transforms *différence* – that is, class antagonism – into *particularism* a simple 'class culture': this is indeed easier when that class culture is also an ethnic or quasi-ethnic one. Hence the ambivalence of 'ethnicity' in immigration states: it is the background both of their collective resistance against exploitation, and of their integration (sometimes their desire for integration, called 'recognition') into the national unit. See Noiriel.

5. This is where a critical discussion of the opposite effects of 'real universality' and 'fictive universality' is very relevant: 'subcultures' and 'deviant behaviour' can be valorized by the market, in given economic conditions, whereas they are always stigmatized by 'hegemonic' state morals. For twenty years now, the USA has been a fascinating arena for this contradiction.

6. Of course, I choose these terms to show the opposition between this conception of universality – which, I think, is a constant in the interpretation of democracy as 'insurrection', both from the English-American and the French point of view – and the 'problem' from which John Rawls deduces his revised theory of justice in recent writings. He would certainly not deny the opposition himself. However, whether Kant's philosophy stands completely on one side of the debate might be less easy to decide.

7. This contradiction had its collective counterpart in revolts or 'conspiracies', but also its subjective result in 'madness': see Roudinesco.

8. For the combination of liberty and equality inasmuch as it concerns the relationship between genders in society – that is, has a political meaning – some French feminists use the term 'parity'.

9. This in turn requires that they impose disciplinary sexual roles not only upon others, but also upon themselves: 'normality', the figure of political power is homosexual; the figure of family bond is heterosexual. Whether a political society which is not a community can exist, and what form the 'play' of affects would take there, remains a very mysterious question.

**References**


