

**Etienne Balibar**, *Nous, Citoyens d'Europe? Les frontières, l'Etat, le Peuple* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001, 324 pp., FF135, €20.58 pbk.).

Citizenship and belonging in Europe is the subject of Etienne Balibar's new collection of essays, written over the course of the last ten years. In this timely publication, the French philosopher, whose recent research has focused on questions of citizenship, domination and subjectivation, sketches out a position in the debate on European citizenship. Instead of considering belonging as a condition for citizenship, Balibar argues that it is a product of the latter. Building on theoretical models articulated in his earlier works, Balibar integrates a theoretical perspective, drawing on his expertise in philosophy and the history of political thought, with a provocative analysis of the current regimes of exclusion in Europe. The collection consists of twelve essays organised into three parts.

The first part of the collection, entitled 'The Crisis of National Communitarianism' (*La crise du communautarisme national*) focuses on the *forme nation*, and the effect of community it produces. The national border is the site where citizenship, subjectivity and identification are formed, where identities are historicized and represented, and where the figure of the foreigner is created. Recent eruptions of European racism are, according to the author, not psychological or sociological phenomena, but need to be analysed within an institutional context. The critical component of this context is the national apparatus of normalisation and regulation of differences, which creates the contemporary subject as a *homo nationalis*. Racism, then, is the response of states that wield excessive internal power to the erosion of their mythical sovereignty under globalisation.

In the following four essays, assembled under the heading 'Violence of borders, violence without borders' (*Violence des frontières, violence sans frontières*), Balibar examines the possibility of a genuinely democratic European citizenship. Inspired by Hannah Arendt's reflections on stateless people and the inversion of human rights and citizen's rights, Balibar frames this analysis as a question of 'right to rights' (*droit aux droits*). A right to rights is understood as a right to citizenship. The idea of a universal right to rights represents the condition of possibility for a genuinely democratic citizenship in Europe, for it would end the discrimination against migrants and asylum seekers. According to the author, this discrimination has attained a threshold which we can characterise as a European *apartheid regime*. Therefore, the development of a democratic European citizenship requires a fundamental about face in the way EU member states treat their non-citizen populations.

In the final part, entitled 'The Power of the People and the Future of Citizenship in Europe' (*Le pouvoir du peuple et l'avenir de la citoyenneté en Europe*) the author presents two genealogical explorations of the concepts of citizenship and sovereignty. In his analysis of the notion of citizenship, Balibar argues that citizenship is not a statute, but rather a collective capacity. Contrary to recent attempts to legitimise a liberal or civic type of nationalism, Balibar refuses a

conception of citizenship based on the logic of identity. Instead, a constitutive feature of citizenship is the progressive struggle for emancipation. In this sense, citizenship embodies the idea of a conquest of civil rights, and in particular social rights. Consequently, the community of citizens should be thought of as constitutively open, as the community of the accession to citizenship (*communauté d'accèsion à la citoyenneté*). The author concludes with an essay that identifies four 'construction sites' (*chantiers*) of democracy in Europe, namely the development of transnational justice systems, the convergence of social struggles on the European level, the democratisation of borders, and finally the promotion of linguistic capacities to improve transnational communication in Europe.

The format of a collection of essays is both a strength and a weakness. The absence of a linear and unified argument, and the frequent repetitions of key points may inconvenience some readers. At the same time, the structure allows for an exploration of the subject from a number of different angles. While the assemblage of the essays is loose, in themselves they are compact and present an original and insightful viewpoint in a coherent and eloquent manner. The arguments presented in this book have little pretension to truth or certitude. Instead, as the author repeatedly asserts, they are working hypotheses and attempts at rethinking the relation between citizenship and identity. The form of the hypothesis allows Balibar to develop innovative arguments, coupling a philosophical enquiry into the genealogy of concepts with a pungent critique. A major drawback of this hypothetical approach, however, is the shortage of supporting evidence for some of the author's bolder assertions, which the occasional functionalist reasoning cannot replace. The author draws attention, for example, to the new global distribution of extreme violence and mass insecurity that prevents collective emancipation and the transformation of structures of domination. This violence includes not only wars and genocide, but also situations of extreme poverty, famines, and other so-called natural catastrophes. What is problematic is Balibar's subsequent claim that this deployment of extreme violence may be functional for market capitalism. Such an assertion calls for a different level of analysis.

Nevertheless, the skilled interweaving of incisive argumentation and conceptual thinking makes *Nous, citoyens d'Europe?* an admirable work. An English translation is planned for 2002, and will be published by Princeton University Press.

**YVES WINTER**

*Yves Winter is a Research Student in Philosophy at the  
University of Paris X, France*