

Race, Nation, Class

Ambiguous Identities



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Racism and Nationalism

Etienne Balibar

Racist organizations most often refuse to be designated as such, laying claim instead to the title of *nationalist* and claiming that the two notions cannot be equated. Is this merely a tactical ploy or the symptom of a fear of words inherent in the racist attitude? In fact the discourses of race and nation are never very far apart, if only in the form of disavowal: thus the presence of ‘immigrants’ on French soil is referred to as the cause of an ‘anti-French racism’. The oscillation of the vocabulary itself suggests to us then that, at least in already constituted national states, the organization of nationalism into individual political movements inevitably has racism underlying it.

At least one section of historians has used this to argue that racism – as theoretical discourse and as mass phenomenon – develops ‘within the field of nationalism’, which is ubiquitous in the modern era.¹ In this view, nationalism would be, if not the sole cause of racism, then at least the determining condition of its production. Or, it is also argued, the ‘economic’ explanations (in terms of the effects of crises) or ‘psychological’ explanations (in terms of the ambivalence of the sense of personal identity and collective belonging) are pertinent in that they cast light upon presuppositions or subsidiary effects of nationalism.

Such a thesis confirms, without doubt, that racism has nothing to do with the existence of objective biological ‘races’.² It shows that racism is a historical – or cultural – product, while avoiding the equivocal position of ‘culturalist’ explanations which, from another angle, also tend to make racism into a sort of invariant of human nature. It has the advantage of breaking the circle which traces the psychology of racism back to

explanations which are themselves purely psychological. Lastly, it performs a critical function in relation to the euphemistic strategies of other historians who are very careful to place racism *outside* the field of nationalism as such, as if it were possible to define the latter without including the racist movements in it, and therefore without going back to the social relations which give rise to such movements and are indissociable from contemporary nationalism (in particular, imperialism).³ However, this accumulation of good reasons does not necessarily imply that racism is an inevitable consequence of nationalism, nor, *a fortiori*, that without the existence of an overt or latent racism, nationalism would itself be historically impossible.⁴ These categories and the connections between them continue to be rather hazy. We should not be afraid to investigate at some length why no form of conceptual ‘purism’ will work here.

The Presence of the Past

From what models have we, living as we do at the end of the twentieth century, formed our conception of racism, which is enshrined in quasi-official definitions? In part from Nazi anti-Semitism, from the segregation of Blacks in the USA (perceived as a long sequel to slavery) and, lastly, from the ‘imperialist’ racism of colonial conquest, wars and domination. Theoretical thinking on these models (which is connected with policies of defence of democracy, assertion of human and civil rights, and national liberation) has produced a series of distinctions. In spite of their abstract nature, it is not unhelpful to begin by reviewing these, since they indicate the directions in which the search for causes is to be undertaken, if we are to follow the more or less accepted idea that the suppression of effects depends precisely upon the suppression of their causes.

The first distinction we encounter is that between *theoretical* (or doctrinal) racism and *spontaneous* racism (or racist ‘prejudice’), considered at times as a phenomenon of collective psychology and at others as a more or less ‘conscious’ structure of the individual personality. I shall return to this point.

From a more historical point of view, the singularity of anti-Semitism by comparison with colonial racism, or, in the USA, the need to interpret the racial oppression of the Blacks differently from the discrimination to which immigration ‘ethnic groups’ are subjected, leads to the distinction being made – in more or less ideal terms – between an *internal* racism (directed against a population regarded as ‘a minority’ within the national space) and an *external* racism (considered as an

extreme form of xenophobia). This, we should note, assumes that we take the national frontier as a prior criterion, and therefore run the risk of this approach being inappropriate to post-colonial or quasi-colonial situations (such as the North American domination of Latin America), in which the notion of frontier is even more equivocal than it is elsewhere.

Ever since the analysis of racist discourse began to apply phenomenological and semantic methods of analysis, it has seemed useful to characterize certain racist postures as *auto-referential* (those in which the bearers of the prejudice, exercising physical or symbolic violence, designate themselves as representatives of a superior race) in opposition to a *hetero-referential* or 'hetero-phobic' racism (in which it is, by contrast, the victims of racism, or, more precisely, of the process of racialization, who are assigned to an inferior or evil race). This poses not only the question of how the race myth forms, but also the question of whether racism is indissociable from it.

Political analysis, whether directed towards current phenomena or seeking to reconstitute the genesis of past phenomena, strives to evaluate the respective contributions of institutional and sociological racisms, a distinction which roughly overlaps that between theoretical racism and spontaneous racism (it is in fact difficult to imagine or name historical institutions which have pursued a goal of racial segregation, without some form of doctrinal justification), but does not purely and simply coincide with it, both because these justifications may be drawn from theoretical ideologies other than a racial mythology, and because the notion of sociological racism contains a dynamic, conjunctural, dimension which goes beyond the psychology of prejudices by calling to our attention the problem posed by collective movements of a racist character. The alternative between institutional and sociological racism warns us not to dismiss as negligible the differences which separate the presence of racism *within the state* from an (official) state racism. It also suggests that it is important to investigate the vulnerability to racism of certain social classes and the forms they give to it in a given conjuncture. Deep down, it is, however, a mystificatory alternative which principally translates two different strategies, the one of projection, the other of disavowal. Every historical racism is *both* institutional and sociological.

Lastly, confronting the questions of Nazism and colonial racisms (or segregation in the United States) has broadly speaking forced upon us the distinction between a racism of *extermination* or elimination (an 'exclusive' racism) and a racism of *oppression* or exploitation (an 'inclusive' racism), the one aiming to purify the social body of the stain or danger the inferior races may represent, the other seeking, by contrast, to hierarchize and partition society. But it immediately emerges

that, even in extreme cases, neither of these forms ever exists in the pure state: thus Nazism combined extermination and deportation, 'the final solution' and slavery, and colonial imperialisms have practised both forced labour, the establishment of caste regimes, ethnic segregation and 'genocides' or the systematic massacre of populations.

In fact, these distinctions do not so much serve to classify types of behaviour or ideally pure structures as to identify historical trajectories. Their relative pertinence leads us both to the common-sense conclusion that there is not merely a *single* invariant racism but a number of *racisms*, forming a broad, open spectrum of situations, and to a caveat that may be intellectually and politically indispensable: a determinate racist configuration has no fixed frontiers; it is a stage in a development which its own latent potentialities, as well as historical circumstances and the relations of force within the social formation, will shunt around within the spectrum of possible racisms. It would, in the end, be difficult to find contemporary societies from which racism is absent (especially if one is not content merely to note that its public expressions are inhibited by the dominant culture or that violent 'acting out' is, to a greater or lesser degree, curbed by the legal apparatus). Nevertheless, we should not conclude that we all live in equally 'racist societies', though this prudence must not in its turn become an alibi. And it is at this point that it becomes clearly necessary to pass beyond mere typologies. Rather than a single type or a juxtaposition of particular cases to be classified in formal categories, racism is itself a singular history, though admittedly not a linear one (with its sharp changes of direction, its subterranean phases and its explosions), connecting together the conjunctures of modern humanity and being, in its turn, affected by them. That is why the figures of Nazi anti-Semitism and colonial anti-racism or indeed of slavery cannot simply be evoked as models against which to measure the purity and seriousness of such and such a 'racist upsurge' nor even as periods or events which mark out the place of racism in history, but they must be considered as ever active formations, part conscious and part unconscious, which contribute to structuring behaviour and movements emerging out of present conditions. Let us emphasize here the paradigmatic fact that South African apartheid intimately intermixes the traces of the three formations which we have mentioned (Nazism, colonization, slavery).

It is, moreover, well known that the defeat of Nazism and the revelation of the policy of extermination that had been carried out in the concentration camps not only created an awareness which became part of what is called universal culture in the contemporary world (though the consciousness thereby acquired is unequal, uncertain of its content and its implications and, all in all, distinct from actual knowledge), but it

also led to a prohibition, half juridical and half ethical, which, as with any prohibition, has ambivalent consequences: ranging from the necessity for contemporary racist discourse to avoid the typical statements of Nazism ('slips' excepted) to the possibility of presenting itself, in relation to Nazism, as the *other* of racism, or from the displacement of hatred on to 'objects' other than the Jews to compulsive fascination for the lost secrets of Hitlerianism. I shall maintain seriously (and all the more seriously in that the phenomenon seems to me by no means marginal) that in its very poverty, the imitation of the Nazis among groups of young skinheads in the third generation after the 'Apocalypse' represents one of the forms of collective memory within current racism or, if you prefer, one of the ways in which collective memory contributes to drawing the parameters of present racism – which also means we cannot hope to eliminate it either by simple repression or by mere preaching.

Doubtless no historical experience has, in itself, the power to re-activate itself, and, in order to interpret the way racism fluctuated in the 1980s between lip-service paid to anti-Nazism, eloquent silences and the reproduction of myths, one must take account of the groups against whom it is aimed and their own actions and reactions. For racism is a social relation, not the mere ravings of racist subjects.⁵ The fact remains that the present is bound to the singular imprint of the past. Thus when we come to ask in what sense the fixation of racial hatreds upon immigrants from the Maghreb reproduces certain classic features of anti-Semitism, we should not only point to an analogy between the situations of Jewish minorities in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century and 'Arabo-Islamic' minorities in present-day France, nor simply refer these hatreds to the abstract model of an 'internal racism' in which a society projects its frustrations and anxieties (or rather those of the individuals who make it up) on to a part of itself; rather we need also to inquire into the unique drift of anti-Semitism out beyond 'Jewish identity', starting out from the repetition of its themes within what is very much a French tradition and from the fresh impulsion given to it by Hitler.

We shall have to do the same, also, for the imprint of colonial racism. It is none too difficult to discover its ubiquitous effects. First, because not all direct French colonization has disappeared (some 'territories' and their semi-citizen status 'natives' have been through a process of decolonization). Second, because neo-colonialism is a solid reality which we cannot simply ignore. Last, and most importantly of all, because the privileged 'objects' of present-day racism – the workers and their families who come from the former French colonies – appear as the result of colonization and decolonization and thus succeed in concentrating upon themselves both the continuation of imperial scorn and the

resentment that is felt by the citizens of a fallen power, if not indeed a vague phantasmatic longing for revenge. These continuities do not, however, suffice to characterize the situation. They are mediated (as Sartre would have said) or overdetermined (as Althusser would put it) by the reflection within the national space (differently, depending upon the social group or the ideological position) of more far-reaching historical events and tendencies. Here again, though in a mode that is wholly dissimilar to Nazism, a break has taken place. Or, more precisely, an interminable sedimentation and a relatively rapid, but profoundly ambiguous, break.

It might at first sight seem that colonial racism constitutes the prime example of an 'external racism' – an extreme variant of xenophobia combining fear and scorn – perpetuated by the awareness the colonizers have always had, in spite of their claim to have founded a durable order, that that order rested on a reversible relation of forces. It is indeed that characteristic – alongside the difference between oppression and extermination (which the Nazi 'final solution' has led theorists to project retrospectively on to the whole history of anti-Semitism) – that many writers have drawn upon to postulate an antithesis between colonial racism and anti-Semitism. These are thus presented as being two tendentially incompatible types of racism (hence the argument of some, not without a touch of Jewish nationalism, that 'anti-Semitism is not racism'): on the one hand, a racism which tends to eliminate an internal minority which is not merely 'assimilated', but constitutes an integral part of the culture and economy of the European nations since their beginnings and, on the other hand, a racism which both *de jure* and *de facto* continues to exclude a forcibly conquered minority from citizenship and from the dominant culture, and therefore to 'exclude' it indefinitely (which does not by any means prevent there being paternalism, the destruction of 'native' cultures and the imposition of the ways of life and thought of the colonizers on the 'elites' of the colonized nations).

We must, however, observe that the *exteriority* of the 'native' populations in colonization, or rather the representation of that state as *racial* exteriority, though it recuperates and assimilates into its discourse very old images of 'difference', is by no means a given state of affairs. It was in fact produced and reproduced within the very space constituted by conquest and colonization with its concrete structures of administration, forced labour and sexual oppression, and therefore on the basis of a certain *interiority*. Otherwise one could not explain the ambivalence of the dual movement of assimilation and exclusion of the 'natives' nor the way in which the subhuman nature attributed to the colonized comes to determine the self-image developed within the colonized nations in the

period when the world was being divided up. The heritage of colonialism is, in reality, a fluctuating combination of continued exteriorization and 'internal exclusion'. One can also see this if one observes the way in which the imperialist superiority complex has been formed. The colonial castes of the various nationalities (British, French, Dutch, Portuguese and so on) *worked together* to forge the idea of 'White' superiority, of civilization as an interest that has to be defended against the savages. This representation – 'the White man's burden' – has contributed in a decisive way to moulding the modern notion of a supranational European or Western identity. It is no less true that the same castes were perpetually involved in what Kipling called the 'Great Game' – playing off, in other words, 'their' natives, rebellions against one another and, above and beyond this, all priding themselves, *in competition with one another*, on their particular humaneness, by projecting the image of racism on to the colonial practices of their rivals. French colonization proclaimed itself 'assimilatory', while British colonization saw itself as 'respectful of cultures'. The other White is also the bad White. Each White nation is spiritually 'the whitest': in other words, it is both the most elitist and the most universalistic, an apparent contradiction to which I return below.

When the pace of the decolonization process increased, these contradictions took on a new form. To judge it by its own ideals, decolonization has failed, the process being both incomplete and perverted. It has, however, in combination with other relatively independent events (the coming of the age of planetary weapons systems and communication networks), created a new political space. This is not merely a space in which strategies are formed, and capital, technologies and messages circulate, but a space in which entire populations subject to the law of the market come into contact physically and symbolically. Thus the equivocal interiority–exteriority configuration which had, since the period of colonial conquest, formed one of the structuring dimensions of racism, finds itself reproduced, expanded and re-activated. It is a commonplace to remark upon this in regard to those 'Third World within' effects which are produced by immigration from the former colonies or quasi-colonies into the capitalist 'centres'. But this form of *interiorization of the exterior* which marks out the horizon against which the representations of 'race' and 'ethnicity' are played out cannot be separated, other than abstractly, from apparently antithetical forms of *exteriorization of the interior*. And in particular it cannot be separated from those which result from the formation – after the more or less complete departure of the colonizers – of states which claim to be national (but only become so very unequally) throughout the immense periphery of the planet, with their explosive antagonisms between

capitalist bourgeoisies or 'Westernized' state bourgeoisies and wretched masses, thrown back by this very fact upon 'traditionalism'.⁶

Benedict Anderson maintains that decolonization has not, so to speak, expressed itself in the Third World by the development of what a particular propaganda calls 'counter-racism' (anti-White or anti-European).⁷ Let us concede that this was written before the recent developments in Islamic fundamentalism, the contribution of which to the flows of 'xenophobia' in our present conjuncture will certainly have to be assessed. Anderson's argument is, however, incomplete, for, though there may not be a 'Third-Worldist' counter-racism in Africa, Asia or Latin America, there is a plethora of devastating racisms, both institutional and popular, *between* 'nations', 'ethnic groups' and 'communities'. And the spectacle of these racisms, in its turn deformed by global communications, is continually feeding the stereotypes of White racism by keeping alive the old idea that three-quarters of humanity are incapable of governing themselves. Doubtless the background to these mimetic effects is constituted by the replacement of the old world of colonizing nations and their sphere of manoeuvre (the rest of humanity) by a new world which is formally organized into equivalent nation states (each represented in international institutions) but traversed by the constantly shifting frontier – irreducible to the frontiers between states – between two humanities which seem incommensurable, namely the humanity of destitution and that of 'consumption', the humanity of underdevelopment and that of overdevelopment. In appearance, humanity has been unified by the suppression of imperial hierarchies; in fact, however, it is only today that humanity exists as such, though split into tendentially incompatible masses. In the space of the world-economy, which has effectively become that of world politics and world ideology, the division between subhumans and super-humans is a structural but violently unstable one. Previously, the notion of humanity was merely an abstraction. But, to the question, 'What is man?' which – however aberrant its forms may appear to us – is insistently present in racist thought, there is today no response in which this split is not at work.⁸

What are we to conclude from this? The displacements to which I have just alluded are part of what, to borrow a term from Nietzsche, we might call the contemporary transvaluations of racism, which concern both the general economy of humanity's political groupings and its historical imaginary. They form what I have, above, called the singular development of racism which relativizes typologies and reworks accumulated experiences against the grain of what we believe to be the 'education of humanity'. In this sense, contrary to what is postulated in one of the most constant statements of racist ideology itself, it is not

'race' which is a biological or psychological human 'memory', but it is racism which represents one of the most insistent forms of the historical memory of modern societies. It is racism which continues to effect the imaginary 'fusion' of past and present in which the collective perception of human history unfolds.

This is why the question, which is perpetually being revived, of the irreducibility of anti-Semitism to colonial racism is wrongly framed. The two have never been totally independent and they are not immutable. They have a joint descent which reacts back upon our analysis of their earlier forms. Certain traces function constantly as a screen for others, but they also represent the 'unsaid' of those other traces. Thus the identification of racism with anti-Semitism – and particularly with Nazism – functions as an alibi: it enables the racist character of the 'xenophobia' directed against immigrants to be denied. Conversely, however, the (apparently quite gratuitous) association of anti-Semitism with anti-immigrant racism in the discourse of the xenophobic movements that are currently developing in Europe is not the expression of a generic anti-humanism, of a permanent structure of exclusion of the 'Other' in all its manifestations, nor the simple passive effect of a conservative political tradition (whether it be called nationalist or fascist). Much more specifically, and much more 'perversely', it organizes racist thought by giving it its conscious and unconscious models: the character of the Nazi extermination, which is strictly speaking unimaginable, thus comes to be lodged within the contemporary complex as the metaphorical expression of the desire for extermination which also haunts anti-Turkish or anti-Arab racism.⁹

The Field of Nationalism

Let us return, then, to the connection between nationalism and racism. And let us begin by acknowledging that the very category of nationalism is intrinsically ambiguous. This has to do, first of all, with the antithetical nature of the historical situations in which nationalist movements and policies arise. Fichte or Gandhi are not Bismarck; Bismarck or De Gaulle are not Hitler. And yet we cannot, by a mere intellectual decision, suppress the effect of ideological symmetry which imposes itself here on the antagonistic forces. We have no right whatever to equate the nationalism of the dominant with that of the dominated, the nationalism of liberation with the nationalism of conquest. Yet this does not mean we can simply ignore the fact that there is a common element – if only the logic of a situation, the structural inscription in the political forms of the modern world – in the nationalism of the Algerian FLN

and that of the French colonial army, or today in the nationalism of the ANC and that of the Afrikaners. Let us take this to its extreme conclusion and say that this formal symmetry is not unrelated to the painful experience we have repeatedly undergone of seeing nationalisms of liberation transformed into nationalisms of domination (just as we have seen socialist revolutions turn around to produce state dictatorships), which has compelled us at regular intervals to inquire into the oppressive potentialities contained within every nationalism. Before coming to reside in words, the contradiction resides in history itself.¹⁰

Why does it prove to be so difficult to define nationalism? First, because the concept never functions alone, but is always part of a chain in which it is both the central and the weak link. This chain is constantly being enriched (the detailed modes of that enrichment varying from one language to another) with new intermediate or extreme terms: civic spirit, patriotism, populism, ethnicism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, chauvinism, imperialism, jingoism ... I challenge anyone to fix once and for all, unequivocally, the differential meanings of these terms. But it seems to me that the overall figure can be interpreted fairly simply.

Where the *nationalism–nation* relation is concerned, the core of meaning opposes a ‘reality’, the nation, to an ‘ideology’, nationalism. This relation is, however, perceived very differently by different people, since several obscure questions underlie it: Is nationalist ideology the (necessary or circumstantial) reflection of the existence of nations? Or do nations constitute themselves out of nationalist ideologies (though it may mean that these latter, having attained their ‘goal’, are subsequently transformed)? Must the ‘nation’ itself – and naturally this question is not independent of the preceding ones – be considered as a ‘state’ or as a ‘society’ (a social formation)? Let us leave these issues in abeyance for a moment, together with the variants to which they may give rise by the introduction of terms such as city, people, nationality and so on.

As far as the relation between *nationalism and racism* is concerned at present, the core of meaning contrasts a ‘normal’ ideology and politics (nationalism) with an ‘excessive’ ideology and behaviour (racism), either to oppose the two or to offer the one as the truth of the other. Here again questions and other conceptual distinctions immediately arise. Rather than concentrating our attention upon racism, would it not be more appropriate to privilege the more ‘objective’ nationalism/imperialism alternative? But this confrontation brings out the other possibilities: for example, that nationalism itself may be the ideologico-political effect of the imperialist character of nations or their survival into an imperialist age and environment. One may complicate the chain further by introducing notions like fascism and Nazism with their

network of attendant questions: Are these both nationalisms? Are they both imperialisms? . . .

In fact, and this is what all these questions bring out – the whole chain is inhabited by one fundamental question. As soon as ‘somewhere’ in this historico-political chain an intolerable, seemingly ‘irrational’ violence enters upon the scene, *where* are we to place that entry? Should we cut into a sequence in which only ‘realities’ are involved to locate it, or should we rather search among the ‘ideological’ conflicts? And should we consider violence as a perversion of a normal state of affairs, a deviation from the hypothetical ‘straight line’ of human history, or do we have to admit that it represents the truth of what has preceded it and therefore, from this point of view, the seeds of racism could be seen as lying at the heart of politics from the birth of nationalism onwards, or even indeed from the point where nations begin to exist?

Naturally, to all these questions, an extreme variety of responses are to be found, depending upon the viewpoint of the observers and the situations they reflect. In my view, however, in their very dispersion, they all revolve around a single dilemma: the notion of nationalism is constantly dividing. There is always a ‘good’ and a ‘bad’ nationalism. There is the one which ends to construct a state or a community and the one which tends to subjugate, to destroy; the one which refers to right and the one which refers to might; the one which tolerates other nationalisms and which may even argue in their defence and include them within a single historical perspective (the great dream of the ‘Springtime of the Peoples’) and the one which radically excludes them in an imperialist and racist perspective. There is the one which derives from love (even excessive love) and the one which derives from hate. In short, the internal split within nationalism seems as essential – and as difficult to pin down – as the step that leads from ‘dying for one’s fatherland’ to ‘killing for one’s country’ . . . The proliferation of ‘neighbouring’ terms, whether they be synonyms or antonyms, is merely an exteriorization of this split. No one, in my view, has wholly escaped this reinscription of the dilemma within the very concept of nationalism itself (and when it has been evacuated within theory, it has re-entered by the door of practice), but it is particularly visible in the liberal tradition, which is probably to be explained by the very profound ambiguity of the relations between liberalism and nationalism over at least the last two centuries.¹¹ We also have to say that, by displacing it one or two degrees, racist ideologies may then mimic this discussion and invade it themselves: is it not the function of notions like ‘living space’ to raise the question of the ‘good side’ of imperialism or racism? And is not the neo-racism we see proliferating today, from ‘differentialist’ anthropology to socio-biology, constantly concerned to distinguish what is supposed to be

inevitable and, deep down, useful (a certain xenophobia which induces groups to defend their 'territories' and 'cultural identities' and to maintain the 'proper distance' between them) from what would be useless and in itself harmful (direct violence, acting out), though inevitable if one ignores the elementary exigencies of ethnicity?

How are we to break out of this circle? It is not enough simply to ask, as some recent analysts have done, that value judgements be rejected – that is, that judgement on the consequences of nationalism in different conjunctures be suspended –,¹² or, alternatively, to consider nationalism itself strictly as an ideological effect of the 'objective' process of constitution of nations (and nation states).¹³ For the ambivalence of effects forms part of the very history of all nationalisms, and it is precisely this which has to be explained. From this point of view, the analysis of the place of racism in nationalism is decisive: though racism is not equally manifest in all racisms or in all the moments of their history, it none the less always represents a necessary tendency in their constitution. In the last analysis, the overlapping of the two goes back to the circumstances in which the nation states, established upon historically contested *territories*, have striven to control *population* movements, and to the very production of the 'people' as a political community taking precedence over class divisions.

At this point, however, an objection does arise regarding the very terms of the discussion. It is the objection Maxime Rodinson, among others, directs at all those – such as Colette Guillaumin – who insist upon a 'broad' definition of racism.¹⁴ Such a definition seeks to take into account *all* forms of exclusion and depreciation, whether or not they are accompanied by biological theories. It seeks to get back beyond 'ethnic' racism to the origin of the 'race myth' and its genealogical discourse: the 'class racism' of the post-feudal aristocracy. And, most particularly, it seeks to include under the heading 'racism' all forms of minority oppression which, in a formally egalitarian society, lead in different ways to the 'racialization' of various social groups – not just ethnic groups, but women, sexual deviants, the mentally ill, subproletarians and so on – so as to be able to analyse the common mechanism of the naturalization of differences. In Rodinson's view, one ought, however, to choose: either one should make internal and external racism a tendency of nationalism and, beyond this, of ethnocentrism of which nationalism would be the modern form; or one could broaden the definition of racism in order to understand the psychological mechanisms (phobic projection, denial of the real Other overlaid with the signifiers of a phantasmatic alterity), but at the risk of dissolving its historical specificity.¹⁵

This objection can, however, be met. And it may even be met in such a way that the historical entanglement of nationalism and racism is made all

the clearer; but on condition that one advances certain propositions which in part rectify the idea of a 'broad' definition of racism or at least make it more exact:

1. No nation, that is, no national state, has an ethnic basis, which means that nationalism cannot be defined as an ethnocentrism except precisely in the sense of the product of a *fictive* ethnicity. To reason any other way would be to forget that 'peoples' do not exist naturally any more than 'races' do, either by virtue of their ancestry, a community of culture or pre-existing interests. But they do have to institute in real (and therefore in historical) time their imaginary unity *against* other possible unities.

2. The phenomenon of 'depreciation' and 'racialization' which is directed simultaneously against different social groups which are quite different in 'nature' (particularly 'foreign' communities, 'inferior races', women and 'deviants') does not represent a juxtaposition of merely analogous behaviours and discourses applied to a potentially indefinite series of objects independent of each other, but *a historical system of complementary exclusions and dominations which are mutually interconnected*. In other words, it is not in practice simply the case that an 'ethnic racism' and a 'sexual racism' exist in parallel; racism and sexism function together and in particular, *racism always presupposes sexism*. In these conditions a general category of racism is not an abstraction which runs the risk of losing in historical precision and pertinence what it gains in universality; it is, rather, a more concrete notion of taking into account the necessary polymorphism of racism, its overarching function, its connections with the whole set of practices of social normalization and exclusion, as we might demonstrate by reference to neo-racism whose preferred target is not the 'Arab' or the 'Black', but the 'Arab (as) junky' or 'delinquent' or 'rapist' and so on, or equally, rapists and delinquents as 'Arabs' and 'Blacks'.

3. It is this broad structure of racism, which is heterogeneous and yet tightly knit (first in a network of phantasies and, second, through discourses and behaviours), which maintains a necessary relation with *nationalism* and contributes to constituting it by producing the fictive ethnicity around which it is organized.

4. If it is necessary to include in the structural conditions (both symbolic and institutional) of modern racism the fact that the societies in which racism develops are at the same time supposed to be 'egalitarian' societies, in other words, societies which (officially) disregard status differences between individuals, this sociological thesis (advanced most notably by L. Dumont) cannot be abstracted from the national environment itself. In other words, it is not the modern state which is 'egali-

tarian' but the modern (nationalist) nation-state, this equality having as its internal and external limits the national community and, as its essential content, the acts which signify it directly (particularly universal suffrage and political 'citizenship'). It is, first and foremost, an equality in respect of nationality.¹⁶

The discussion of this controversy (as of other similar controversies to which we might refer¹⁷) is of considerable value to us here, since through it we begin to grasp that the connection between nationalism and racism is neither a matter of perversion (for there is no 'pure' essence of nationalism) nor a question of formal similarity, but a question of historical articulation. What we have to understand is the specific difference of racism and the way in which, in articulating itself to nationalism, it is, in its difference, necessary to nationalism. This is to say, by the very same token, that the articulation of nationalism and racism cannot be disentangled by applying classical schemas of causality, whether mechanistic (the one as the cause of the other, 'producing' the other according to the rule of the proportionality of the effects to the cause) or spiritualistic (the one 'expressing' the other, or giving it its meaning or revealing its hidden essence). It requires a dialectics of the unity of opposites.

Nowhere is this necessity more evident than in the debate, which is forever being reopened, on the 'essence of Nazism', a positive magnet for all the various forms of hermeneutics of social relations, in which the political uncertainties of the present are mirrored (and transposed).¹⁸

For some, Hitlerian racism is the culmination of nationalism: it derives from Bismarck, if not indeed from German Romanticism or Luther, from the defeat of 1918 and the humiliation of the Versailles *Diktat*, and provides a project of absolute imperialism with its ideology (*Lebensraum*, a German Europe). If the coherence of that ideology seems analogous to the coherence of delirium, then one should see this as precisely the explanation of its brief, but almost total hold on the 'mass' of the population, whatever their social origins, and on the 'leaders', whose blindness in the end plunged the nation to its doom. Beyond all the 'revolutionary' deception and conjunctural twists and turns, the enterprise of world domination was inherent in the nationalism shared by masses and leaders alike.

For others, such explanations are doomed always to miss the essential point, however subtly they might analyse the social forces and intellectual traditions, events and political strategies, and however skilfully they might relate the monstrous nature of Nazism to the anomalous course of German history. It was precisely by regarding Nazism as merely a nationalism analogous to their own – distinguished only by a difference of degree – that public opinion and the political leaders in the

'democratic' nations of the time deluded themselves as to its goals and thought they could come to an arrangement with it or limit the havoc it might create. Nazism is exceptional (and perhaps shows up a possibility of transgression of the political rationality inscribed in the condition of modern man) because in it the logic of racism overwhelms all other factors, and imposes itself to the detriment of 'pure' nationalist logic, because 'race war', both internal and external, ends up by depriving 'national war' (whose goals of domination remain *positive* goals) of any coherence. Nazism could thus be seen as the very embodiment of that 'nihilism' of which it spoke itself, in which the extermination of the imaginary Enemy, who is seen as the incarnation of Evil (the Jew or the Communist) and self-destruction (more the annihilation of Germany than a confession of failure on the part of its 'racial elite', the SS caste and the Nazi party) meet.

We can see that in this controversy analytic discourses and value judgements are constantly intermingling. History sets itself up as diagnosis of the normal and the pathological and ends up echoing the discourse of its own object, demonizing Nazism which itself demonized its enemies and victims. Yet it is not easy to get out of this circle, since the essential point is not to reduce the phenomenon to conventional generalities, the *practical* impotence of which it precisely revealed. We have the contradictory impression that, with Nazi racism, nationalism both plumbs the greatest depths of its latent and, to borrow Hannah Arendt's expression, tragically 'ordinary' tendencies and yet *goes beyond* itself, and the ordinary form in which it is normally realized, that is, is normally institutionalized to penetrate in a lasting way the 'common sense' of the masses. On the one hand, we can see (admittedly after the event) the irrationality of a racial mythology which ends up dislocating the nation-state whose absolute superiority it proclaims. We can see this as proof that racism, as a complex which combines the banality of daily acts of violence and the 'historical' intoxication of the masses, the bureaucratism of the forced labour and extermination camps and the delirium of the 'world' domination of the 'master race', can no longer be considered a simple aspect of nationalism. But we then have to ask ourselves immediately: How are we to avoid this irrationality becoming its own cause, the exceptional character of Nazi anti-Semitism turning into a sacred mystery, into a speculative vision of history which represents history precisely as the history of Evil (and which, correlatively, represents its victims as the true Lamb of God)? It is not, however, in any way certain that doing the opposite and deducing Nazi racism from German nationalism frees us from all irrationalism. For we have to admit that only a nationalism of an 'extreme' intensity, a nationalism exacerbated by an 'exceptional' series of internal and

external conflicts was able to idealize the goals of racism to the point of making the violence wrought by the great number of torturers possible and 'normalizing' this in the eyes of the great mass of other people. The combination of this banality and this idealism tends rather to reinforce the metaphysical idea that German nationalism might itself be 'exceptional' in history: though a paradigm of nationalism in its pathological content in relation to liberalism, it would in the end be irreducible to 'ordinary' nationalism. We here fall back then into the aporias described above of 'good' and 'bad' nationalism.

Now might we not rediscover, in respect of each conjuncture in which racism and nationalism are individualized in discourses, mass movements and specific policies, what the debate on Nazism emphatically exhibits? In this internal connectedness *and* this transgression of rational interests and ends, is there not *the same contradiction*, the terms of which we believe we can see once again in our present-day reality, for example when a movement which carries within it nostalgia for a 'New European Order' and 'colonial heroism' canvasses, as successfully as it has done, the possibility of a 'solution' to the 'immigrant problem'?

Generalizing these thoughts, I shall say then, first, that in the historical 'field' of nationalism, there is always a reciprocity of determination between this and racism.

This reciprocity shows itself initially in the way in which the development of nationalism and its official utilization by the state transforms antagonisms and persecutions that have quite other origins into racism in the modern sense (and ascribes the verbal markers of ethnicity to them). This runs from the way in which, since the times of the *Reconquista* in Spain, theological anti-Judaism was transposed into genealogical exclusion based on 'purity of blood' at the same time as the *raza* was launching itself upon the conquest of the New World, down to the way in which, in modern Europe, the new 'dangerous classes' of the international proletariat tend to be subsumed under the category of 'immigration', which becomes the main name given to race within the crisis-torn nations of the post-colonial era.

This reciprocal determination shows itself again in the way in which all the 'official nationalisms' of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, aiming to confer the political and cultural unity of a nation on the heterogeneity of a pluri-ethnic state,¹⁹ have used anti-Semitism: as if the domination of a culture and a more or less fictively unified nationality (for example, the Russian, German or Romanian) over a hierarchically ordered diversity of 'minority' ethnicities and cultures marked down for assimilation should be 'compensated' and mirrored by the racializing persecution of an absolutely singular *pseudo-ethnic group* (without their own territory and without a 'national' language) which represents the

common internal enemy of all cultures and all dominated populations.²⁰

Finally, it shows itself in the history of the national liberation struggles, whether they be directed against the old empires of the first period of colonization, against the dynastic multinational states or against the modern colonial empires. There is no question of reducing these processes to a single model. And yet it cannot be by chance that the genocide of the Indians became systematic immediately after the United States – the ‘first of the new nations’ in Lipset’s famous expression – achieved independence.²¹ Just as it cannot be by chance, to follow the illuminating analysis proposed by Bipan Chandra, that ‘nationalism’ and ‘communalism’ were formed together in India, and continue into the present to be inextricable (largely because of the early historical fusion of Indian nationalism with Hindu communalism).²² Or again that independent Algeria made assimilating the ‘Berbers’ to ‘Arabness’ the key test of the nation’s will in its struggle with the multicultural heritage of colonization. Or, indeed, that the State of Israel, faced with an internal and an external enemy and the impossible gamble of forging an ‘Israeli nation’ developed a powerful racism directed both against the ‘Eastern’ Jews (called ‘Blacks’) and the Palestinians, who were driven out of their lands and colonized.²³

From this accumulation of entirely individual but historically linked cases there results what might be called the cycle of historical reciprocity of nationalism and racism, which is the temporal figure of the progressive domination of the system of nation-states over other social formations. Racism is constantly emerging out of nationalism, not only towards the exterior but towards the interior. In the United States, the systematic institution of segregation, which put a halt to the first civil rights movement, coincided with America’s entry into world imperialist competition and with its subscribing to the idea that the Nordic races have a hegemonic mission. In France, the elaboration of an ideology of the ‘French race’, rooted in the past of ‘the soil and the dead’, coincides with the beginning of mass immigration, the preparation for revenge against Germany and the founding of the colonial empire. And nationalism emerges out of racism, in the sense that it would not constitute itself as the ideology of a ‘new’ nation if the official nationalism against which it were reacting were not profoundly racist: thus Zionism comes out of anti-Semitism and Third World nationalisms come out of colonial racism. Within this grand cycle, however, there is a multitude of individual cycles. Thus to take but one example, a crucial one in French national history, the defeat suffered by anti-Semitism after the Dreyfus Affair, which was symbolically incorporated into the ideals of the republican regime, opened up to a certain extent the possibility of a colonial ‘good conscience’ and made it possible for many years for the notion of

racism to be dissociated from that of colonization (at least in metropolitan perceptions).

Secondly, however, I argue that *the gap subsists between the representations and practices of nationalism and racism*. It is a fluctuating gap between the two poles of a contradiction and a forced identification – and it is perhaps, as the Nazi example shows, when this identification is apparently complete that the contradiction is most marked. Not a contradiction between nationalism and racism as such, but a contradiction between determinate *forms*, between the political objectives of nationalism and the crystallization of racism on a particular object, at a particular moment: for example, when nationalism undertakes to ‘integrate’ a dominated, potentially autonomous population, as in ‘French’ Algeria or ‘French’ New Caledonia. From this point onwards, I therefore concentrate on this gap and the paradoxical forms it may assume, the better to understand the point that was emerging from most of the examples to which I have referred: namely, that racism is not an ‘expression’ of nationalism, but *a supplement of nationalism* or more precisely *a supplement internal to nationalism*, always in excess of it, but always indispensable to its constitution and yet always still insufficient to achieve its project, just as nationalism is both indispensable and always insufficient to achieve the formation of the *nation* or the project of a ‘nationalization’ of society.

The Paradoxes of Universality

The fact that the theories and strategies of nationalism are always caught up in the contradiction between universality and particularism is a generally accepted idea which can be developed in an infinite range of ways. In actual fact, nationalism is a force for uniformity and rationalization and it also nurtures the fetishes of a national identity which derives from the origins of the nation and has, allegedly, to be preserved from any form of dispersal. What interests me here is not the general form of this contradiction, but the way it is exhibited by racism.

In fact racism figures *both* on the side of the universal and the particular. The excess it represents in relation to nationalism, and therefore the supplement it brings to it, tends both to universalize it, to correct its lack of universality, and to particularize it, to correct its lack of specificity. In other words, racism actually adds to the ambiguous nature of nationalism, which means that, through racism, nationalism engages in a ‘headlong flight forward’, a metamorphosis of its material contradictions into ideal contradictions.²⁴

Theoretically, speaking, racism is a philosophy of history or, more

accurately, a *historiosophy* which makes history the consequence of a hidden secret revealed to men about their own nature and their own birth. It is a philosophy which makes visible the invisible cause of the fate of societies and peoples; not to know that cause is seen as evidence of degeneracy or of the historical power of the evil.²⁵ There are, of course, aspects of *historiosophy* in providentialist theologies, in philosophies of progress and also, indeed, in dialectical philosophies. Marxism is not exempt and this has played quite some part in keeping alive a semblance of symmetry between the 'class struggle' and the 'racial struggle', between the engine of progress and the enigma of evolution and therefore the possibilities of translating the one ideological universe into the other. This symmetry does, however, have very clear limits. I am not so much thinking here of the abstract antithesis between rationalism and irrationalism, nor that between optimism and pessimism, even though it is true (and crucial in practice) that most racist philosophies present themselves as inversions of the theme of progress in terms of decadence, degeneracy and the degradation of the national culture, identity and integrity.²⁶ But I think, in fact, that unlike a *historiosophy* of the racial or cultural struggle or the antagonism between the 'elite' and the 'masses', a historical dialectic can never present itself as the mere elaboration of a Manichaeian theme. It has to explain not just the 'struggle' and the 'conflict', but the *historical constitution of the forces in struggle and the forms of struggle* or, in other words, ask critical questions in respect of its own representation of the course of history. From this point of view, the *historiosophies* of race and culture are radically acritical.

Certainly there is not a racist philosophy, particularly since racist thinking does not always assume a systematic form. Contemporary neo-racism directly confronts us today with a variety of historical and national forms: the myth of the 'racial struggle', evolutionist anthropology, 'differentialist' culturalism, sociobiology and so on. Around this constellation, there gravitate sociopolitical discourses and techniques such as demography, criminology, eugenics. We ought also to unravel the threads of the genealogy of the racist theories which, through Gobineau or Chamberlain, but also the 'psychology of peoples' and sociological evolutionism, go back to the anthropology and natural history of the Enlightenment,²⁷ and as far as what L. Sala-Molins calls 'White-biblical' theology.²⁸ To get to the heart of the matter as quickly as possible, I want first of all to recapitulate the intellectual operations that have always been at work – for more than three centuries now – in theoretical racism, operations that allow it to articulate itself to what we may call everyday racism's 'desire to know'.

First of all, there is the fundamental operation of *classification* – that

is, the reflection within the human species of the difference that constitutes it, the search for criteria by which men can be said to be 'men': What makes them so? To what extent are they so? Of what kind are they? Such classification is presupposed by any form of hierarchical ranking. And it can lead to such a ranking, for the more or less coherent construction of a hierarchical table of the groups which make up the human race is a privileged representation of its unity in and through inequality. It can also, however, be regarded as sufficient in itself, as pure 'differentialism'. Or at least apparently so, since the criteria used for differentiation can never be 'neutral' in a real context. They contain within them sociopolitical values which are contested in practice and which have to be imposed, in a roundabout way, by the use of ethnicity or culture.²⁹

Classification and hierarchy are operations of naturalization *par excellence* or, more accurately, of projection of historical and social differences into the realm of an imaginary nature. But we must not be taken in by the self-evident character of the result. 'Human nature', closely shadowed by a system of 'natural differences' within the human species, in no way represents an unmediated category. In particular, it necessarily has built into it sexual schemas, both on the 'effect' or symptoms side ('racial characteristics', whether psychological or somatic, are always metaphors for the difference between the sexes) and on the 'cause' side (interbreeding, heredity). Hence the central importance of the criterion of *genealogy* which is anything but a category of 'pure' nature: it is a symbolic category articulated to relative juridical notions and, first and foremost, to the legitimacy of filiation. There is therefore a latent contradiction in the 'naturalism' of race, which has to be overcome in a movement beyond this towards an originary, 'immemorial' 'super-nature', which is always already projected into an imaginary divided between good and evil, innocence and perversion.³⁰

This first aspect immediately introduces a second: every theoretical racism draws upon *anthropological universals*. It is even, in a sense, the way it selects and combines these that constitutes its development as a doctrine. Among these universals we naturally find the notions of 'humanity's genetic inheritance' or 'cultural tradition', but we also find more specific concepts such as human aggression or, conversely, 'preferential' altruism,³¹ which brings us to the different variants of the ideas of xenophobia, ethnocentrism and tribalism. We find here the possibility of a double game which allows neo-racism to attack anti-racist criticism from the rear, sometimes directly dividing and hierarchizing humanity and, at others, turning into an explanation of the 'natural necessity for racism' itself. And these ideas are in turn 'grounded' in other universals, which are either sociological (for example, the idea that endogamy is a

condition and a norm of every human grouping, and therefore exogamy a cause of anxiety and something universally prohibited) or psychological (for example, suggestion and hypnotic contagion, concepts on which crowd psychology has traditionally fallen back).

In all these universals we can see the persistent presence of the same 'question': that of *the difference between humanity and animality*, the problematic character of which is re-utilized to interpret the conflicts within society and history. In classical Social Darwinism, we thus have the paradoxical figure of an evolution which has to extract humanity properly so-called (that is, culture, the technological mastery of nature – including the mastery of human nature: eugenics) from animality, but to do so by the means which characterized animality (the 'survival of the fittest') or, in other words, by an 'animal' competition between the different degrees of humanity. In contemporary sociobiology and ethology, the 'socio-affective' behaviours of individuals and, most importantly, of human groups (aggression and altruism) are represented as the indelible mark of animality within evolved humanity. In differentialist culturalism, one might think that this theme was totally absent. I believe it does exist, however, in an oblique form: in the frequent coupling of the discourse on cultural difference with that on ecology (as if the isolation of cultures were the precondition for the preservation of the 'natural milieu' of the human race) and, especially, in the thoroughgoing metaphorization of cultural categories in terms of individuality, selection, reproduction and interbreeding. Man's animality, animality within and against man – hence the systematic 'bestialization' of individuals and racialized human groups – is thus the means specific to theoretical racism for conceptualizing human historicity. A paradoxically static, if not indeed regressive, history, even when offering a stage for the affirmation of the 'will' of the superior beings.

Just as racist movements represent a paradoxical synthesis of the contradictory ideologies of revolution and reaction, which, in certain circumstances, is all the more effective for being paradoxical, so theoretical racism represents the ideal synthesis of transformation and fixity, of repetition and destiny. The 'secret', the discovery of which it endlessly rehearses, is that of a humanity eternally leaving animality behind and eternally threatened with falling into the grasp of animality. That is why, when it substitutes the signifier of culture for that of race, it has always to attach this to a 'heritage', and 'ancestry', a 'rootedness', all signifiers of the imaginary face-to-face relation between man and his origins.

It would therefore be very wide of the mark to believe that theoretical racism is incompatible with any form of transcendence, as has been argued by some recent critics of culturalism who, moreover, commit the same error in respect of nationalism.³² On the contrary, racist theories

necessarily contain an aspect of sublimation, an idealization of the species, the privileged figure of which is aesthetic; this is why that idealization necessarily culminates in the description and valorization of a certain type of man, demonstrating the human ideal, both in terms of body and of mind (from the 'Teuton' and the 'Celt' of old to the 'gifted child' of today's 'developed' nations). This ideal connects up both with the first man (non-degenerate) and the man of the future (the superman). This is a crucial point both in understanding the way in which racism and sexism are articulated (the importance of the phallic signifier in racism) and for seeing the connection between racism and the exploitation of labour and political alienation. The aestheticization of social relations is a crucial contribution of racism to the constitution of the projective field of politics. Even the idealization of the technocratic values of efficiency presupposes an aesthetic sublimation. It is no accident that the modern manager whose enterprises are to dominate the planet is simultaneously sportsman and womanizer. And the symbolic reversal which, in the socialist tradition, has, by contrast, valorized the figure of the worker as the perfect type of future humanity, as the 'transition' from extreme alienation to extreme potency, has been accompanied, as we know, by an intense aestheticization and sexualization, which has allowed it to be recuperated by fascism and which also forces us to ask what elements of racism re-surfaced historically in 'socialist humanism'.³³

The remarkable constancy of these historical and anthropological themes allows us to begin to cast light on the ambiguous character of the relations which theoretical racism has maintained over two centuries with humanist (or universalist) ideologies. The critique of 'biological' racisms has given rise to the idea, which is especially widespread in France, that racism is, by definition, incompatible with humanism and therefore, theoretically speaking, an anti-humanism, since it valorizes 'life' to the detriment of properly human values, such as morality, knowledge, individual dignity. Now there is a confusion and a misunderstanding here. Confusion because the 'biologism' of the racial theories (from anthropometry to Social Darwinism and sociobiology) is not a valorization of life as such, still less an application of biology; rather it is a vitalized metaphor of certain sexualized social values: energy, decisiveness, initiative and generally all the virile representations of domination or, conversely, passivity, sensuality, femininity, or again, solidarity, *esprit de corps* and generally all the representations of the 'organic' unity of society along the lines of an endogamous 'family'. This vitalist metaphor is associated with a hermeneutics which makes somatic traits into symptoms of the psychological or cultural 'character'. Alongside this confusion, however, there is also a misunderstanding, because

biological racism itself has never been a way of dissolving human specificity into the larger field of life, evolution or nature, but, on the contrary, a way of applying pseudo-biological notions to constitute the human race and improve it or preserve it from decline. Just as it is also closely allied to a morality of heroism and asceticism. It is here that the Nietzschean dialectic of the *Übermensch* and the 'higher man' may be illuminating. As Colette Guillaumin puts it so excellently: 'These categories, which are marked by biological difference, are situated within the human race and regarded as being so. This point is crucial. In fact, the human species is the key notion; it is in terms of this notion that racism has been and is, daily, constituted.'³⁴ It would not be so difficult to organize the struggle against racism in the intellectual sphere if the 'crime against humanity' were not being perpetrated in the name of and by means of a humanist discourse. It is perhaps above all this fact which confronts us with what, in another context, Marx called the 'bad side' of history, which does, however, constitute its reality.

The paradoxical presence of a humanist, universalist component in the ideological constitution of racism does, however, enable us also to cast some light on the profound ambivalence of the signifier of 'race' (and its current substitutes) from the point of view of national unity and identity.

As a supplement of particularity, racism first presents itself as a *super-nationalism*. Mere political nationalism is perceived as weak, as a conciliatory position in a universe of competition or pitiless warfare (the language of international 'economic warfare' is more widespread today than it has ever been). Racism sees itself as an 'integral' nationalism, which only has meaning (and chances of success) if it is based on the integrity of the nation, integrity both towards the outside and on the inside. What theoretical racism calls 'race' or 'culture' (or both together) is therefore a continued origin of the nation, a concentrate of the qualities which belong to the nationals 'as their own'; it is in the 'race of its children' that the nation could contemplate its own identity in the pure state. Consequently, it is around race that it must unite, with race – an 'inheritance' to be preserved from any kind of degradation – that it must identify both 'spiritually' and 'physically' or 'in its bones' (the same goes for culture as the substitute or inward expression of race).

This means, of course, that racism underlies the claims for annexation ('return') to the national 'body' of 'lost' individuals and populations (for example, the Sudeten or Tyrolean Germans) which is, as is well known, closely linked to what might be called the pan-ic developments of nationalism (Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, Pan-Turanianism, Pan-Arabism, Pan-Americanism ...). Above all, however, it means that racism constantly induces an excess of 'purism' as far as the nation is

concerned: for the nation to be itself, it has to be racially or culturally pure. It therefore has to isolate within its bosom, before eliminating or expelling them, the 'false', 'exogenous', 'cross-bred', 'cosmopolitan' elements. This is an obsessional imperative which is directly responsible for the racialization of social groups whose collectivizing features will be set up as stigmata of exteriority and impurity, whether these relate to style of life, beliefs or ethnic origins. But this process of forming the race into a super-nationality leads to an endless upping of the stakes. In theory, it ought to be possible to recognize by some sure criterion of appearance or behaviour those who are 'true nationals' or 'essential nationals', such as the 'French French', or the 'English English' (of whom Ben Anderson speaks with regard to the hierarchy of caste and the categorization of civil servants in the British Empire), the authentically 'Teutonic' German (cf. the distinction made by Nazism between *Volkszugehörigkeit* and *Staatsangehörigkeit*), or the authentic Americanness of the WASP, not to mention of course the Whiteness of the Afrikaner citizen. In practice, however, it has to be constituted out of juridical conventions or ambiguous cultural particularisms, by imaginarily denying other collectivizing features, other systems of irreducible 'differences', which sets the quest for nationality off once again through race towards an inaccessible goal. Moreover, it is often the case that the criteria invested with a 'racial' (and *a fortiori* cultural) significance in this way are, largely, criteria of social class or that ultimately they symbolically 'select' an elite which has *already* been selected by economic and political class inequalities, or that the dominated classes are those whose 'racial composition' and 'cultural identity' are the most questionable. These effects run directly counter to the nationalist objective, which is not to re-create an elitism, but to found a populism; not to cast suspicion upon the historical and social heterogeneity of the 'people', but to exhibit its essential unity.

This is why racism always tends to operate in an inverted fashion, drawing upon the projection mechanism we have already mentioned in regard to the role of anti-Semitism in European nationalisms: the racial-cultural identity of 'true nationals' remains invisible, but it can be inferred (and is ensured) *a contrario* by the alleged, quasi-hallucinatory visibility of the 'false nationals': the Jews, 'wogs', immigrants, 'Pakis', natives, Blacks . . . In other words, it remains constantly in doubt and in danger; the fact that the 'false' is too visible will never guarantee that the 'true' is visible enough. By seeking to circumscribe the common essence of nationals, racism thus inevitably becomes involved in the obsessional quest for a 'core' of authenticity that cannot be found, shrinks the category of nationality and de-stabilizes the historical nation.³⁵ This can lead, in an extreme case, to the reversal of the racial phantasm: since it is

impossible to *find* racial-national purity and guarantee its provenance from the origins of the people, it becomes necessary to *create* it in conformity with the ideal of a (super-)national superman. This is the meaning of Nazi eugenics. Yet we should add that the same orientation was inherent in all the sociotechnologies of human selection, indeed in a certain tradition of 'typically British' education, and that it is resurgent today in the 'educational' application of the psychology of differential mental abilities (whose ultimate weapon is IQ).

This also explains the rapidity with which the transition from super-nationalism to racism as *supranationalism* occurs. We must take absolutely seriously the fact that the racial theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries define communities of language, descent and tradition which do not, as a general rule, coincide with historical states, even though they always obliquely refer to one or more of these. This means that the dimension of universality of theoretical racism, the anthropological aspects of which we have sketched above, plays an essential role here: it permits a 'specific universalization' and therefore an idealization of nationalism. It is this aspect which I should like to examine in the last part of this chapter.³⁶

The classical myths of race, in particular the myth of Aryanism, do not refer initially to the nation but to class, and they do so from an aristocratic perspective. In these conditions, the 'superior' race (or the superior races, the 'pure races' in Gobineau's writings) can never, by definition, coincide with the whole of the national population, nor be restricted to it.³⁷ Which means that the 'visible', institutional national collectivity must regulate its transformations by reference to another, invisible collectivity, which transcends frontiers and is, by definition, transnational. But what was true of the aristocracy, and might seem to be the transient consequence of the modes of thought of a period in which nationalism was only beginning to assert itself, remains true of all later racist theories, whether their referent be biological (in fact, as we have seen, somatic) or cultural in nature. Skin colour, skull shape, intellectual predispositions or mind are beyond positive nationality; this is simply the other side of the obsession with purity. The consequence is the following paradox, which a number of those who have studied the question have run up against: there actually is a racist 'internationalism' or 'supranationalism' which tends to idealize timeless or transhistorical communities such as the 'Indo-Europeans', 'the West', 'Judeo-Christian civilization' and therefore communities which are at the same time both closed and open, which have no frontiers or whose only frontiers are, as Fichte had it, 'internal' ones, inseparable from the individuals themselves or, more precisely, from their 'essence' (what was once called their 'soul'). In fact these are the frontiers of an ideal humanity.³⁸

Here the excess of racism over nationalism, though it continues to be constitutive of nationalism, takes on a form that is the opposite of what we saw above: it stretches it out to the dimensions of an infinite totality. Hence the similarities to – and more or less caricatural borrowings from – theology, from ‘gnosis’. Hence also the possibilities of a slide towards the racism of the universalist theologies where these are tightly bound to modern nationalism. This explains, above all, why a racial signifier has to transcend national differences and organize ‘transnational’ solidarities so as to be able, in return, to ensure the effectivity of nationalism. Thus anti-Semitism functioned on a European scale: each nationalism saw in the Jew (who was himself contradictorily conceived as both irreducibly inassimilable to others and as cosmopolitan, as member of an ‘original’ people and as rootless) its own specific enemy and the representative of all other ‘hereditary enemies’; this meant, then, that all nationalisms were defined against the *same* foil, the same ‘stateless other’, and this has been a component of the very idea of Europe as the land of ‘modern’ nation-states or, in other words, of civilization. At the same time, the European or Euro-American nations, locked in a bitter struggle to divide up the world into colonial empires, recognized that they formed a community and shared an ‘equality’ through that very competition, a community and an equality to which they gave the name ‘White’. We might adduce similar descriptions of the universalist extensions of Arab or Jewish-Israeli or Soviet nationality here. When historians speak of this universalist project within nationalism, meaning by that an aspiration towards – and a programme of – cultural imperialism (imposing an ‘English’, ‘German’, ‘French’, ‘American’ or ‘Soviet’ conception of man and universal culture on the whole of humanity) and yet evade the question of racism, their arguments are at best incomplete, for it is only as ‘racism’ – that is to say, only to the extent that the imperialist nation has been imagined and presented as the specific instrument of a more essential mission and destiny which other peoples cannot but recognize – that imperialism has been able to turn itself from a mere enterprise of conquest into an enterprise of universal domination, the founding of a ‘civilization’.

From these reflections and hypotheses I shall draw two conclusions. The first is that, in these conditions, we should be less surprised that contemporary racist movements have given rise to the formation of international ‘axes’, to what Wilhelm Reich provocatively called ‘nationalist internationalism’.³⁹ Reich’s remark was provocative but accurate, for his concern was to understand the mimetic effects both of that paradoxical internationalism and of another one, which was increasingly tending to realize itself in the form of an ‘internationalist nationalism’ just as,

following the example of the 'socialist homeland' and around it and beneath, the Communist parties were turning into 'national parties', a development which in some cases drew upon anti-Semitism. Just as decisive was the symmetry with which, since the middle of the nineteenth century, the two representations of history as 'class struggle' and 'race struggle' were ranged against each other, each of these being conceived as 'international civil wars' in which the fate of humanity was to be played out. Both were supranational in this sense, though the distinction between them, which cannot be evaded, was that the class struggle was supposed to dissolve nationalities and nationalisms, whereas the race struggle was supposed to establish for all time each nation's status and place in the hierarchy of nations, thus enabling nationalism to fuse specifically national and socially conservative elements (militant anti-socialism and anti-communism). It was as a supplement to universality, invested in the constitution of a supranationalism, that the ideology of the race struggle was able in a way to draw a line around the universalism of the class struggle and set against it a different 'conception of the world'.

My second conclusion is that theoretical racism is in no sense the absolute antithesis of humanism. Paradoxically, in the excess of signification and activism which marks the transition from nationalism to racism, while still remaining within nationalism, and which enables this latter to crystallize the violence that is specific to it, the aspect which wins out is universality. What makes us hesitate to admit this and draw the necessary conclusions from it is the confusion which continues to reign between a theoretical humanism and a practical humanism. If we identify this latter with a politics and an ethics of the defence of civil rights without limitations or exceptions, we can clearly see that racism and humanism are incompatible, and we have no difficulty in understanding why effective anti-racism has had to constitute itself as a 'logically coherent' humanism. This does not, however, mean that practical humanism is necessarily founded on theoretical humanism (that is, on a doctrine which makes man as a species the origin and end of declared and established rights). It can also be founded on a theology, on a non-religious form of wisdom subordinating the idea of man to the idea of nature or, which is decidedly different, on an analysis of social conflict and liberation movements which substitutes specific social relations for the general notions of man and the human race. Conversely, the necessary link between anti-racism and a practical humanism in no way prevents theoretical racism from also being a theoretical humanism. Which means that the conflict unfolds here within the ideological universe of humanism, where the outcome is decided on the basis of political criteria other than the simple distinction between the humanism of identity and the humanism of differences. Absolute

civic equality, taking precedence over the question of 'belonging' to a particular state, represents a formulation decidedly more solid than humanist generalities. This is why I believe we have to read the link between these notions in a way that is the reverse of the traditional reading; we have, so to speak, to 'set it back on its feet': a practical humanism can only be achieved today if it is, first of all, an effective anti-racism. This, admittedly, means pitting one idea of man against another, but, indissociably from that, it means setting an internationalist politics of citizenship against a nationalist one.⁴⁰

Notes

1. The most thorough recent account is that by René Gallissot, *Misère de l'anti-racisme*, Editions Arcanère, Paris 1985.

2. Already, in her book *Race and Racism* of 1942 (republished by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1983), this was the objective of Ruth Benedict. She does not, however, really distinguish between nation, nationalism and culture. or rather she tends to 'culturalize' racism by the way of 'historicizing' it as an aspect of nationalism.

3. Cf., for example, Raoul Girardet's article 'Nation: 4. Le nationalisme', *Encyclopaedia universalis*.

4. As I have argued in an earlier study, 'Sujets ou citoyens? – Pour l'égalité', *Les Temps modernes*, Special number: *L'Immigration maghrébine en France*, 1984.

5. The category of delirium springs spontaneously to mind when one is attempting to describe the complex of racism, by reason of the way in which racist discourse disavows the real while projecting scenarios of aggression and persecution. It cannot, however, be employed without correctives, on the one hand, because it runs the risk of masking the activity of thought which racism always entails and, on the other hand, because the notion of *collective delirium* comes very close to being a contradiction in terms.

6. Each of the classes of the 'new' nations of old colonial humanity thus projects its social difference from the others in ethnico-cultural terms.

7. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London 1983, pp. 129 *et seq.*

8. This specular structure seems to me essential: to the 'underdeveloped', the 'overdeveloped' are those who more than ever exhibit racist contempt; to the 'overdeveloped', the 'underdeveloped' are mainly defined by the way they mutually despise one another. For each group, racism is 'the work of the others' or, more precisely, the other is the site of racism. But the frontier between 'overdevelopment' and 'underdevelopment' has begun to shift about uncontrollably: no one can say exactly who is the other.

9. Hence the problems surrounding the 'process of educating memory' with which anti-fascist organizations are trying to confront the current threat, particularly if they believe that the potential of the Nazi model derives from the occulting of genocide. In this regard, the activities of the 'revisionist' historians function as a real trap, since they are essentially a way of endlessly speaking about the gas chambers in the highly ambivalent mode of denial. Denouncing the concealment of the Nazi genocide by racists who really are anti-Semites will unfortunately not be enough to allow a collective recognition of what anti-Semitism and anti-Arabism have in common to emerge. However, unmasking the nostalgia for Nazism within the leaders' speeches will also not be sufficient to enlighten the 'mass' of ordinary racists as to the displacement which they effect daily, but which largely occurs without their knowledge. This is true, at least, as long as this indispensable educational process does not extend to a complete explanation of contemporary racism as a system of thought and a social relation, the condensed expression of a whole history.

10. For what is both a dogged and nuanced analysis of this contradiction, it would only be right to refer the reader to the whole of Maxime Rodinson's writings and, in particular, to the texts assembled in *Marxisme et monde musulman*, Editions de Seuil, Paris 1972 and *Peuple juif ou problème juif?*, Maspero, Paris 1981.

11. The primary question for liberal historians of nationalism (either as 'ideology' or as 'politics') is: 'Where and when does the transition from 'liberal nationalism' to 'imperialist nationalism' occur? Cf. Hannah Arendt, 'Imperialism', Part II of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, André Deutsch, London 1986, and Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism. A Study of Its Origins and Background*, New York 1944. Their common answer to this question is that it occurs between the 'universalist' revolutions of the eighteenth century and the 'Romanticism' of the nineteenth, which begins in Germany and then extends over the whole of Europe and finally the whole world in the twentieth century. Examining the question more closely, however, it turns out that the French Revolution could already be said to contain within itself these two contradictory aspects. It is thus the French Revolution that caused nationalism to 'go off the rails'.

12. Cf. Tom Nairn's caveats in 'The Modern Janus', *New Left Review*, no. 94, 1975 (reprinted in *The Break-Up of Britain*, New Left Books, London 1977). See the critique by Eric Hobsbawm, 'Some Reflections on The Break-Up of Britain', *New Left Review*, no. 105, 1977.

13. Which is not only a Marxist position but also the thesis of other 'economic' thinkers in the liberal tradition. Cf. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford 1983.

14. Colette Guillaumin, *L'Idéologie raciste. Genèse et langage actuel*, Mouton, Paris/The Hague 1972; M. Rodinson, 'Quelques thèses critiques sur la démarche poliakovienne', in M. Olander, ed., *Racisme, mythes et sciences*. See also M. Rodinson's article 'Nation: 3. Nation et idéologie', *Encyclopaedia universalis*.

15. This may usefully be compared with Erving Goffmann, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1968.

16. Cf. L. Dumont, *Essai sur l'individualisme*, Editions de Seuil, Paris 1983.

17. Cf. the debate between Tom Nairn and Benedict Anderson, in *The Break-Up of Britain and Imagined Communities*, on the relations between 'nationalism', 'patriotism' and 'racism'.

18. Cf. the excellent presentation by P. Ayçoberry in *La Question nazie. Essai sur les interprétations du national-socialisme, 1922-1975*, Editions de Seuil, Paris 1979.

19. Among other recent accounts, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, a happy parallel between the practices and discourses of Russification and Anglicization.

20. Cf. Léon Poliakov, *Histoire de l'antisémitisme*, new edn (Le Livre de Poche Pluriel), vol. II, pp. 259 *et seq.*: Madeleine Rebérioux, 'L'Essor du racisme nationaliste', in P. de Comarmond and C. Duchet, eds, *Racisme et société*, Maspero, Paris 1969.

21. Cf. R. Ertel and G. Fabre and E. Marienstras, *En marge. Les minorités aux Etats-Unis*, Maspero, Paris 1974, pp. 287 *et seq.*

22. Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi 1979, pp. 287 *et seq.*

23. Cf. Haroun Jamous, *Israël et ses juifs. Essai sur les limites du volontarisme*, Maspero, Paris 1982.

24. It has often been thought possible to argue that nationalism, unlike the other great political theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, lacked a theory and theorists (cf. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Isaiah Berlin, 'Nationalism - Past Neglect and Present Powers', in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, Oxford 1981). This is to forget that very often racism provides nationalism with its theories, just as it provides it with a daily stock of images, thus figuring at the two poles of the 'ideological movement'.

25. Cf. M. Rodinson on the function of *kerygma* in ideological movements: 'Nature et fonction des mythes dans les mouvements socio-politiques d'après deux exemples comparés: communisme marxiste et nationalisme arabe', *Marxisme et monde musulman*, pp. 245 *et seq.*

26. The introduction of the 'pessimistic' theme of degeneracy into Social Darwinism, when it clearly has no place in the Darwinian theory of natural selection, is an essential

stage in the ideological exploitation of the theory of evolution (playing on the double meaning of the notion of heredity). Not every racism is categorically pessimistic, though all are so hypothetically: the superior race (culture) is lost (and human civilization with it) if it ends up being 'swamped' by barbarians or lesser mortals. The differentialist version states that *all* races (cultures) are lost (and thus human civilization) if they all come to swamp each other with their diversity, if the 'order' which they constitute as distinct cultures dissipates, to be replaced by the entropy of a standardized 'mass culture'. Historical pessimism entails a voluntarist or 'decisionist' conception of politics: only a radical decision, expressing the antithesis which exists between pure will and the course of events, between men of will and men of passivity, can counter or indeed reverse the progress of decadence. Hence the way Marxism (and, more generally, socialism) comes dangerously close to these conceptions when it pushes its representation of historical determinism to the point of *catastrophism*, which, in its turn, entails a 'decisionist' conception of revolution.

27. Cf. especially the works of Michèle Duchet: *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des Lumières*, Maspero, Paris 1971; 'Racisme et sexualité au XVIII^e siècle' in L. Poliakov *et al.*, *Ni juif ni grec. Entretiens sur le racisme* (II), Mouton, Paris/The Hague 1978; 'Du Noir au blanc, ou la cinquième génération' in L. Poliakov *et al.* *Le Couple interdit. Entretiens sur le racisme* (II), Mouton, Paris/The Hague 1980.

28. Cf. Louis Sala-Molins, *Le Code noir ou le calvaire de Canaan*, PUF, Paris 1987.

29. Differentialism displaces discrimination by transferring it from the immediate appearance of the groups being classified to the criteria of classification, thus constituting a 'fallback position' for racism. It also replaces the idea that 'races' are naturally given with the notion that 'racist attitudes' are naturally given. See this volume chapter 1, where I draw on recent analyses by C. Guillaumin, V. de Rudder, M. Barker and P. -A. Taguieff of racist discourse in France and Britain.

30. On nature as 'phantasmatic mother' in racist and sexist ideologies, cf. C. Guillaumin, 'Nature et histoire. A propos d'un "matérialisme"' in *Le Racisme, mythes et sciences*. On genealogy and heredity, cf. Pierre Legendre, *L'Inestimable objet de la transmission*, Fayard, Paris 1985.

31. Compare the way in which sociobiology hierarchizes 'altruistic sentiments': first the immediate family, then kin-kin altruism and lastly the ethnic community which is supposed to represent an extension of this. Cf. Martin Barker, *The New Racism. Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe*, Junction Books, London 1981.

32. Cf. A. Finkielkraut, *La Défaite de la pensée*, Gallimard, Paris 1987.

33. On Nazi thought as an aestheticization of politics, cf. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, transl. C. Terner, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1990. Pierre Ayçoberry, *La Question nazie*, p. 31, notes that Nazi aesthetics 'has the function of obliterating the traces of the class struggle by situating each category firmly in its proper place in the racial community: the rooted peasant, the worker as athlete of production and women in the home'. Cf. also A.G. Rabinbach, 'L'Esthétique de la production sous le III^e Reich', *Recherches*, nos 32-3, 1978.

34. Guillaumin, *L'Idéologie raciste*, p. 6.

35. This gives rise to a great deal of casuistry: if it has to be admitted that French nationality includes innumerable successive generations of migrants and descendants of migrants, their spiritual incorporation into the nation will be justified on the grounds of their capacity to be assimilated, this being understood as a predisposition to Frenchness. It will, however, always be possible (as it was with the *conversos* when they came before the Inquisition) to question whether their assimilation is not merely superficial, not pure simulation.

36. Hannah Arendt does not relate the 'secret meaning' perceived by a 'sixth sense', which she speaks of in the concluding chapter of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (p. 471), to a process of idealization, but to the coercive force of terror which she sees as being inherent in the compulsion for 'ideological logicity'. Even less does she see it as connecting with a variety of humanism; it relates rather to the absorption of the man will into the anonymous movement of History or Nature, which the totalitarian movements see it as their task to 'speed up'.

37. On Gobineau, see especially the study by Colette Guillaumin, 'Aspects latents du racismisme chez Gobineau', *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, vol. XLII, 1967.

38. One of the purest examples in contemporary literature is provided by the works of Ernst Jünger. See, for example, *Der gordische Knoten*, Klostermann, Frankfurt-am-Main 1953.

39. Cf. Wilhelm Reich, *Les Hommes dans l'Etat*, Payot, Paris 1978.

40. I have attempted to develop this position in a number of 'occasional' articles: 'Suffrage universel' (with Yves Bénot), *Le Monde*, 4 May 1983; 'Sujets ou citoyens? - Pour l'égalité'; 'La Société métissée', *Le Monde*, 1 December 1984; 'Propositions sur la citoyenneté', in C. Wihtol de Wenden, ed., *La Citoyenneté*, Edilig-Fondation Diderot, Paris 1988.