

9. The Myth of *Civic Patriotism*: Nationalism under the veil of the Republic in France

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“I propose to analyse an idea that is to all appearances straightforward, but which can give rise to the most dangerous misunderstandings” (Renan 1947 I: 887). With these words Ernest Renan began his famous lecture at the Sorbonne *What is a nation?* on 11 March 1882. In this chapter we will examine the idea that in the historical development of the French Republic one finds the archetypal form of *civic patriotism* which, focusing exclusively on the “daily plebiscite” and the juridical-political relationship between the citizenry and the state, dispenses with all substantive ethnic-cultural and nationalist references. We will show that, under the wing of the Republic, the nation and nationalism - “Une Nation une” - through the equation: State=Nation=Citizenship, have always been explicitly or implicitly present, albeit in a variety of forms.

1. The historical nationalisation of the Republic in France.

Recent research has highlighted the connection between the “disillusionment of the world” – the move from a society whose structure is based on an external, transcendent principle of order, to another which is structured around an immanent order – and the appearance of the (transcendent-immanent) concept of the nation, as well as the “civil religion” (Rousseau) of love for the homeland and nationalism (Gauchet 1986, Bell 2001).

However, here we are concerned with recalling, as succinctly as possible, that the French nation, the archetype par excellence of the myth of nationalism or civic patriotism and the Enlightenment, was founded during a period of initial religious exclusion. The confrontation between Catholics and Protestants, and even between Gallican and Roman Catholics, was a veritable historical-political driving force for its own particular dual process of nation building and state building and had a greater impact on the future than is commonly supposed. The creation of a shared “French”

identity, as Anthony Marx has shown, has a fundamental historical root: the unification at the dawn of the modern era of a *Catholic* nation, symbolised by the myth of Joan of Arc, in opposition to the Huguenot Protestants, within the country, and the English, as external enemies (Marx 2003). This underlying Catholic founding dimension, France as the *La Fille Aînée de L'Église* (Rémond 1992), would give rise, after the Revolution, to a nationally constituent mythical-symbolic coexistence/confrontation between the myth of *La Pucelle d'Orleans* and *Marianne*, between Catholic France and the lay Republic (Winnock 1992, Agulhon 1979). This confers a permanent historical divergence and tension on the “French” concept of nationhood between the political-territorial and the mythical-symbolic ends of the continuum of nationalising factors, which was implicit during most of the period of the Republic (see below: Historical map of ideas of nationhood in France).

Moreover, the myth of Joan of Arc as a national heroine was introduced by the Republicans, as shown by the work of Michelet or the republican statue of the national saint, by Frémiet, which was erected in the Place des Pyramides in Paris in 1874 (Mélonio 2001:175). This was propagated at the time by moderate republicans (Joseph Fabre’s proposal in 1884 for a public holiday in her honour, which was passed by the French parliament in 1894) (Winnock 1992:141) as a way of achieving a consensus in a country which at the time was seriously divided both ideologically and socially. Only much later would the myth be reformulated, in a clearly anti-Semitic form, at the time of the Dreyfus Affair and, later still, in anti-Muslim form by the Front National. This reappropriation of the “Bonne Lorraine” would result in a kind of discourse based on the binary logic of oppositions that would structure the mythical-symbolic complex of French reactionary nationalism, partially interwoven with a number of republican nationalisms, during most of the 20th century – “C’est une Celte, Jeanne D’Arc, qui sauva la patrie” (Drumont) – and would be its legacy to contemporary extreme-right nationalisms: Joan of Arc/Jews, national/internal enemy, country/town, peasant/nomad, work/speculation, health/morbidity, people/intellectuals, national unity/national disintegration, French/English, Catholicism/atheism, spiritualism/materialism, virginity/prostitution, superior race/inferior race, etc. (Winnock 2004).

Even without the anti-Semitic reformulation, that founding religious split which, although distant in time, was no less important in its founding function of the common ascendancy, has survived in stronger or weaker form even the notorious attempts at

secularisation of the end of the 19th century, exemplified by the education law of 1882 and the separation of the State and the Church by the law of 1905. In fact, beyond its recovery by nationalist movements during and following the Dreyfus Affaire – “la nationalité française est liée étroitement au catholicisme” (Barrès 1925: 254) – the religious debt of its origins has inspired a whole series of commitments of the French Republic to the Catholic religion which, despite the declaration of the secular State in the 1958 Constitution, has remained as an implicit backdrop to this day. Therefore, it is necessary to recall a number of striking practices: although the catechism was not taught in state schools, the national education authorities allowed Wednesday afternoons to be used for the religious (Catholic) education of pupils. Likewise, many public holidays are still traditional Catholic festivals: Easter, Ascension Day, Christmas, the 15th of August. There is, however, a well-known territorial exception that is often forgotten, but which is very significant in the “one and indivisible” Republic: since they were returned to France in 1918, Alsace and Lorraine have maintained a special concordat with the Holy See. Moreover, the principle of the “*école unique*” was finally abandoned, thus permitting not only private Catholic education, but also facilitating public aid for private schools (Barangé Law of 1951), introducing a contractual principle of public finance for private education (Debré law of 1959), or even authorising financing, with public funds, for the running of private centres (Guermeur law of 1976). Moreover, and of particular interest here, the Catholic character of 95% of the private centres subsidised with public funds was used by these same centres, during the 1990s, as a reason to be exempted from the application of the Bayrou memorandum on the use of religious symbols (Poulat 1987, Gaspard & Khosrokhavar 1995, Laborde 2008).

Apart from religion, following the Revolution other ethnic-cultural elements clouded the civic purity of republican ideology which, it should not be forgotten, already bore in its Jacobin version a significant burden of values which referred to an exacerbated idea of the common good (a virtuous citizenry distilled by the Great Terror) and not only a conception, which was equally problematic, of justice (“La République une et indivisible”). Indeed, tensions stemming from the *nationalist paradox* are clearly perceptible from the very beginning. To be exact, on the one hand, claims are made for the sovereignty and constituent power of a nation that previously existed in history and, on the other, the necessary political production of the French nation through a variety of procedures: national education by means of the *Projet d’Education Nationale* of Rabaut

de Saint-Étienne (1792); the systematic elimination of *patois* and the “creation of republicans, or better still Frenchmen, who will give the nation its own unique physiognomy”, demanded by Marie-Joseph Chénier (1792) (Certeau, Julia, Revel 1975); the exclusion of the nobility due to their “faineantisse” and the anti-particularist territorial reorganisation of *L'adunation politique* of Emmanuel Sieyès (1789) etc. The task of forging a collective identity of “Frenchmen” despite religious, class, regional and cultural differences would be regarded by the founders of the Republic as a correlate and pre-requisite for the functioning of democratic institutions and even the healing or tempering of social inequalities.

Even during the most decisionist moments of *La Révolution* – a revolution that was based on both will and reason and, it should be remembered, openly directed against history: “L’histoire c’est pas nôtre code” (Rabaut de Sainte-Étienne) – ethnic and cultural dimensions played a role that was, if not fundamental, always of some importance. In fact, beneath the revolutionary rupture it is possible to observe a partial continuation of the nation that was the *Ancien Régime*. This can be seen in the syncretism of France’s national flag (the colours of Paris and the National Guard, blue and red, in addition to the white of the monarchy). Or the *Marsellaise*, the national anthem, written by the arch-monarchist Rouget de Lisle, who eliminated the initial reference to the demolition of the “thrones of the tyrants” because it was excessively republican and replaced it with another referring to foreign “tyrants”, that is, the Prussians, not the French (Verrière 2000:276). Or, finally, the vicissitudes of the Louvre, which opened on the 8th of November 1793 as the “palace of the nation”, an unmistakable sign of a conception of the republic in which the political legitimacy of the new order included the construction of a French national narrative marked by iconic works of art (Mélonio 2001:164).

Likewise, despite the fact that Roman roots undeniably predominate as a mythical-discursive reference to Jacobin republicanism, there is another shadowy dimension in which the Celtic chieftain “Vercingetorix” (in 1867 an enormous statue was erected in his honour by Napoleon III in Alise-Sainte-Reine), the “Gallic Cockerel”, the Gallic origins of the real France (a creation of the *Académie Celtique* in 1805, destined to “faire la statistique antique des Gaules”) (Thiesse 1999:57) etc, play a by no means insignificant role in the construction of the “Nation Une” (Pomian 1992). In 1802

Girodet-Trioson painted the *Apothéose des héros français morts pour la patrie pendant la guerre de la Liberté*, in which Marceau, Kléber and others can be seen being received by *Ossian* (the publication of Macpherson's texts dates back to 1761) in Paradise; the same myth appears in *Le Songe d'Ossian* (1812) by Ingres (Darriulat 2001:114).

Moreover, the evolution of Jacobin patriotism during the French Revolution covers a whole spectrum which goes from cosmopolitanism to incipient signs of xenophobia, while at the same time displaying an increasing nationalisation of the initial patriotism by means of a variety of different elements:

- The Gallic/Celtic myth of the origins of France.
- An ethical overload of the idea of good community life: virtuous citizenry, religious transfer (worship of the “goddess reason”), the execution of the king as an “acte de providence nationale” (Robespierre) (Nora 1986: 804).
- Reformulation of state education as both a republican and a national institution, exemplified in the significant transition from “Instruction publique” (Condorcet) to “l'éducation nationale” (Rabaut de Saint-Étienne). State education is designed, from the very beginning, to carry out the task of affirming and producing a unitary and homogeneous conception of the national community.
- The construction of the *Republique une et indivisible* in opposition to the cultural and linguistic diversity of France, which was reinterpreted as an obstacle to nation-building. Instead of being a *natural* fact, the nation becomes an *artificial* product of political will: cultural homogeneity, unified historical narrative propagated by state schools, centralisation and unitarianism, imposition of the national language, etc. (Bell 2001:15).
- Close links between citizenship and nationality, to such an extent that civic rights are limited and made dependent on membership of the nation .
- Militarism and universalist expansionism in France's “civilising mission” in the world.
- Production of the figure of the foreigner as “the other”, the suspect (*conspiration de l'étranger*): increase in the number of tests of public-spiritedness, prohibition of residence, confiscation of goods, etc. Internal homogenisation that placed the category of citizen of the nation above all particularisms and also involved the reinforcement of the external delimitation of the foreigner (Brubaker 1992:46).

It is not necessary to refer to the work of Chateaubriand – *Atala, Les Natchez, Le genie du Christianisme* or the *Essai Historique* – in order to detect, from the perspective of the counter-revolution, the recovery of national-Catholicism and the defence of the “man of nature” in contrast to the disintegrative modernity of one’s roots (Thom 1995). It is in the very field of liberal republicanism where, as the century unfolds, we discover the unmistakable signs of a recovery of the organicism of the nation. Without any doubt, the influential work of Madame de Staël provides clear proof of this. In her novel *Corinne ou L’Italie*, but above all in *De L’Allemagne*, the author puts forward a clear conception of nations and national identities based on ethnic-cultural features: “The difference between languages, natural borders, memories of a common history, all contribute to create among men *these great individuals that are called nations* (De Staël 1814:41). “Ces grands individus qu’on appelle des nations” would receive attention from a variety of intellectual, political, and institutional perspectives in post-revolutionary France. But perhaps the most important work in this way was the very influent novel *Les mysteres du Peuple* (1848-1856), by the republican and socialist writer Eugène Sue, where the historical evolution of French popular and working classes is narrowly intertwined with a ethno-national narrative about the antagonism between *gaules* (popular, proletariat) and *francs* (oppressors, upper-class) (Sue 2003).

What can be said, for example, about post-revolutionary historiography? And we are not referring to the work of Taine who, from *L’Histoire de la litterature anglaise* (1863) to *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine* (1875-1883), develops an idea of the French nation which is openly anti-Jacobin, deterministic and racist. We must confront, once again, the republican legacy, whose early task would be none other than, with the justification of defending the revolution, reinstating the lost affective link of communitarianism to the abstraction of the Republic. Regarding this point, it is necessary to recall that the republican Michelet – who, incidentally, wrote that “Le Dieu des nations a parlé par la France” – explicitly dedicated his work to reconcile “dogmas and principles” with “legend” (from Joan of Arc to the Revolution). It is from this perspective of *republican nationalism*, for which the nation constitutes the supreme truth built on the myth of the origins, that a text like *Le Peuple* (1846) should be read as well as two of its themes that would subsequently be more influential: 1) France as a *universal nation*: “asile du monde”,

“bien plus qu’une nation: la fraternité vivante”, etc. (Michelet 1846, 1:229); and 2) France as a *One and Indivisible Nation*, built by the suppression of “nationalités intérieures”: “it is when France eliminates from its midst all the divergent Frances that it attains its highest and most original revelation” (Michelet 1846:216). Initially conceived as an intermediate stage between tribe and Universal Republic, the *nation* was gradually filled with solid (linguistic, historical, affective, etc.) content as the century progressed. In fact, from Michelet onwards it can be said that a movement in search of organicism begins for the French nation which, recognisable earlier in Ferry, is more clearly visible in the work of Renan and Thierry.

It would, however, be with the Empire and the Restoration, especially in the romantic historiography of Thierry, when, in opposition to the civic nationalism of Michelet – *nationalism* in its strict sense, not mere “republican patriotism”, because it reinforces the idea of the nation granting it a highly affective content, transforming national history into a national (and, at the same time, universal) *Destiny*, introducing the myth of the “chosen people”, etc. – the theme of the “struggle of races” is recovered as the driving force of French history, and the reason for loyalty to the “primitive race”. In the same way, the reformulation of the founding Celtic myth that returns the French nation to the common Aryan trunk and thus to an equal footing with Germany. The mythical conflict between Franks and Gauls, between nobles and serfs (“la race conquise”) (Poliakov 1971) reverberates even in such influential historical accounts as Guizot’s. But, moreover, the relative influence of the Celtic myth of the origins, in the version of Reynaud and Martin, regarding French republicanism, as the century unfolds, illustrates the in no way marginal ethical background of the most “civic” of nationalisms. The obvious, and in principle unthinkable, presence of a form of “Celtic republican patriotism” exemplifies the inseparability between the historical-cultural and mythical dimension and the civic dimension of the nation. In fact, from 1830 onwards, it is possible to observe how a defence of “instinct” and “love for the homeland” overwhelm, in the republican youth, the purely rational dimension of citizenship and the state (Darriulat 2001:115).

The vicissitudes of *jus solis* bear witness, likewise, beyond the stereotypical, to the narrow limits of French civic patriotism. In effect, the pre-revolutionary tradition of *jus solis* was rejected by jurists, against Napoleon’s wishes, and replaced by the *jus*

sanguinis in the Code of 1803. In fact, *jus solis* would not be recovered until the 1889 law, but complicated, moreover, by the additional requirement of socialisation in French customs and culture. Finally, in 1927, as an instrument of a demographic policy for dealing with depopulation, a third stage to facilitate access to nationality was opened (through naturalisation or marriage). To all this must be added, from the end of the 1920s, a racist perspective that would triumph in Vichy after 1940. A form of racism that would not disappear with the Liberation, but would re-emerge occasionally in the policy of quotas imposed by Georges Mauco, in the forced repatriation of North Africans carried out by d'Estaing between 1978 and 1980, in the attempts to suppress the *jus solis*, etc. (Weil 2002). In fact, as Brubaker has shown, even the recovery of *jus solis* formed part of a wider national-republic consciousness-raising (“moral and civil indoctrination”) (Brubaker 1992:45), by means of a national education system that imposes at one fell swoop a single language (the dialectal variety of L'Île de France), an account of history and a number of common national myths and symbols for all French people.

Meanwhile, the slow nationalisation of France in opposition to the traditional territories and internal regions, merged together, as we well know from Eugen Weber among others, civic patriotism with a) organisation through radial road networks to unify the territory, with b) an education system to generalise the language, history and symbols of the nation, and c) the army, *La Grande Armée* elevated to become a key instrument for the nationalising socialisation of the *Grande Nation* (Weber 1976:493).

A fundamental part of this process was the construction of the “national heritage” which stemmed from Guizot's encouragement in 1830 of the conservation and cataloguing of the historical monuments of France. In 1838, Hugo, Montalambert and Merimée were appointed members of the historical committee of the monuments and artistic treasures of France. One of the most important events in this regard was, thanks to Villet Le Duc, the “invention of cathedrals” as national monuments; that is, as symbols of national unity in a secularised and divided society, by means of a discourse based on the own/Gothic – alien/neo-classical dichotomy, which established itself after 1848 (Mélonio 2001:156).

It is not, therefore, necessary to wait, as is usually the case, for the nationalisation of France during the Third Republic, for the trauma of the 1871 defeat, for the appearance of the “nationalist” party towards the end of the century (Birnbaum 1993:88), for Maurice Barrés’ famous article in *Le Figaro* in 1892, which introduced the term “nationalist” (Girardot 1966:221), in order to detect, from the beginning of the Revolution, a process of the progressive incorporation into the republican programme of a strictly nationalist content (values, narratives, myths and symbols of a common ancestry, mission and destiny). On the contrary, one can discern how, from an early stage, a peculiar attempt to equate the universal with the particular gradually establishes itself: the history of France with universal history, human rights with the “rights of man and the citizen. Put another way, a growing synthesis of the abstract universal with the specific universal. If, on the one hand, the Revolution was against tradition, the need to complete the abstract skeleton of principles with flesh and blood, following the mobilisation there was a growing recovery of history, the myth of the Golden Age, of a common ancestry, of the glorious tradition of a language and culture with universal value (Nora 1986).

This is the ideological national-republican formula that, in essence, existed at the time of the July Monarchy and the Restoration, Armand Carrel and the “the nationals”. It is possible to read in the pages of *Le National* this singular synthesis of the republic and the French nation, citizenship of rights, on the one hand, and *chauvinisme cocardier* and militaristic humanitarian messianism, on the other. These themes were later reformulated, although they already appear in Quinet (Herder’s translator, incidentally), after the 1848 Revolution: France’s destiny illuminates, at that time, a new providential universal “Mission”, which would no longer be the *Code Civil* and the Enlightenment, but the liberation of oppressed nationalities.

But at the same time the ethnification of the republican concept is reinforced: the right to self-determination slowly ceases to be the property of the “peoples” understood as the citizenry, in order to become the right of oppressed nations, which possessed a particular culture, language, history, etc. which forged their collective identity. In relation to this, a highly significant event is the progressive semantic replacement of the term “Nation” by that of “nationalité” in the 1840s, because it confirms the weakening of the universalist and cosmopolitan concept of the homeland at the end of a long road.

In synthesis: the long journey from 1) *national sovereignty*, where the nation is an abstract entity of reason, for the sole purpose of imputation of sovereignty and the foundation of censal suffrage (1791); to 2) *popular sovereignty*, or the nation understood as a specific population of citizens, although semiotically representing itself, in peculiar synecdoche, by the Jacobin vanguard, by the virtuous minority (1793) (Máiz 2007); 3) to the *sovereignty of the nation*, but now as a unanimous and homogeneous community of destiny, endowed with a universal civilising and colonial mission; 4) to the ethnic-cultural *French nation*, with its specific language, history, traditions, myths and symbols, at the heart of a conflicting friend and enemy logic, now external (England, Germany), now internal (Jews).

It was from 1870 onwards, however, during the war with Germany and the subsequent loss of Alsace Lorraine, that the ethnification and nationalisation of French political thought became properly established. This would ultimately have a significant effect on republican ideology itself: such as the drift from *opportuniste* republicanism, to Littré's *Republique conservatrice*, including Gambetta's *République transactionnelle* (Nicolet 1982).

All this took place during the “German crisis of French thought” which makes cultural nationalism of a German nature compatible with political, intellectual (Mommsen, Strauss) and military confrontation with Germany (Digeon 1959), blurring once again the myth of the ethnic-civic dichotomy. For this reason it is necessary to look behind the supposed transparency of the civic narrative, the ambiguities and the internal tension that exist following the statements which, at first sight, seem to have an unequivocally strong political accent of a territorial and liberal nature: “What distinguishes nations is not race or language ... but a community of ideas, interests, affections, and hopes. ... Race and language are history and the past ... what is current and alive are will, ideas, interests, affections” (Fustel de Coulanges 1870, in Girardet 1966: 213).

Above all we must pay attention to the traditional “voluntarist” reading of Renan. In effect, with the famous phrase from his lecture in the Sorbonne in 1882: “The existence of a nation is (if you forgive the metaphor) a continual plebiscite” (Renan 1947 I:904), one can deduce a whole supposedly “voluntarist” and “civic” conception of the nation. Thus, the confirming element par excellence of the nation would be the freely expressed

consent of the citizens. However, if one looks a little more closely, his position is far from being as unequivocal and political as many have tried to make it (Finkielkraut 1987).

Above all, his idea of the nation should be contextualised at the heart of a body of work that, from *L'Avenir de la Science*, including *Philosophie de l'histoire contemporaine*, to *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale de la France*, its explicit objective, despite its deceptive anti-clericalism, is a critique of the entire legacy of the Enlightenment and the Revolution. Thus, in *La Réforme...*, the critique of materialism and “French democracy” is extended to a demand for the late-feudal principle of “hierarchy” (Renan (1859) 1947 I:29-68) and a historical determinism with Herderian roots. Despite the undeniable subsequent evolution of his thought as a result of the Franco-German conflict, Renan never accepted the legacy of the Enlightenment and the Revolution (Sternhell 1983: XXVII).

This provides a number of keys to why, first of all, there are many instances in his work of uses of the concept of nation which are a long way from the democratic and plebiscitary voluntarism that is attributed to him. Thus, for example, in a text of 1871, *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale de la France*, one can read “A nation is not the mere addition of the individuals that it comprises; it is a soul, a consciousness, a person, a living result” (Renan 1947 I:361). This “soul of the nation”, however, cannot survive on its own, but requires the help of a “college” that is officially responsible for ensuring this. Without this institutional support, our author continues, cemented by a single will, “like the dream of our democrats”, that is, as the mere “national reason of the people” it will become, in a highly graphic description, a perishable house of sand (*une maison de sable*). In order to maintain the time-line that links the living with the dead the nation must be institutionalised, not forgetting that, unlike what is usually attributed to him “the current will of the nation, the plebiscite, even when it is seriously implemented, is not sufficient”. The alternative leaves little room for doubt with regard to the our author’s conservative liberalism. As is demonstrated by his rejection of the “majorité numérique” and universal suffrage, any trace of the Republic and the nation that rose up against the King has disappeared: “A dynasty is the best institution to achieve this” (Renan 1947:375). The relationship between the traditional dynastic institutions and the nation becomes so fundamental for the existence of the nation because the dynasty, in

some way, precedes and is superior to the nation. In fact, it was the dynasty that produced the nation: “*le roi a fait la nation*” (Renan 1947 I:380).

Secondly, even in *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?* the political-voluntarist conception is the result, above all, of the historical circumstances of Germany’s annexation of Alsace Lorraine and the “objective” (linguistic, ethnic) arguments used to justify it by German intellectuals. Moreover, this is heavily nuanced by the surprising presence of elements coming from the very same ethnic, Germanic, tradition, which had, in principle, been rejected by the voluntarist, civic concept. The idea is put forward here, for example, that “A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle” (Renan 1947 I:903). In fact, for Renan, there are not one but two elements that confer nationalising charisma: 1) the past, history “the common possession of a rich legacy of memories (*d’un riche legs de souvenirs*); that is, “a heroic past, great men, glory ... here lies the social capital on which the national idea is based” (Renan 1947 I:904); and 2) consent, the explicit desire of co-nationals to live together.

Politics is clearly insufficient for Renan; common interests are not enough: “a *Zollverein* is not a homeland” (Renan 1947 I:902); unexpectedly, the “complications of history” are also required. History as a narrative; that is, the “history” of past glories created explicitly as a national mythical story as opposed to history as a science, which often dilutes and clouds the singularity of the homeland: “Oblivion, even historical error, are an essential factor in the creation of a nation. That is why the progress of historical studies is often a danger for nationality” (Renan 1947 I:891). Moreover, one should not disregard the culturalising essentialism that lies behind the argument of 1882. How, if he is unable to fully realise the omnipresence in his reasoning of history, tradition, the common ancestry; in short, the undivided legacy on which the nation is built: (*l’heritage qu’on a reçu indivis*) ? (Renan 1947 I:904)

The critique, in this particular text, of race as a nationalising factor, and its terrible result, the “zoological wars” (Renan 1947:456), should not lead to the oblivion of its substantive racism: “the absence of healthy ideas about the inequality of races may lead to total decadence,” he states in *Dialogues Philosophiques* (Renan 1947 I:591). Also his militant anti-Semitism – “la race sémitique représente une combinaison inférieure de la nature humaine” (Renan 1947 VIII:144), which is evident in works like *Histoire*

générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques. Both elements would have an enormous influence on anti-Semitism (Jules Soury, Édouard Drumont) and on subsequent French nationalism (Barrès).

Let us concentrate now on the supporters of the Republic. The figure of Leon Gambetta is perhaps the one which best illustrates the nationalisation process of republicanism. This is because, in the 1870s, the leader of the republican party not only reasserts the French nation, but also reformulates nationalism to suit the realities of the present, by contrasting the stereotypical “France Glorieuse” with the victim mentality of “la France vaincue et humiliée”.

In short, what needs to be highlighted in the nationalisation process of French republicanism after 1870 - throughout the 3rd Republic - is the fact that, without initially renouncing revolutionary patriotism and the republican heritage of the Revolution, or at least not completely, the concept of the French nation undergoes a definitive shift towards the mythical-symbolic sphere, at the same time as the initial liberal-voluntarist articulation is diluted, through the following movements:

- Growing accidentalism of the forms of government: progressive diluting of the founding antagonism between monarchy and republic.
- Reinforcement of French particularism (reserrement) and ethnification of the concept of nation – the idea of “race” in Thierry and Taine, “history” in Renan (*souvenirs*), influence of Darwinism and positivism – at the same time as the appearance of a nationalism of the European retreat in the face of the universalism and civilising expansion of the Revolution and the Empire. It could be exemplified as the shift from the “révolutionner l’Europe” (Sieyès) to “mon patriotisme est en France” (Clemenceau).
- State education will be clearly conceived as the fundamental nationalising institution. Thus, a nationalist pedagogy goes beyond mere civic education (history, geography, imposition of the French national language over the *patois*, cultivation of national values, etc). The Ferry law of 1882 synthesises all this with its explicit statement of “the wish to found a national education system” (Ferry 1996:109).
- Dissemination of a new synthesis between the idea of *Justice* or liberal-democratic ideal (a unitary and indivisible republic) and an idea of *Common Good* based on the new hegemonic social classes (the traditional bourgeois moral values: discipline, work, saving, *chauvinisme*, etc. raised to “national values”).

- Reinforcement of militarism, not only by means of the key role of the army at the heart of the state, but also with the partial militarization of the national education system (the “school battalions” of 1882). It should not be forgotten, in this regard, that in 1882 Jules Ferry ordered the distribution of 20,000 copies of the *Soldiers’ Songs* to schools. The books of Paul Déroulède, an admirer and vulgariser of Renan, founder of the Liges des Patriotes – *De l’éducation militaire* (1882) or the *La Défense Nationale* (1883) – demonstrate the extreme dilution of republican patriotism in the search for a “strong regime”, but without renouncing universal suffrage yet (Winnock 1982:293). What appears here, beyond the militarization of the education system, is a whole idea of the nation; a new, united France founded on military virtues, the values of sacrifice and discipline, worship of the leader, support for coups d’état. The slogan “Pour la patrie, par le livre et par l’épée” of the education *Leagues* perfectly synthesises the new form of nationalism that was developing.

- Colonialism: hand in hand with the European retreat before Germany (which would firmly establish the nationalism of “la revanche”), came a new impetus for colonialism in Africa and Asia: France receives a new “Mission”, the “civilisation of inferior races” in Ferry’s words when extending the French education law to include Algeria.

- Definitive prominence of “la Nation” in contrast to “the Republic”. As the early republicanism and secularism had previously cleared the way, and as neither God nor the monarch are able to obstruct the new direction, the Nation emerges as the destination community, as a collective being generated by “solidarité nationale”. From this stems the new synthesis of the *Republican Nation* as “cultural, spiritual and moral Unity”, as stated in 1872 by Jules Barni’s *Manuel Republicain* (Barni 1992). Or, put another way, the French Republic now reformulated, in a very significant way, as a “moral person”, as “la plus haute expression de l’esprit humain”, in the words of Gambetta during his famous speech at Annecy (1872).

Finally, towards the end of the century, starting with *Boulangisme*, “protestation nationale” (1888) and the “parti national” (1888-1889), including what occurred before and after the Dreyfus Affaire, until the *Action Française*, the Nationalism of the “nationalists” would take a step towards the predominance of mythical-symbolic factors and a clearly organicist bias of the idea of the nation, even in some cases anti-Semitic and authoritarian, which would end up eroding republicanism once and for all (Tombs

1991). It should be stressed, however, that only Maurras, with the formulation of “nationalisme intégrale”, would make a definitive break with the republican regime, declaring democracy itself “anti-national”: neither Barrès nor Péguy would nominally renounce the Republic.

It is worth highlighting the following elements of the new national-republican synthesis:

- Absolutization of French cultural uniformism (communitarian essentialism): “une chaire et un cimetière” (Barrès) as fundamental factors of the nation.
- Culturalist and biological racism, depending on the case, based on Drumont’s anti-Semitism, *La France Juive* (1886), and the historical anti-Semitism (in its anti-capitalist version) of the republican and socialist left, which would make even Jaurès hesitate (Birnbaum 1993).
- Catholic reaction, recovery of religion as a national trait (Péguy) and diffusion of the Jeanne d’Arc myth (*La France Catholique*) vs. Marianne (the republic) and from that, once more, regarding Jews as internal enemies (the Other) of France.
- Reinforcement of militarism (Barrès’ “*La République armée*”) and revenge nationalism against Germany as the historical enemy (Maurras’ “*La revanche reine de France*”).
- Change from *jus sanguinis* to *jus solis*, although corrected by a key factor: the necessary socialisation required by the 1989 law, concession of nationality to second-generation immigrants to prevent foreigners who had been resident for a long time from being excluded from military service. In the words of the Conseil Constitutionnel in 1993, the *jus solis* “is not a fundamental principle of the Republic”, and would be introduced quite late (1889) and “pour répondre notamment aux exigences de la conscription”. And, moreover, it was a form of *jus solis* conceived as a unifying instrument and to block the creation of ethnic-cultural minorities at the heart of France (Brubaker 1992:105), an ethnic-cultural complement of the centralism of the “République une et indivisible” and, as a result, with clearly racist features: the law would only apply in Algeria, despite the fact that it was a wholly French territory, to Europeans of the *Hexagone* and not the indigenous Algerians (Weil 2002:61).
- Predominance of openly ethnic Nationalism: the past, myths of a common ancestry, the narrative of palingenesis, discourse of decadence and resurrection (“*la terre et les morts*” Barrès).

- Juridical-political construction of the figure of the “foreigner” (Noiriel 1988): colonialism and assimilationism as two aspects of the same process of the fusion of citizenship/nationality.

- It should be stressed, however, that there were important differences between Barrès’ and Maurras’ ideas of the nation and previous French nationalism, both in its republican and counter-revolutionary versions. Barrès, in fact, retains an large component of traditionalism which, along the road that takes him from Renan to Taine, leads him not only to deplore modernity, democracy, and parliamentarianism, but to yearn for the old France, its traditions – “je me baigne dans la tradition française”, he wrote in his *Cahiers* (IV 67)- and its values (order, hierarchy, honour). In the exceptional trilogy of the *Roman de l’énergie nationale* (1897-1902) we find a superb synthesis of the past components of his nationalism: 1) the decontextualisation of French tradition and history as the principal evil that modernity causes in its rootless young protagonists (“étrangères à nos habitudes traditionnelles”). The loss of roots of these “déracinés” young people, of the umbilical link with regional and national reality, is presented as a genuine loss of the meaning of life, of personal alienation (“un jeune isolé de sa nation ne vaut guère plus qu’un mot détaché d’un texte” (Barrès 1994 I:1109). 2) The cause of all this is a French political and education system imbued with rationalist abstraction, derived from the triumph of disastrous enlightened philosophy, exemplified in *Les déracinés* in the character of Boutiller, a reflection of the Kantian professor of philosophy Burdeau. With this education system, the bourgeois state produces a denationalised France, “dissociée et descerebrée” (Barrès 1994 I:616); 3) This universalism of reason leads to the illusion of cosmopolitanism, to “se passer de la patrie”, to the falsity of the “citoyens de l’humanité”, of the “affranchis”; 4) The loss of the nation is articulated by the open rejection of the liberal state, of individual rights, of constitutional guarantees and, above all, by an omnipresent anti-parliamentarianism (“le parlementarisme n’est qu’un système de chantage”) (Barrès 1994 I:1075).

But, on the other hand, Barrès’ radical nationalism indicates a way to “refaire la substance nationale entamée” (Barrès 1994 I: 620), which markedly breaks away from French counter-revolutionary traditionalism: 1) above all because its anti-Cartesianism and comprehensive critique of the Enlightenment extends into open irrationalism, anti-intellectualism, and support for the unconscious and instinct; 2) which, in turn, leads to partisan thought, to the rejection of objective and universal values, to particularism, to the chauvinist bias of moral and political judgement; 3) the nation becomes nature

which imposes itself on the individual, in the irresistible determinism of “une nation de chaire et d’os”, in anti-voluntarism based on the mythical-historical legacy of “la terre et les morts”; 4) having rejected the class struggle, the question of the nationalist discourse turns determinedly towards populism; 5) the repertoire of action leads to the spontaneity of the masses, which expresses “national energy”, revolt, street-fighting against the established order: (“le plaisir instinctif d’être dans un troupeau”, he wrote in *Mes cahiers* I 1929:39); 6) the theme of the removal of heterogeneity from the heart of the people and xenophobia emerge (“reagir contre les étrangers qui nous envahissent”), which overflows into open racism and anti-Semitism; 7) radical anti-Protestantism and agnostic and instrumental Catholicism towards nationalism, conceived strategically as “l’expression de notre sang”.

Maurras’ “integral nationalism” shares a number of the postulates mentioned above. Among other features common to anti-Protestantism, we might mention anti-individualism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and anti-parliamentarianism. But there are also marked differences between the two. Of course, Barrès’ refusal to condemn the Republic and the Revolution as an indivisible and unavoidable heritage of the history of France is a long way from the recovery of the Monarchy and the explicit condemnation of the French Revolution espoused by Maurras and the ideology of *Action Française*. But we must look more deeply into the roots of this disagreement, as they are highly revealing of the ideas of nationhood and nationalism that are at stake.

Of special interest is the scope of the equivocal Maurrasian postulate: “Politique d’abord”. On the one hand, Maurras breaks with the counter-revolutionary postulates of De Maistre and Bonald, not with regard to the political supremacy of religion but, and above all, because it overcomes the substantial alien nature of the very idea of nation typical of counter-revolutionary thinking, for which the very concept of Nation synthesised the entire legacy of the Revolution. But this break does not mean that Maurras opts for an authoritarian form of political voluntarism in his concept of the nation, neither can he be considered a precursor of fascism. Above all, his integral nationalism is aimed against the key synthesis of the French Revolution: reason and will. But he does this using rationalist philosophy, which is diametrically opposed to that of Barrès, as a starting point in order to rob the revolution of the monopoly of reason and thus justify the idea of the nation with a certain kind of modernity that is not

unrelated to the world of science. But, on the other hand, it is decidedly anti-voluntarist. In fact, “Politique d’abord” has nothing to do with the ontological primacy of politics, that is, of decision, of the artificial versus the natural, but quite the contrary: “politique la première, la première dans l’ordre du temps, nullement dans l’ordre de la dignité” (Maurras 1972:172). That is, against revolutionary ideology, the immutable being, the nature of things should prevail over the duty of being and the nation as the unanimous organic totality should prevail over the individual and his will. The Maurrasian nation differs from the republican nation in that the latter was based on “l’impiété vers ce qui est”.

For this reason, despite the fact that in the *Enquête sur la monarchie* Maurras introduces the concept of “revolution conservatrice”, does not hesitate to advocate coups d’état, postulates the determined and energetic action of a vanguard that imposes monarchy on the masses, etc., he fails to take the final step towards total rupture with conservatism’s and counter-revolutionary traditionalism’s idea of the nation, nor does he accept a reading of the national dimension based on artificialist voluntarism. Maurras’ integral nationalism is heading down this road but does not go very far. Thus, for example, in the novel *Dilemme de Marc Sangnier* he defends “l’absolu l’immuable” of “l’être français”, shades of Maistre or Le Play, by returning to the same ontology that advocates an immutable order of the French nation around the hereditary, traditional, anti-parliamentarian and decentralised monarchy. All this is expressed through a form of discourse that weaves a semantic web of oppositions that reflect the servitude of tradition in integral nationalism, at the same time as its great originality: nature/artifice, nation/state, monarchy/republic, Catholicism/Protestantism, Provence/Paris, Mediterranean/Atlantic, centralisation/local liberties, vanguard/masses, coup d’état/democratic elections, etc.

The real break in French nationalism, which is hardly hinted at in the work of Barrès and Maurras, would occur with fascist nationalism, the anti-nationalist radical nationalism of the revolutionary right: Georges Valois, Thierry Maulnier, Pierre Drieu La Rochelle, Robert Brasillach, etc. Only with these authors will the “besoin d’action” and a *decisionist* concept of the nation evolve towards an extreme, antidemocratic and violent “voluntarism”. Thus, paradoxically, at the end of a long road which started with the revolutionary concept of the nation in Sieyès – a road that saw the gradual

ethnification of the republican concept of nation until the final expulsion of all forms of republicanism – the only French voluntarist and political concept of the nation would be that of a decisionist, anti-republican, authoritarian and fascist form of nationalism (see below the Historical map of Ideas of Nationhood in France). Leaving the very interesting controversy regarding the existence and features of French fascism (Lévy 1981, Miltza 1987, Winnock 2004, Dobry 2003), let us now turn to the highly illustrative cases of Maulnier and Drieu La Rochelle in relation to the issues that interest us here.

Thierry Maulnier, despite being highly influenced at first by Barrès, formulates a different version of “néo-nationalisme français” in which the traditionalist articulation of the nation gives way to a revolutionary, voluntarist, agonistic, authoritarian and violent vision. A kind of neo-nationalism that, representing a clear break with previous French nationalisms, regards itself as “anti-nationalist” as is revealed by the title of his most important work *Au delà du nationalisme*.

Above all, Maulnier’s nationalism completely abandons all links with the past or Arcadian dreams of returning to the traditional France: “the nation no longer lies in the current state of things but in the will to change them” (Maulnier 1938:230). For him, nationalism consists, above all, in an “action politique créatrice” which, faced with tradition and restoration, proposes the creation of a new order through which the community of the nation recovers the possibility of deciding its own destiny and triumphing in a “new synthesis of the antagonisms that tear it apart. The nation can only be rebuilt through a liberating metamorphosis” (Maulnier 1938:227). It is important to highlight this synthesis of the palingenetic myth of decadence and resurrection, and the radical novelty of the new world of the nation which springs from revolutionary action. In this way, nationalist *will* and revolutionary *will* come together in the act of historical creation of the nation: “la seule voie politique du nationalisme est la voie révolutionnaire”, “une révolution ne peut être que nationale”, etc. (Maulnier 1938:226). Hence the strategic political objective of neo-nationalism: “to interest the nation in the revolution in an organic way, as it is the only one that can carry it out; and to interest the nation in the revolution, as it is the only thing that can save it” (Maulnier 1938:249).

Only in this decisionist context of national political mobilisation is it possible to comprehend his undisguised admiration for some aspects of Marxism: “théorie grossière

de l'histoire et la société, mais théorie géniale de l'action révolutionnaire" (Maulnier 1938:232). However, this does not prevent the prediction that the era of class struggle must end in order to foreground the new nationalist driving force of history, which is: "l'infrastructure organique ou biologique des communautés humaines" (Maulnier 1938:198). However, the "révolution nationale" which is advocated does not harbour any dream of France as a reconciled community, but is based on an agonistic idea of the nation as an "équilibre féconde d'antagonismes": "Revolutionary and totalitarian action, as the embodiment of supreme efficacy, only attains (aboutit) a valuable political creation insofar as it constructs a national structure based on natural antagonisms" (Maulnier 1938:239).

But it is in the prolific literary and political work of Pierre Drieu La Rochelle that *anti-nationalist neo-nationalism* reaches its highest levels of authoritarian modernism, voluntarism, anti-traditionalism, revolution, and purifying and nihilistic violence. A form of radical nationalism which is, in all other respects, explicitly directed against those who, like Maurras, have not learnt the terrible lesson of the century: "un monarchiste n'est jamais un moderne: il n'a point la brutalité, le simplisme barbare d'un moderne" (Sterhnell 1978: 285).

Both in his essays *Socialisme fasciste* (1934), *Chronique Politique* (1943) etc. and in his novels, above all the extraordinary *Gilles* (1939), we find the most extreme expression of this kind of revolutionary and anti-nationalist French nationalism: "le nationalisme est périmé" (Drieu 1939:56). In Drieu's work the absolute imperative of French national unity, a lyrical vision of the regenerated and purified nation as opposed to the decadence and rottenness of liberal modernity – "une conception spirituelle, esthétique de la nation" (Drieu 1934:221) – links up with the principal themes of contemporary fascism: "Ce parti ne peut être que national et socialiste" (1934:96). Thus, among others, we could mention: the cult of youth and the new; justification of violence, cult of the body and physical strength – the contrast of "la fierté du corps", of "le bon athlète" with the bourgeois "intellectuel ventripotent" (Drieu 1943:45); the foregrounding of revolutionary spontaneity ("les forces spontanées de la vie, de la santé, du sang" (Drieu 1943:50); contempt of material well-being and rejection of the mediocrity of bourgeois values of the *Revêuse bourgeoisie* (Drieu 1937:89): profit, obsession with money, usefulness, tedium... which are contrasted with the heroic values of action against the

established order, and “une disposition au sacrifice, une volonté de combat” (Drieu 1934:202); support for war (“La Guerre c’est ma patrie”) (Drieu 1939:75), and as a consequence, for the archetype of the “guerrier” in contrast to the “clerc”; antagonistic proximity to Marxism (je n’en veux pas moins comme les marxistes détruire la société actuelle, constituer une force de combat...) (Drieu 1939:521), and admiration of Lenin and his “politique au lieu de commandement”; an obvious irrationalism and taste for instinct and the aesthetic of the myth, directly straight against “une conception intellectualiste et rationaliste de la vie qui est tout à fait périmée” (Drieu 1934:53), bearing in mind that “La rationalisme c’est l’agonie de la raison” (Drieu 1939:560); overcoming class struggle through nationalist populism: “renverser la dictature francmaçonne par une coalition de jeunes bourgeois et jeunes ouvriers” (Drieu 1939:421); not forgetting, finally, anti-Semitism and racism, based not on theories of race, but on the enemy within, the complete opposite of the nation: “je ne peux pas supporter les juifs parce qu’ils sont par excellence le monde moderne” (Drieu 1939:112).

As a result of this long evolution, throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, and despite important differences that cannot be overlooked, France accumulated a penetrating sediment of organicism in the concept of the nation that would cement a hidden consensus which, from the beginning of the 1914-1918 war onwards, would partially affect both the right and the left and would project its implicit interpretative norms of the nation and the republic over contemporary France. Even among the most ardent defenders of republicanism and peace between nations such as Jaurés, Allemane, Hervé, Vaillant, etc. one can discern the footprint not only of civic patriotism, but also of this nationalist ethnification of republicanism. The words of Jean Jaurés in *L’armée Nouvelle* of 1911 show how far this process had gone: “The homeland is not exclusively founded on economic categories ... it possesses much greater organic depth and much greater idealistic height. Its roots go deep into human life itself and, in a manner of speaking, into the physiology of man” (Jaurés 2001:326).

We find a indissoluble ethnic-civic discourse that articulates cultural and linguistic absolutism, anti-particularist centralism and Unitarianism, historical narrative of military and civilising *Grandeur* and, finally, designation of the “other”, the immigrant,

as culturally alien and inferior, although there are two alternatives: republican and assimilationist, on the one hand, and “nationalist” and exclusive, on the other.

It is quite significant that the work of Mauco *Les étrangers en France*, the first study of immigration in France, by an author with decisive influence in the public policies of immigration during the Vichy period and the early years following the Liberation (Weil 2002), does not establish a *biological* criterion for exclusion, one of racial purity, but of *cultural* superiority, when diagnosing the dangers that immigration represents, as the carrier of “the contrary of reason and sense of finesse characteristic of the French people” (Mauco 1932:557). Hence the, sometimes deceptive, cultural, not biological, factor, of this – in a strict sense – *raceless racism* and its criteria for exclusion: “the others” do not share, nor will ever be able to share completely, the same past, the same memories, the same culture. For this reason it is by no means accurate to talk about *jus solis* in the French republican tradition, but of *jus solis* plus assimilation (second generation immigrants). That is, the acquisition of nationality requires socialisation in French culture. In short, we are seeing the roots of a new equation: assimilation = naturalisation (Silverman 1992:32).

“Français de papier” was the expression of Action Française, “Être français: ça se mérite” is the slogan of Lepenism. That is, immigrants may be juridically naturalised, but would nevertheless remain alien to the French nation, that is, to its memories, narratives and symbols. But the republican criteria, adopted during the 3rd French Republic is that residence and work are not sufficient criteria for naturalisation, but that cultural assimilation is necessary through the two fundamental devices of nationalisation: state education and the army. Both of these state apparatuses have nationalising missions as transmitters of the history, myths, values and symbols of the nation, and although the latter loses importance after the 1914-18 war, the education system would continue until the present as the *lieu sacré* of the République. The idea that being educated in the society creates a national bond is the corollary of the republican conception that nationality is founded on socialisation: not on ethnic data, and not on a voluntary or contractual act either (Weil 1999:61).

Assimilationism and *jus solis* for the second generation of immigrants would remain as a republican constant – apart from during Vichy – from the 1889 law onwards,

surviving the successive reforms to broaden the citizenship law in 1927, 1945 and 1973, and the more restrictive 1993 law (Hargreaves 1995:161).

2. Republicanism, nationalism and immigration in contemporary France.

From the 1980s onwards, several political conflicts related with immigration had an impact on this historical legacy of the ethnic-cultural concept of nation hidden behind the seamless veil of the republic, which indissolubly links nationality and citizenship, and would reveal all the contradictions of the “civic” French model. It is worth remembering that in the 1980s there were a number of protests by young Algerian immigrants regarding the automatic concession of French citizenship, which some considered to be a violation of their Algerian identity. *Civic* inclusion thus became the ethno-cultural exclusive imposition of French nationality (Mangin 1981). But, moreover, it would soon be clear that, beneath the shiny surface of republican universalism of rights, in the shadows there lurked a nationalist particularism of cultural assimilationism.

Three successive debates took place with regard to this issue.

- 1) the debate regarding immigrants’ right to *vote* (since 1981 and still unresolved);
- 2) the debate regarding *nationality* (from 1985 until the 1998 reform, which has established the principles of a) equality of access to nationality for resident foreigners and b) autonomy of explicitly stated will of belonging);
- 3) the debate regarding *secularism* (from the first *affaire du foulard* in 1989).

Here we will focus on the last of these, with occasional reference to the second when necessary, due to the links between the two. First of all, we should synthesise the fundamental factors of change, with regard to the immigration problem, which appeared in France during the 1980s (Brubaker 1992, Silverman 1992, Hargreaves 1995, Geddes 2003):

- 1) A previous element dates from earlier decades: immigration comes to be regarded as a structural rather than a temporal phenomenon. As a result, it is no longer tackled according to the current needs of the labour market, but is seen as a social and political problem, involving the issues of coexistence, public order and education (Noiriel 1988).

- 2) The existence of a large population of North African immigrants (850,000 Algerians, 27,000 Moroccans, 150,000 Tunisians), many of them second-generation.
- 3) The realisation that Islam had become France's second religion, made official in the President of the Republic's speech of 17 December 2003 during the reception given for the report of the Stasi commission.
- 4) The growth of the National Front with its xenophobic and exclusionist programme, which was aimed directly at the eradication of *jus solis* and the expulsion of immigrants.
- 5) Rise of the left's discourse regarding multiculturalism and the right to be different, and tolerance of socialist policies with regard to immigration (specifically, those of Lionel Jospin, which were continued by Jack Lang).
- 6) Increase in social and political conflicts: terrible living conditions in the ghettos, lack of safety in neighbourhoods inhabited by North Africans, as well as growing mobilisation and political protests by these sectors.

The debates would initially involve the nationality code, based on the *assimilationist jus solis* mentioned earlier, above all regarding articles 23 (which awarded French nationality at birth to third-generation immigrants) and 44 (which gave French nationality to second-generation immigrants born in France and resident in the country during the previous five years) (Geddes 2003:63, Weil 2002).

The debate arose both in the ranks of the republican right and those of the socialist republicans and not only affected the automatic nature of acquiring citizenship (which was finally eliminated in the 1998 reform) and the competition that immigrants represented for a labour market in crisis, but also the accusation that the republican political system as a whole, with regard to immigrants, was *insufficiently assimilationist*. In other words, an old *both ethnic and cultural nationalist* concern re-emerged: that immigrants only became "Français de papier", without becoming, if not "Français de souche", at least "Français de coeur". Thus, following the attack on the French formulation of *jus solis* (residence + socialisation), another hidden dimension needed to be addressed: the questioning on the grounds of the assimilationist shortcomings of the current legislation and the policies of the socialist governments that tolerated the instrumental acquisition of French citizenship by immigrants who were not socialised in the national culture.

One of the arguments was shared by a wide range of sectors, albeit with different nuances and articulations, in the 1980s. This was: 1) on the one hand, the assimilation institutions, mainly the education system, had ceased to fulfil, thanks to an angelical “prejudge post-colonialiste” (Kintzler 1996:106), its nationalising responsibilities and it was necessary to recover these functions, by means of re-secularisation, in opposition to the multiculturalist discourse (Laborde 2008); 2) on the other hand, the fundamentalist homogenisation of Islam was begun and it was conceived as a whole, explicitly and implicitly, to be alien to French culture and national values (Tribalat 2002) and, in consequence, as difficult to assimilate, which meant that it was necessary to be on the defensive with regard to the formation of Islamist community ghettos.

The left’s difficulties in all this debate sprang from the fact that, despite maintaining a clearly differentiated political position on other issues, the majority of its leaders share with those of the right the unquestioned core idea of a nationalist/assimilationist articulation of the republic, the “French model”, which leads inexorably to the common ground of cultural monolithism and assimilation as pillars of citizenship. In other words, it is not only, nor even fundamentally, reasons of a liberal or republican nature that underlie the critique of difference and particularism by French republicanism. Rather it is reasons based on culturalist nationalism – “Le monde de gauche, secrètement national...” wrote Drieu La Rochelle with exceptional acuity in the 1930s (Drieu 1934:86) – that had gradually installed itself at the heart of republicanism, parasitizing “civic patriotism”. The debate regarding the *affaire du foulard* would thus prove to be not only extraordinarily divisive within the republican left, but revealing of the untenability of its conception of “civic-nationalist” *soi-disant* nation.

In fact, despite the undeniable differences, it is of prime importance to recognise the common *nationalist assumptions* shared by most republicans, socialists or liberals, many of whom became, at the time, a kind of *enragés de la République* (Mounier 1999). Everyone from the “Socialism and Republic” group led by Jean Pierre Chevènement, intellectuals such as Régis Debray, Finkielkraut, Elisabeth Badinter, Alain Renaut, Catherine Kintzler and others, to highly authoritative figures with great political-institutional weight such as Dominique Schnapper. For all of them, the *superimposition of nationality and citizenship* led over and over again to a dual conflict of Republic/particularism and secularism/difference.

It is significant, in this respect, both because of the personality of the authors and the media impact it had, to point out that in relation to the *affaires du foulard* five influential philosophers, including Finkielkraut, Debray, Kintzler and Badinter, published a manifesto in *Le Nouvel Observateur* on 2 November 1989 (Kintzler 1996:78). The article denounced, above all, the unacceptable concessions in the education system that had been made by Republican France in the interests of cultural diversity: “the Republic is not a mosaic of ghettos ... trusting exclusively in the natural light of human beings. The education system is at the root of the Republic, and for that reason the destruction of the education system means the beginning of the end of the Republic”. As a result, secularism was pushed to centre stage in the French contemporary debate. In fact, even according to the highly nuanced document produced by the Stasi commission, “laïcité” possesses “the rank of founding value” around which the French Republic has been constructed and represents “a conception of the common good” which rests on three inseparable values: freedom of conscience, equality of rights of all spiritual options and the neutrality of the state.

However, secularism as a representation of “a conception of common good” is historically articulated in France, at the heart of a wider ethic-political conception: unitarian nationalist, culturally absolutist, enemy of all forms of particularism or difference... which results in the empirical-transcendental nationalist pair of *assimilationism/centralism*. It is true that in the past there was a difference between the militant anticlerical secularism of Emile Combes or Gambetta himself (“Le cléricalisme voilà l’ennemi”) and the more neutralist version of Aristide Briand, Jules Ferry or Jean Jaurés. But it should not be forgotten that the two are reconciled at the last moment on an underlying premise, which is: a homogenising cultural-nationalist vision of French society, which produces assimilationism and acculturation as the only form of *nationalist integration* of citizenship for immigrants.

Apart from the gender criticism (“le foulard symbole de la soumission féminine”), the manifesto not only regarded education as the *sacré républicain* par excellence with the burden that that represents, but also accepts the main characteristics of the nationalist version of republicanism of the 3rd Republic which we have synthesized earlier: cultural absolutism, centralism, an essentialist and trans-historical notion of the French nation,

citizenship equivalent to nationality and consequent exclusion of cultural differences, substantivity of shared national values, threat of the Other (Islam understood homogeneously as Islamic fundamentalism), etc. In short, it left no room for dialogue and connection with the debates on secularism in the Muslim world (Bencheikh 1998).

However, one of the missions of secularism is precisely the creation of a public arena that is common to and shared by all cultural and religious differences (Laborde 2008). However, when articulated within French nationalist discourse of the “*défense de l’unité du corps social*” – which is riddled with ethnic-cultural mythical elements and organicist postulates – it becomes a sectarian principle directed in a militant fashion against the public presence of cultural and religious pluralism, which is the result of the complexity of contemporary French society (Tournon 2004).

Other infringements of the principle of republican secularism had occurred beforehand, but had not caused any alarm: the existence of subsidised private Catholic schools, the use in state schools of symbols and emblems of other (Christian and Jewish) religions, or even the use of the veil by the mothers and grandmothers of North African adolescents, which had failed to arouse any conflict whatsoever. If, on the other hand, the *affaire du foulard* has provoked conflict this is because it is attacking, in our opinion, the roots of the nationalist discourse underlying French republicanism. The veil threatened, in the privileged public arena of the republic, to cause a crisis in the education system, which is the model of French national citizenship. In other words, it opens the question of the possibility of integration without assimilation or, put another way, integration as citizens without national-cultural assimilation. It is not so much an alarmist form of secular fundamentalism that underlies the republican denunciations of the *foulard*, but that behind the universalist republicanism invoked there is the fear that anti-particularist republican nationalism is being called into question. Following the republic, it is the French nation that feels threatened, not the universal Republic, but the “cultural identity of France” (Táguieff 1996). The Islamic veil of the “*les filles voilées de Creil*” shows up the *persona ficta*, the homogeneous, unitarian and centralist collective identity of the French nation. Paradoxically, the veil is criticised as a symbol of the (particularist) communitarianism of Islam in the name of an implicit and unquestioned (national/universal) French communitarian nationalism. In the end, the ethnicism of minorities is denounced in the name of the *majority ethnicity*, to use the

term introduced by Smith and refined by Kaufmann, of the “dominant ethnic group” (Smith 2004, Kaufmann 2004).

But, moreover, the supreme levelling of differences, the construction of a, culturally homogeneous, French national republic, by definition alien to ethnic or territorial particularism, is reinforced through the creation of an “Other”, Islam, equally homogeneous, with a very similar format, although not in its content, to the way “the Jew” was constructed during the Dreyfus Affair.

Sociological and political studies, however, reveal a very different picture. Above all, they underline the diversity of the collective identities of the North African immigrants with regard to the French nation: from assimilation into the majority culture to Islamic communitarianism, including diverse kinds of accommodation and compatibility between both identities (Venel 2004). This calls into question, incidentally, the close link between the nationalist interpretation of the co-implication of nationality and citizenship. Moreover, the veil, far from exclusively representing an “act of political militancy” (Kintzler 1996:106), is worn for a variety of very diverse reasons: 1) those of a traditional nature, from the immigrant mothers and grandmothers who have always worn it; 2) those of a family nature, of acceptance of loyalty to the family, but as a way to integrate and embrace the French world; 3) those involving individual assertiveness, as an anti-anomic and dual sign (conciliation of the veil and situated modernity); 4) those of a fundamentalist nature (Gaspard & Khosrokhavar 1995, Cesari 1998). However, all these nuances are overshadowed by the reduction to fundamentalist communitarianism, renunciation of republican ideology and ingenuousness in the face of the dangers of radical Islam, etc. and only two alternatives: “republican assimilation or community chaos” (Cesari 1998:192). Here the adolescents are homogenised and essentialized, as a danger to the Republic, and are subsequently collectively stigmatised in a chain of equivalences that go beyond the borders of France: from Creuil and Aubervilliers to Kabul and Teheran.

It is striking that even in the responses to the text of Finkielkraut et al. by “multicultural intellectuals” such as TÁguieff, Touraine or Henri Lévy, there is a predominance of considerations of opportunity and strategy: reinforcement of fundamentalism, yielding to the Nationalism of Le Pen, etc., but neither the assimilationist model - the myth of the

secular republic - nor the nationalised republicanism in which the postulate of French-style secularism attains its full political significance, are questioned in any depth. And, nevertheless, only this nationalism can fully explain the significant disregard (stated, in fact, by the Conseil d'État) of the fact that secularism is an obligation of the education system and teachers and of the State; not of the students, nor of the society. Moreover, texts denouncing the ethnification of the *affaire du foulard*, such as the recent one by Bouamama, inexplicably reject the relevance of the debate "in essentialist terms" (referring to the nation, identity and community), and express in terms of "social criticism" (class, injustice, domination, etc.), when it is precisely this essentialism which needs dismantling (Bouamama 2004).

All this is not so surprising, however, if we investigate the self-clarification process of prominent republican intellectuals who, in relation to the debate regarding the veil, have shifted, with exceptions such as that of Catherine Kintzler, from a universalist liberal-republican position to the implicit assumption, to a greater or lesser extent, of a French culturalist communitarianism or nationalism. This is true of, say, R. Debray, A. Finkielkraut or D. Schnapper, for whom the classical liberal arguments: separation of the public sphere (Justice), as a neutral space of the state, from the private sphere (ideas of good), as a social space of pluralism; autonomy, as a capacity for revising ends and ideas of good, in contrast with authenticity, that is, loyalty to tradition, etc. increasingly give way to an uncritical rediscovery of ethnicity as a founding principle of the French nation. As Debray (Debray 2006) always displayed a greater nationalist weakness for the *fraternité*, or for the "group instinct" as Finkielkraut denounced, let us briefly focus, for illustrative reasons, on the two other thinkers.

Finkielkraut became famous due to *La défaite de la pensée*, an influential neo-enlightened attack, based on the "immutable values" of republicanism, against the romantic spirit of *Volksgeist* that resides in contemporary policies of identity. All this was based on a hyper-voluntarist, and according to what we have seen earlier, a partial and, in the final analysis, incorrect reading of Renan (Finkielkraut 1987: 31). The rehabilitation of Dreyfus was made to equate to that of universal values with regard to chauvinism, the triumph of the contractual definition of the nation as opposed to the collective soul and tradition, while multiculturalism testifies to the disappearance of the Dreyfusards and the end of French loyalty to the universal (Finkielkraut 1987:106).

However, that which he detested in 1987, “the reduction of France to its Frenchness”, years later turns into an unequivocal culturalist defensive turn, in defence of this “little nation” (sic) faced with universalist cosmopolitanism and the loss of roots: “variations of the same discourse: everything is the same because all men are the same. Faced with this triumphant nihilism, only small nations and weak inheritances remain. We are all Quebecois”. In *L’Ingratitude*, the scene we find is characterised by an undisguised French cultural nationalist discourse denouncing the “cosmopolitan ecstasy” and “French francophobia”, which contrasts belonging to autonomy, communitarian allegiance to indifference to all temporal or geographical attachment, the USA as a “country of communities” in contrast to France, a paradise, it would appear, of “the passion of equality against cultural preference” (Finkielkraut 1999:153). All this taken to the extreme of inverting, without quoting him, the words – a synthesis of the nascent republican ideology which has already been mentioned – of Rabaud Saint-Étienne: “Whether we like it or not, our history is our code” (Finkielkraut 1999:97). In short, all the themes of culturalist ethnic nationalism are successively recovered here: history, language, tradition, cultural conservatism, true “conservatism” ... at the service of a French culture not only pre-designed but, to use Renan’s words, as an “undivided heritage”, a homogeneous and seamless whole, which only permits the passive socialisation in school of the new generations which are obliged to “feel completely at home in the French language”. This French national preoccupation, also in the words of Renan, can be seen in the interviews of the programme “Répliques” which Finkielkraut directed in France Culture and were published with the title *Qu’est-ce que la France?* (Finkielkraut 2007).

For her part, Dominique Schnapper, a prominent exponent of the so-called civic-republican nationalism, undergoes a somewhat similar evolution. Thus, in works like *La France de l’Intégration* (1991) and especially *La Communauté des Citoyens* (1994) she theorises about a civic concept of the nation as the “fruit of political will” linking “nationality and citizenship” as the “foundations of political legitimacy” (Schnapper 1991:63, 143), so that “particularisms are relegated to the private sphere” (Schnapper 1991:101). In *La Communauté des Citoyens*, based on an individual and universalist concept of citizenship alien to any cultural feature whatsoever, and a notion of the public sphere as a space that “transcends all particularisms through citizenship”, she proposed a concept of the nation “defined by a form of sovereignty that integrates

peoples in a community of citizens, whose existence legitimises the internal and external action of the State” (Schnapper 1994:48). Here the author postulates a national model that “transcends nationalities”, conceived as a “public project”, a “universal national project”. A form of nationality that is the horizon of the defence of liberty, equality and human rights. This “republican model” of the nation is linked, finally, to “strong state institutions that justify themselves through a system of values” (Schnapper 1994:96).

A few years later, however, in *La relation à l'autre*, Schnapper accentuates the cultural dimension of the republican concept of the nation. It is true that in her earlier books she mentions the necessary “acculturation” of immigrants, the replacement of the “right to difference” by the “right to indifference” (Schnapper 1991:95), the impossibility of maintaining “particular political identities” in order to prevent the “Lebanonization” of France, the “reduction of cultural differences as the most economical and probably the most effective way of overcoming ethnic identities” etc. But in 1998 the weight of cultural and communitarian nationalist factors is accentuated definitively in contrast with the universal dimension of public order: “the society of citizens has always been a national society, a particular political organisation, born at a given moment and in a particular region, none being identical to any other and the national dimension constitutes a dimension (sic) of the identity of all individuals” (Schnapper 1998:446). Thus, now she postulates that “all democratic societies indissolubly involve ethnic elements. Political organisation cannot neglect what Elias calls the affective desire of human society” (Schnapper 1998:455). Finally, she lucidly recognises a tension and the fact that “individuals belong to particular groups”.

3. Conclusion

It is clear that recognition of the ethnic-cultural dimension of the nation poses a serious problem for French republicanism: it questions the notion of the one and indivisible republic, its endemic unitarianism, as there is no intrinsic reason whatsoever for believing that sub-national cultures possess less or no political importance with regard to the national culture (Laborde 2008). But this also raises a related question which is of key significance for the issue of immigration which interests us here: faced with the

nationalist concept of cultural homogeneity, why not recognise diversity as an intrinsic dimension of the French nation?

In conclusion, the *affaire du foulard* has highlighted, firstly, the historical *nationalisation* of French republicanism in its different political versions and its contemporary reinforcement by a ethno-cultural and assimilationist concept of the nation, in defiance of the proclamations of universalism and the “civic” conception of patriotism. Secondly, the explicit or implicit postulation of a series of cultural and national concepts that rest on normatively nationalist pre-political assumptions (of a barely pluralist and deliberative nature): 1) the belief that cultures (both French and North African) and the nation are organic, integrated and homogeneous wholes, ignoring or marginalising internal diversity, the plurality of interpretations and concurrent national and interpretive projects, as well as the conflict between them; 2) the belief that cultures and nations are clearly individualised and distinguishable entities, underlining the difference which separates “us” from “them”, “what is ours” from “what is theirs”, and homogenising both extremes of the duality; 3) the view that nations and cultures are entities crystallised by history, as pre-packaged objective wholes that are essentially alien to any possible process of evolution, change or reformulation; 4) the conviction that belonging to a culture or a nation is related to the passive socialisation in tradition, immersion and uncritical acceptance of the guidelines and formulations provided by historical legacies, ignoring any free, adaptive and creative participation of its members in its construction; 5) an isolationist and conservationist perspective of culture and nations, as if debate, change, or non-assimilationist mixing of races or incorporation would put them at risk of degeneration and that they should be protected in their supposed pristine purity (“cultural exception”); 6) a conservative communitarian culturalism that leaves little room for relating demands for recognition with basic and closely-linked dimensions of republican democratic politics: equality, participation and political deliberation in all the spheres of social and cultural life, including the pluralist, even multinational definition of “us”.

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HISTORICAL MAP OF THE IDEAS OF NATIONHOOD IN FRANCE

