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# BECOMING NATIONAL



A READER

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## Etienne Balibar

Author of works on Marx and Marxism, Spinoza, and Foucault, Etienne Balibar has taught philosophy at the University of Paris and at Nanterre. He wrote *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1967), with the French Marxist theorist Louis Althusser and *Race, Nation: Class: Ambiguous Identities* (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1988) with Immanuel Wallerstein. This latter book marked a transition in Balibar's work toward a deep concern with race and nation, themes he developed in *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy before and after Marx* (London: Verso, 1994).

Always interested in situating philosophical developments in social and political contexts, Balibar has been concerned with the specificity of contemporary racism and its relationship both to class division within capitalism and to the contradictions of the nation-state. Moving from a structuralist reading of modes of production toward a greater engagement with the politics and discourses of social formation, Balibar explores the tension between universalisms and particularisms, between attempts to create universalistic ideological constructions that harmonize the exploiter and the exploited and the always present pull of particular forms of domination, whether on the basis of class, sex, or race.

The nation form involves a historical narrative in which the nation is the subject moving continuously through time, fulfilling a project over many centuries of coming to self-awareness. This destiny of the nation is made possible by pre-national developments, like the ancient generation of linguistic, cultural, and religious communities, that produce a kind of "fictive ethnicity" that then gives content and substance to the nation form. "No modern nation possesses a given 'ethnic' basis, even when it arises out of a national independence struggle." Balibar's argument is a potent challenge to the essentializing nationalisms and racisms that promote an ethnic or racial origin for the nation and is quite congenial to Benedict Anderson's idea of an "imagined community." Balibar declares that "every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary," and that "in certain conditions, only imaginary communities are real."

## The Nation Form: History and Ideology

... a "past" that has never been present, and which never will be.

JACQUES DERRIDA, *Margins of Philosophy*

The history of nations, beginning with our own, is always already presented to us in the form of a narrative which attributes to these entities the continuity of a subject. The formation of the nation thus appears as the fulfillment of a "project" stretching over centuries, in which there are different stages and moments of coming to self-awareness, which the prejudices of the various historians will portray as more or less decisive—where, for example, are we to situate the origins of France? with our ancestors the Gauls? the Capetian monarchy? the revolution of 1789?—but which, in any case, all fit into an identical pattern: that of the self-manifestation of the national personality. Such a representation clearly constitutes a retrospective illusion, but it also expresses constraining institutional realities. The illusion is twofold. It consists in believing that the generations which succeed one another over centuries on a reasonably stable territory, under a reasonably univocal designation, have handed down to each other an invariant substance. And it consists in believing that the process of development from which we select aspects retrospectively, so as to see ourselves as the culmination of that process, was the only one possible, that is, it represented a destiny. Project and destiny are the two symmetrical figures of the illusion of national identity. The "French" of 1988—one in three of whom has at least one "foreign"<sup>1</sup> ancestor—are only collectively connected to the subjects of King Louis XIV (not to speak of the Gauls) by a succession of contingent events, the causes of which have nothing to do either with the destiny of "France," the project of "its kings" or the aspirations of "its people."

This critique should not, however, be allowed to prevent our perceiving the continuing power of myths of national origins. One perfectly conclusive example of this is the French Revolution, by the very fact of the contradictory appropriations to which it is continually subjected. It is possible to suggest (with Hegel and Marx) that, in the history of every modern nation, wherever the argument can apply, there is never more than one single founding revolutionary event (which explains both the permanent temptation to repeat its forms, to imitate its

episodes and characters, and the temptation found among the "extreme" parties to suppress it, either by proving that national identity derives from before the revolution or by awaiting the realization of that identity from a *new* revolution which would complete the work of the first). The myth of origins and national continuity, which we can easily see being set in place in the contemporary history of the "young" nations (such as India or Algeria) which emerged with the end of colonialism, but which we have a tendency to forget has also been fabricated over recent centuries in the case of the "old" nations, is therefore an effective ideological form, in which the imaginary singularity of national formations is constructed daily, by moving back from the present into the past.

### FROM THE "PRE-NATIONAL" STATE TO THE NATION-STATE

How are we to take this distortion into account? The "origins" of the national formation go back to a multiplicity of institutions dating from widely differing periods. Some are in fact very old: the institution of state languages that were distinct both from the sacred languages of the clergy and from "local" idioms—initially for purely administrative purposes, but subsequently as aristocratic languages—goes back in Europe to the High Middle Ages. It is connected with the process by which monarchical power became autonomous and sacred. Similarly, the progressive formation of absolute monarchy brought with it effects of monetary monopoly, administrative and fiscal centralization and a relative degree of standardization of the legal system and internal "pacification." It thus revolutionized the institutions of the *frontier* and the *territory*. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation precipitated a transition from a situation in which church and state competed (rivalry between the ecclesiastical state and the secular one) to a situation in which the two were complementary (in the extreme case, in a state religion).

All these structures appear retrospectively to us as pre-national, because they made possible certain features of the nation-state, into which they were ultimately to be incorporated with varying degrees of modification. We can therefore acknowledge the fact that the national formation is the product of a long "pre-history." This pre-history, however, differs in essential features from the nationalist myth of a linear destiny. First, it consists of a multiplicity of qualitatively distinct events spread out over time, none of which implies any subsequent event. Second, these events do not of their nature belong to the history of *one* determinate nation. They have occurred within the framework of political units other than those which seem to us today endowed with an original ethical personality (this, just as in the twentieth century the state apparatuses of the "young nations" were prefigured in the apparatuses of the colonial period, so the European Middle Ages saw the outlines of the modern state emerge within the framework of "Sicily," "Catalonia" or "Burgundy"). And they do not even belong by nature to the history of the *nation-state*, but to other rival forms (for example, the "imperial" form). It is not a line of necessary evolution but a series of conjunctural

Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," from Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 86-106

relations which has inscribed them after the event into the pre-history of the nation form. It is the characteristic feature of states of all types to represent the order they institute as eternal, though practice shows that more or less the opposite is the case.

The fact remains that all these events, on condition they are repeated or integrated into new political structures, have effectively played a role in the genesis of national formations. This has precisely to do with their institutional character, with the fact that they cause the state to intervene in the form which it assumed at a particular moment. In other words, *non-national* state apparatuses aiming at quite other (for example, dynastic) objectives have progressively produced the elements of the nation-state or, if one prefers, they have been involuntarily "nationalized" and have begun to nationalize society—the resurrection of Roman law, mercantilism and the domestication of the feudal aristocracies are all examples of this. And the closer we come to the modern period, the greater the constraint imposed by the accumulation of these elements seems to be. Which raises the crucial question of the *threshold* of irreversibility.

At what moment and for what reasons has this threshold been crossed—an event which, on the one hand, caused the configuration of a *system* of sovereign states to emerge and, on the other, imposed the progressive diffusion of the nation form to almost all human societies over two centuries of violent conflict? I admit that this threshold (which it is obviously impossible to identify with a single date<sup>2</sup>) corresponds to the development of the market structures and class relations specific to modern capitalism (in particular, the proletarianization of the labour force, a process which gradually extracts its members from feudal and corporatist relations). Nevertheless this commonly accepted thesis needs qualifying in several ways.

It is quite impossible to "deduce" the nation form from capitalist relations of production. Monetary circulation and the exploitation of wage labour do not logically entail a single determinate form of state. Moreover, the realization space which is implied by accumulation—the world capitalist market—has within it an intrinsic tendency to transcend any national limitations that might be instituted by determinate fractions of social capital or imposed by "extra-economic" means. May we, in these conditions, continue to see the formation of the nation as a "bourgeois project"? It seems likely that this formulation—taken over by Marxism from liberal philosophies of history—constitutes in its turn a historical myth. It seems, however, that we might overcome this difficulty if we return to Braudel and Wallerstein's perspective—the view which sees the constitution of nations as being bound up not with the abstraction of the capitalist market, but with its concrete historical form: that of a "world-economy" which is always already hierarchically organized into a "core" and a "periphery," each of which have different methods of accumulation and exploitation of labour power, and between which relations of unequal exchange and domination are established.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning from the core, national units form out of the overall structure of the world-economy, as a function of the role they play in that structure in a given period. More exactly, they form against one another as competing instruments in the service of the core's domination of the periphery. This first qualification is a

crucial one, because it substitutes for the "ideal" capitalism of Marx and, particularly, of the Marxist economists, a "historical capitalism" in which a decisive role is played by the early forms of imperialism and the articulation of wars with colonization. In a sense, every modern nation is a product of colonization: it has always been to some degree colonized or colonizing, and sometimes both at the same time.

However, a second qualification is necessary. One of the most important of Braudel and Wallerstein's contributions consists in their having shown that, in the history of capitalism, *state forms other than the national have emerged* and have for a time competed with it, before finally being repressed or instrumentalized: the form of empire and, most importantly, that of the transnational politico-commercial complex, centred on one or more cities.<sup>4</sup> This form shows us that there was not a single inherently "bourgeois" political form, but several (we could take the Hanseatic League as an example, but the history of the United Provinces in the seventeenth century is closely determined by this alternative which echoes through the whole of its social life, including religious and intellectual life). In other words, the nascent capitalist bourgeoisie seems to have "hesitated"—depending on circumstances—between several forms of hegemony. Or let us rather say that there existed *different bourgeoisies*, each connected to different sectors of exploitation of the resources of the world-economy. If the "national bourgeoisies" finally won out, even before the industrial revolution (though at the cost of "time-lags" and "compromises" and therefore of fusions with other dominant classes), this is probably both because they needed to use the armed forces of the existing states externally and internally, and because they had to subject the peasantry to the new economic order and penetrate the countryside, turning it into a market where there were consumers of manufactured goods and reserves of "free" labour power. In the last analysis, it is therefore the concrete configurations of the class struggle and not "pure" economic logic which explain the constitution of nation-states, each with its own history, and the corresponding transformation of social formations into national formations.

### THE NATIONALIZATION OF SOCIETY

The world-economy is not a self-regulating, globally invariant system, whose social formations can be regarded as mere local effects; it is a system of constraints, subject to the unforeseeable dialectic of its internal contradictions. It is globally necessary that control of the capital circulating in the whole accumulation space should be exercised from the core; but there has always been struggle over the *form* in which this concentration has been effected. The privileged status of the nation form derives from the fact that, locally, that form made it possible (at least for an entire historical period) for struggles between heterogeneous classes to be controlled and for not only a "capitalist class" but the *bourgeoisies* proper to emerge from these—state bourgeoisies both capable of political, economic and cultural hegemony and *produced* by that hegemony. The dominant bourgeoisie and the bourgeois social formations formed one another reciprocally in a "process

without a subject," by restructuring the state in the national form and by modifying the status of all the other classes. This explains the simultaneous genesis of nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

However simplified this hypothesis may be, it has one essential consequence for the analysis of the nation as a historical form: we have to renounce linear developmental schemas once and for all, not only where modes of production are concerned, but also in respect of political forms. There is, then, nothing to prevent us from examining whether in a new phase of the world-economy rival state structures to that of the nation-state are not tending to form once again. In reality, there is a close implicit connection between the illusion of a necessary unilinear evolution of social formations and the uncritical acceptance of the nation-state as the "ultimate form" of political institution, destined to be perpetuated for ever (having failed to give way to a hypothetical "end of the state").<sup>5</sup>

To bring out the relative indeterminacy of the process of constitution and development of the nation form, let us approach matters from the perspective of a consciously provocative question: *For whom today is it too late?* In other words, which are the social formations which, in spite of the global constraint of the world-economy and of the system of state to which it has given rise, can no longer completely effect their transformation into nations, except in a purely juridical sense and at the cost of interminable conflicts that produce no decisive result? An a priori answer, and even a general answer, is doubtless impossible, but it is obvious that the question arises not only in respect of the "new nations" created after decolonization, the transnationalization of capital and communications, the creation of planetary war machines and so on, but also in respect of "old nations" which are today affected by the same phenomena.

One might be tempted to say that it is too late for those independent states which are formally equal and represented in the institutions which are precisely styled "international" to become self-centred nations, each with its national language(s) of culture, administration and commerce, with its independent military forces, its protected internal market, its currency and its enterprises competing on a world scale and, particularly, with its ruling bourgeoisie (whether it be a private capitalist bourgeoisie or a state *nomenklatura*), since in one way or another every bourgeoisie is a state bourgeoisie. Yet one might also be tempted to say the opposite: the field of the reproduction of nations, of the deployment of the nation form is no longer open today except in the old peripheries and semiperipheries; so far as the old "core" is concerned, it has, to varying degrees, entered the phase of the decomposition of national structures which were connected with the old forms of its domination, even if the outcome of such a decomposition is both distant and uncertain. It clearly seems, however, if one accepts this hypothesis, that the nations of the future will not be like those of the past. The fact that we are today seeing a general upsurge of nationalism everywhere (North and South, East and West) does not enable us to resolve this kind of dilemma: it is part of the formal universality of the international system of states. Contemporary nationalism, whatever its language, tells us nothing of the real age of the nation form in relation to "world time."

In reality, if we are to cast a little more light on this question, we must take into account a further characteristic of the history of national formations. This is what I call the *delayed nationalization of society*, which first of all concerns the old nations themselves—so delayed is it, it ultimately appears as an endless task. A historian like Eugen Weber has shown (as have other subsequent studies) that, in the case of France, universal schooling and the unification of customs and beliefs by interregional labour migration and military service and the subordination of political and religious conflicts to patriotic ideology did not come about until the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> His study suggests that the French peasantry was only finally "nationalized" at the point when it was about to disappear as the majority class (though this disappearance, as we know, was itself retarded by the protectionism that is an essential characteristic of national politics). The more recent work of Gérard Noiriel shows in its turn that, since the end of the nineteenth century, "French identity" has continually been dependent upon the capacity to integrate immigrant populations. The question arises as to whether that capacity is today reaching its limit or whether it can in fact continue to be exercised in the same form.<sup>7</sup>

In order completely to identify the reasons for the relative stability of the national formation, it is not sufficient, then, merely to refer to the initial threshold of its emergence. We must also ask how the problems of unequal development of town and countryside, colonization and decolonization, wars and the revolutions which they have sometimes sparked off, the constitution of supranational blocs and so on have in practice been surmounted, since these are all events and processes which involved at least a risk of class conflicts drifting beyond the limits within which they had been more or less easily confined by the "consensus" of the national state. We may say that in France as, *mutatis mutandis*, in the other old bourgeois formations, what made it possible to resolve the contradictions capitalism brought with it and to begin to remake the nation form at a point when it was not even completed (or to prevent it from coming apart before it was completed), was the institution of the *national-social state*, that is, of a state "intervening" in the very reproduction of the economy and particularly in the formation of individuals, in family structures, the structures of public health and, more generally, in the whole space of "private life." This is a tendency that was present from the very beginnings of the nation form—a point to which I return below—but one which has become dominant during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the result of which is entirely to subordinate the existence of the individuals of all classes to their status as citizens of the nation-state, to the fact of their being "nationals" that is.<sup>8</sup>

### PRODUCING THE PEOPLE

A social formation only reproduces itself as a nation to the extent that, through a network of apparatuses and daily practices, the individual is instituted as *homo nationalis* from cradle to grave, at the same time as he or she is instituted as *homo*

*oeconomicus, politicus, religiosus* . . . That is why the question of the nation form, if it is henceforth an open one, is, at bottom, the question of knowing under what historical conditions it is possible to institute such a thing: by virtue of what internal and external relations of force and also by virtue of what symbolic forms invested in elementary material practices? Asking this question is another way of asking oneself to what transition in civilization the nationalization of societies corresponds, and what are the figures of individuality between which nationality moves.

The crucial point is this: What makes the nation a "community"? Or rather in what way is the form of community instituted by the nation distinguished specifically from other historical communities?

Let us dispense right away with the antitheses traditionally attached to that notion, the first of which is the antithesis between the "real" and the "imaginary" community. *Every social community reproduced by the functioning of institutions is imaginary*, that is to say, it is based on the projection of individual existence into the weft of a collective narrative, on the recognition of a common name and on traditions lived as the trace of an immemorial past (even when they have been fabricated and inculcated in the recent past). But this comes down to accepting that, under certain conditions, *only* imaginary communities are real.

In the case of national formations, the imaginary which inscribes itself in the real in this way is that of the "people." It is that of a community which recognizes itself in advance in the institution of the state, which recognizes that state as "its own" in opposition to other states and, in particular, inscribes its political struggles within the horizon of that state—by, for example, formulating its aspirations for reform and social revolution as projects for the transformation of "its national state." Without this, there can be neither "monopoly of organized violence" (Max Weber), nor "national-popular will" (Gramsci). But such a people does not exist naturally, and even when it is tendentially constituted, it does not exist for all time. No modern nation possesses a given "ethnic" basis, even when it arises out of a national independence struggle. And, moreover, no modern nation, however "egalitarian" it may be, corresponds to the extinction of class conflicts. The fundamental problem is therefore to produce the people. More exactly, it is to make the people produce itself continually as national community. Or again, it is to produce the effect of unity by virtue of which the people will appear, in everyone's eyes, "as a people," that is, as the basis and origin of political power.

Rousseau was the first to have explicitly conceived the question in the terms "What makes a people a people?" Deep down, this question is no different from the one which arose a moment ago: How are individuals nationalized or, in other words, socialized in the dominant form of national belonging? Which enables us to put aside from the outset another artificial dilemma: it is not a question of setting a collective identity against individual identities. *All identity is individual*, but there is no individual identity that is not historical or, in other words, constructed within a field of social values, norms of behaviour and collective symbols. Individuals never identify with one another (not even in the "fusional" practices of mass movements or the "intimacy" of affective relations), nor, however, do they ever acquire an isolated identity, which is an intrinsically contra-

dictory notion. The real question is how the dominant reference points of individual identity change over time and with the changing institutional environment.

To the question of the historical production of the people (or of national individuality) we cannot merely be content to rely with a description of conquests, population movements and administrative practices of "territorialization." The individuals destined to perceive themselves as the members of a single nation are either gathered together externally from diverse geographical origins, as in the nations formed by immigration (France, the USA) or else are brought mutually to recognize one another within a historical frontier which contained them all. The people is constituted out of various populations subject to a common law. In every case, however, a model of their unity must "anticipate" that constitution: the process of unification (the effectiveness of which can be measured, for example, in collective mobilization in wartime, that is, in the capacity to confront death collectively) presupposes the constitution of a specific ideological form. It must at one and the same time be a mass phenomenon and a phenomenon of individuation, must effect an "interpellation of individuals as subjects" (Althusser) which is much more potent than the mere inculcation of political values or rather one that integrates this inculcation into a more elementary process (which we may term "primary") of fixation of the affects of love and hate and representation of the "self." That ideological form must become an a priori condition of communication between individuals (the "citizens") and between social groups—not by suppressing all differences, but by relativizing them and subordinating them to itself in such a way that it is the symbolic difference between "ourselves" and "foreigners" which wins out and which is lived as irreducible. In other words, to use the terminology proposed by Fichte in his *Reden an die deutsche Nation* of 1808, the "external frontiers" of the state have to become "internal frontiers" or—which amounts to the same thing—external frontiers have to be imagined constantly as a projection and protection of an internal collective personality, which each of us carries within ourselves and enables us to inhabit the space of the state as a place where we have always been—and always will be—"at home."

What might that ideological form be? Depending on the particular circumstances, it will be called patriotism or nationalism, the events which promote its formation or which reveal its potency will be recorded and its origin will be traced back to political methods—the combination of "force" and "education" (as Machiavelli and Gramsci put it)—which enable the state to some extent to fabricate public consciousness. But this fabrication is merely an external aspect. To grasp the deepest reasons for its effectiveness, attention will turn then, as the attention of political philosophy and sociology have turned for three centuries, towards the analogy of *religion*, making nationalism and patriotism out to be a religion—if not indeed *the* religion—of modern times.

Inevitably, there is some truth in this—and not only because religions, formally, in so far as they start out from "souls" and individual identities, institute forms of community and prescribe a social "morality"; but also because theological discourse has provided models for the idealization of the nation and the sacralization of the state, which make it possible for a bond of sacrifice to be

created between individuals, and for the stamp of "truth" and "law" to be conferred upon the rules of the legal system.<sup>9</sup> Every national community must have been represented at some point or another as a "chosen people." Nevertheless, the political philosophies of the Classical Age had already recognized the inadequacy of this analogy, which is equally clearly demonstrated by the failure of the attempts to constitute "civil religions," by the fact that the "state religion" ultimately only constituted a transitory form of national ideology (even when this transition lasted for a long time and produced important effects by superimposing religious on national struggles) and by the interminable conflict between theological universality and the universality of nationalism.

In reality, the opposite argument is correct. Incontestably, national ideology involves ideal signifiers (first and foremost the very *name* of the nation or "fatherland") on to which may be transferred the sense of the sacred and the affects of love, respect, sacrifice and fear which have cemented religious communities; but that transfer only takes place because *another type* of community is involved here. The analogy is itself based on a deeper difference. If it were not, it would be impossible to understand why national identity, more or less completely integrating the forms of religious identity, ends up tending to replace it, and forcing it itself to become "nationalized."

#### FICTIVE ETHNICITY AND IDEAL NATION

I apply the term "fictive ethnicity" to the community instituted by the nation-state. This is an intentionally complex expression in which the term fiction, in keeping with my remarks above, should not be taken in the sense of a pure and simple illusion without historical effects, but must, on the contrary, be understood by analogy with the *persona ficta* of the juridical tradition in the sense of an institutional effect, a "fabrication." No nation possesses an ethnic base naturally, but as social formations are nationalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized—that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions.<sup>10</sup>

Fictive ethnicity is not purely and simply identical with the *ideal nation* which is the object of patriotism, but it is indispensable to it, for, without it, the nation would appear precisely only as an idea or an arbitrary abstraction; patriotism's appeal would be addressed to no one. It is fictive ethnicity which makes it possible for the expression of a preexisting unity to be seen in the state, and continually to measure the state against its "historic mission" in the service of the nation and, as a consequence, to idealize politics. By constituting the people as a fictively ethnic unity against the background of a universalistic representation which attributes to each individual one—and only one—ethnic identity and which thus divides up the whole of humanity between different ethnic groups corresponding potentially to so many nations, national ideology does much more than justify the strategies employed by the state to control populations. It inscribes their de-

mands in advance in a sense of belonging in the double sense of the term—both what it is that makes one belong to oneself and also what makes one belong to other fellow human beings. Which means that one can be interpellated, as an individual, *in the name* of the collectivity whose name one bears. The naturalization of belonging and the sublimation of the ideal nation are two aspects of the same process.

How can ethnicity be produced? And how can it be produced in such a way that it does not appear as fiction, but as the most natural of origins? History shows us that there are two great competing routes to this: language and race. Most often the two operate together, for only their complementarity makes it possible for the "people" to be represented as an absolutely autonomous unit. Both express the idea that the national character (which might also be called its soul or its spirit) is immanent in the people. But both offer a means of transcending actual individuals and political relations. They constitute two ways of rooting historical populations in a fact of "nature" (the diversity of languages and the diversity of races appearing predestined), but also two ways of giving a meaning to their continued existence, of transcending its contingency. By force of circumstance, however, at times one or the other is dominant, for they are not based on the development of the same institutions and do not appeal to the same symbols or the same idealizations of the national identity. The fact of these different articulations of, on the one hand, a predominantly linguistic ethnicity and, on the other, an ethnicity that is predominantly racial has obvious political consequences. For this reason, and for the sake of clarity of analysis, we must begin by examining the two separately.

The language community seems the more abstract notion, but in reality it is the more concrete since it connects individuals up with an origin which may at any moment be actualized and which has as its content the *common act* of their own exchanges, of their discursive communication, using the instruments of spoken language and the whole, constantly self-renewing mass of written and recorded texts. This is not to say that that community is an immediate one, without internal limits, any more than communication is in reality "transparent" between all individuals. But these limits are always relative: even if it were the case that individuals whose social conditions were very distant from one another were never in direct communication, they would be bound together by an uninterrupted chain of intermediate discourses. They are not isolated—either *de jure* or *de facto*.

We should, however, certainly not allow ourselves to believe that this situation is as old as the world itself. It is, on the contrary, remarkably recent. The old empires and the *Ancien Régime* societies were still based on the juxtaposition of linguistically separate populations, on the superimposition of mutually incompatible "languages" for the dominant and the dominated and for the sacred and profane spheres. Between these there had to be a whole system of translations.<sup>11</sup> In modern national formations, the translators are writers, journalists and politicians, social actors who speak the language of the "people" in a way that seems all the more natural for the very degree of distinction they thereby bring to it. The translation process has become primarily one of internal translation between different "levels of language." Social differences are expressed and relativized

as different ways of speaking the national language, which supposes a common code and even a common norm.<sup>12</sup> This latter is, as we know, inculcated by universal schooling, whose primary function it is to perform precisely this task.

That is why there is a close historical correlation between the national formation and the development of schools as "popular" institutions, not limited to specialized training or to elite culture, but serving to underpin the whole process of the socialization of individuals. That the school should also be the site of the inculcation of a nationalist ideology—and sometimes also the place where it is contested—is a secondary phenomenon, and is, strictly speaking, a less indispensable aspect. Let us simply say that schooling is the principal institution which produces ethnicity as linguistic community. It is not, however, the only one: the state, economic exchange and family life are also schools in a sense, organs of the ideal nation recognizable by a common language which belongs to them "as their own." For what is decisive here is not only that the national language should be recognized as the official language, but, much more fundamentally, that it should be able to appear as the very element of the life of a people, the *reality* which each person may appropriate in his or her own way, without thereby destroying its identity. There is no contradiction between the instituting of *one* national language and the daily discrepancy between—and clash of—"class languages" which precisely are not different languages. In fact, the two things are complementary. All linguistic practices feed into a single "love of the language" which is addressed not to the textbook norm nor to particular usage, but to the "mother tongue"—that is, to the ideal of a common origin projected back beyond learning processes and specialist forms of usage and which, by that very fact, becomes the metaphor for the love fellow nationals feel for one another.<sup>13</sup>

One might then ask oneself, quite apart from the precise historical questions which the history of national languages poses—from the difficulties of their unification or imposition, and from their elaboration into an idiom that is both "popular" and "cultivated" (a process which we know to be far from complete today in all nation-states, in spite of the labours of their intellectuals with the aid of various international bodies)—*why the language community is not sufficient to produce ethnicity.*

Perhaps this has to do with the paradoxical properties which, by virtue of its very structure, the linguistic signifier confers on individual identity. In a sense, it is always in the element of language that individuals are interpellated as subjects, for every interpellation is of the order of discourse. Every "personality" is constructed with words, in which law, genealogy, history, political choices, professional qualifications and psychology are set forth. But the linguistic construction of identity is by definition *open*. No individual "chooses" his or her mother tongue or can "change" it at will. Nevertheless, it is always possible to appropriate several languages and to turn oneself into a different kind of bearer of discourse and of the transformations of language. The linguistic community induces a terribly constraining ethnic memory (Roland Barthes once went so far as to call it "fascist"), but it is one which none the less possesses a strange plasticity: it immediately naturalizes new acquisitions. It does so *too quickly* in a sense. It is a collective memory which perpetuates itself at the cost of an individual for-

getting of "origins." The "second generation" immigrant—a notion which in this context acquires a structural significance—inhabits the national language (and through it the nation itself) in a manner as spontaneous, as "hereditary" and as imperious, so far as affectivity and the imaginary are concerned, as the son of one of those native heaths which we think of as so very French (and most of which not so long ago did not even have the national language as their daily parlance). One's "mother" tongue is not necessarily the language of one's "real" mother. The language community is a community *in the present*, which produces the feeling that it has always existed, but which lays down no destiny for the successive generations. Ideally, it "assimilates" anyone, but holds no one. Finally, it affects all individuals in their innermost being (in the way in which they constitute themselves as subjects), but its historical particularity is bound only to interchangeable institutions. When circumstances permit, it may serve different nations (as English, Spanish and even French do) or survive the "physical" disappearance of the people who used it (like "ancient" Greek and Latin or "literary" Arabic). For it to be tied down to the frontiers of a particular people, it therefore needs an extra degree [*un supplément*] of particularity, or a principle of closure, of exclusion.

This principle is that of being part of a common race. But here we must be very careful not to give rise to misunderstandings. All kinds of somatic or psychological features, both visible and invisible, may lend themselves to creating the fiction of a racial identity and therefore to representing natural and hereditary differences between social groups either within the same nation or outside its frontiers. I have discussed elsewhere, as have others before me, the development of the marks of race and the relation they bear to different historical figures of social conflict. What we are solely concerned with here is the symbolic kernel which makes it possible to equate race and ethnicity ideally, and to represent unity of race to oneself as the origin or cause of the historical unity of a people. Now, unlike what applied in the case of the linguistic community, it cannot be a question here of a practice which is really common to *all* the individuals who form a political unit. We are not dealing with anything equivalent to communication. What we are speaking of is therefore a second-degree fiction. This fiction, however, also derives its effectiveness from everyday practices, relations which immediately structure the "life" of individuals. And, most importantly, whereas the language community can only create equality between individuals by simultaneously "naturalizing" the social inequality of linguistic practices, the race community dissolves social inequalities in an even more ambivalent "similarity"; it ethnicizes the social difference which is an expression of irreconcilable antagonisms by lending it the form of a division between the "genuinely" and the "falsely" national.

I think we may cast some light on this paradox in the following way. The symbolic kernel of the idea of race (and of its demographic and cultural equivalents) is the schema of genealogy, that is, quite simply the idea that the filiation of individuals transmits from generation to generation a substance both biological and spiritual and thereby inscribes them in a temporal community known as "kinship." That is why, *as soon as* national ideology enunciates the proposition



that the individuals belonging to the same people are interrelated (or, in the prescriptive mode, that they should constitute a circle of extended kinship), we are in the presence of this second mode of ethnicization.

The objection will no doubt be raised here that such a representation characterizes societies and communities which have nothing national about them. But, it is precisely on this point that the particular innovation hinges by which the nation form is articulated to the modern idea of race. This idea is correlative with the tendency for "private" genealogies, as (still) codified by traditional systems of preferential marriage and lineage, to disappear. The idea of a racial community makes its appearance when the frontiers of kinship dissolve at the level of the clan, the neighbourhood community and, theoretically at least, the social class, to be imaginarily transferred to the threshold of nationality: that is to say, when nothing prevents marriage with any of one's "fellow citizens" whatever, and when, on the contrary, such a marriage seems the only one that is "normal" or "natural." The racial community has a tendency to represent itself as one big family or as the common envelope of family relations (the community of "French," "American" or "Algerian" families).<sup>14</sup> From that point onward, each individual has his/her family, whatever his/her social condition, but the family—like property—becomes a contingent relation between individuals. In order to consider this question further, we ought therefore to turn to a discussion of the history of the family, an institution which here plays a role every bit as central as that played by the school in the discussion above, and one that is ubiquitous in the discourse of race.

### THE FAMILY AND THE SCHOOL

We here run up against the lacunae in family history, a subject which remains prey to the dominant perspective of laws relating to marriage on the one hand and, on the other, of "private life" as a literary and anthropological subject. The great theme of the recent history of the family is the emergence of the "nuclear" or small family (constituted by the parental couple and their children), and here discussion is focused on whether it is a specifically "modern" phenomenon (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) connected with bourgeois forms of sociality (the thesis of Ariès and Shorter) or whether it is the result of a development, the basis of which was laid down a long time before by ecclesiastical law and the control of marriage by the Christian authorities (Goody's thesis).<sup>15</sup> In fact, these positions are not incompatible. But, most importantly, they tend to push into the shade what is for us the most crucial question: the correlation which has gradually been established since the institution of public registration and the codification of the family (of which the Code Napoléon was the prototype) between the dissolution of relations of "extended" kinship and the penetration of family relations by the intervention of the nation-state, which runs from legislation in respect of inheritance to the organization of birth control. Let us note here that in contemporary national societies, except for a few genealogy "fanatics" and a few who are "nostalgic" for the days of the aristocracy, genealogy is no longer either a body

of theoretical knowledge or an object of oral memory, nor is it recorded and conserved *privately*: today it is the state which draws up and keeps the archive of filiations and alliances.

Here again we have to distinguish between a deep and a superficial level. The superficial level is familialist discourse (constitutive of conservative nationalism), which at a very early stage became linked with nationalism in political tradition—particularly within the French tradition. The deep level is the simultaneous emergence of "private life," the "intimate (small) family circle" and the family policy of the state, which projects into the public sphere the new notion of population and the demographic techniques for measuring it, of the supervision of its health and morals, of its reproduction. The result is that the modern family circle is quite the opposite of an autonomous sphere at the frontiers of which the structures of the state would halt. It is the sphere in which the relations between individuals are immediately charged with a "civic" function and made possible by constant state assistance, beginning with relations between the sexes which are aligned to procreation. This is also what enables us to understand the anarchistic tone that sexually "deviant" behaviour easily takes on in modern national formations, whereas in earlier societies it more usually took on a tone of religious heresy. Public health and social security have replaced the father confessor, not term for term, but by introducing both a new "freedom" and a new assistance, a new mission and therefore also a new demand. Thus, as lineal kinship, solidarity between generations and the economic functions of the extended family dissolve, what takes their place is neither a natural micro-society nor a purely "individualistic" contractual relation, but a nationalization of the family, which has as its counterpart the identification of the national community with a symbolic kinship, circumscribed by rules of pseudo-endogamy, and with a tendency not so much to project itself into a sense of having common antecedents as a feeling of having common descendants.

That is why the idea of eugenics is always latent in the reciprocal relation between the "bourgeois" family and a society which takes the nation form. That is why nationalism also has a secret affinity with sexism: not so much as a manifestation of the same authoritarian tradition but in so far as the inequality of sexual roles in conjugal love and child-rearing constitutes the anchoring point for the juridical, economic, educational and medical mediation of the state. Finally also, that is why the representation of nationalism as a "tribalism"—the sociologists' grand alternative to representing it as a religion—is both mystificatory and revealing. Mystificatory because it imagines nationalism as a regression to archaic forms of community which are in reality incompatible with the nation-state (this can be clearly seen from the incompleteness of the formation of a nation wherever powerful lineal or tribal solidarities still exist). But it is also revealing of the substitution of one imaginary of kinship for another, a substitution which the nation effects and which underpins the transformation of the family itself. It is also what forces us to ask ourselves to what extent the nation form can continue to reproduce itself indefinitely (at least as the dominant form) once the transformation of the family is "completed"—that is to say, once relations of sex and procreation are completely removed from the genealogical order. We would then

reach the limit of the material possibilities of conceiving what human "races" are and of investing that particular representation in the process of producing ethnicity. But no doubt we have not reached that point yet.

Althusser was not wrong in his outline definition of the "Ideological State Apparatuses" to suggest that the kernel of the dominant ideology of bourgeois societies has passed from the family-church dyad to the family-school dyad.<sup>16</sup> I am, however, tempted to introduce two correctives to that formulation. First, I shall not say that a particular institution of this kind in itself constitutes an "Ideological State Apparatus": what such a formulation adequately designates is rather the combined functioning of several dominant institutions. I shall further propose that the contemporary importance of schooling and the family unit does not derive solely from the functional place they take in the reproduction of labour power, but from the fact that they subordinate that reproduction to the constitution of a fictive ethnicity—that is, to the articulation of a linguistic community and a community of race implicit in population policies (what Foucault called by a suggestive but ambiguous term the system of "bio-powers").<sup>17</sup> School and family perhaps have other aspects or deserve to be analysed from other points of view. Their history begins well before the appearance of the nation form and may continue beyond it. But what makes them together constitute the dominant ideological apparatus in bourgeois societies—which is expressed in their growing interdependence and in their tendency to divide up the time devoted to the training of individuals exhaustively between them—is their national importance, that is, their immediate importance for the production of ethnicity. In this sense, there is only one dominant "Ideological State Apparatus" in bourgeois social formations, using the school and family institutions for its own ends—together with other institutions grafted on to the school and the family—and the existence of that apparatus is at the root of the hegemony of nationalism.

We must add one remark in conclusion on this hypothesis. Articulation—even complementarity—does not mean harmony. Linguistic ethnicity and racial (or hereditary) ethnicity are in a sense mutually exclusive. I suggested above that the linguistic community is open, whereas the race community appears in principle closed (since it leads—theoretically—to maintaining indefinitely, until the end of the generations, outside the community or on its "inferior" "foreign" margins those who, by its criteria, are not authentically national). Both are ideal representations. Doubtless race symbolism combines the element of anthropological universality on which it is based (the chain of generations, the absolute of kinship extended to the whole of humanity) with an imaginary of segregation and prohibitions. But in practice migration and intermarriage are constantly transgressing the limits which are thus projected (even where coercive policies criminalize "interbreeding"). The real obstacle to the mixing of populations is constituted rather by class differences which tend to reconstitute caste phenomena. The hereditary substance of ethnicity constantly has to be redefined: yesterday it was "German-ness," "the French" or "Anglo-Saxon" race, today it is "European-ness" or "Western-ness," tomorrow perhaps the "Mediterranean race." Conversely, the openness of the linguistic community is an ideal openness, even

guage to another and therefore the capacity of individuals to increase the range of their linguistic competence.

Though formally egalitarian, belonging to the linguistic community—chiefly because of the fact that it is mediated by the institution of the school—immediately re-creates divisions, differential norms which also overlap with class differences to a very great degree. The greater the role taken on by the education system within bourgeois societies, the more do differences in linguistic (and therefore literary, "cultural" and technological) competence function as caste differences, assigning different "social destinies" to individuals. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that they should immediately be associated with forms of corporal *habitus* (to use Pierre Bourdieu's terminology) which confer on the act of speaking in its personal, non-universalizable traits the function of a racial or quasi-racial mark (and which still occupy a very important place in the formulation of "class racism"): "foreign" or "regional" accent, "popular" style of speech, language "errors" or, conversely, ostentatious "correctness" immediately designating a speaker's belonging to a particular population and spontaneously interpreted as reflecting a specific family origin and a hereditary disposition.<sup>18</sup> The production of ethnicity is also the racialization of language and the verbalization of race.

It is not an irrelevant matter—either from the immediate political point of view or from the point of view of the development of the nation form, or its future role in the instituting of social relations—that a particular representation of ethnicity should be dominant, since it leads to two radically different attitudes to the problem of integration and assimilation, two ways of grounding the juridical order and nationalizing institutions.<sup>19</sup>

The French "revolutionary nation" accorded a privileged place to the symbol of language in its own initial process of formation; it bound political unity closely to linguistic uniformity, the democratization of the state to the coercive repression of cultural "particularisms," local *patois* being the object on which it became fixated. For its part, the American "revolutionary nation" built its original ideals on a double repression: that of the extermination of the Amerindian "natives" and that of the difference between free "White" men and "Black" slaves. The linguistic community inherited from the Anglo-Saxon "mother country" did not pose a problem—at least apparently—until Hispanic immigration conferred upon it the significance of class symbol and racial feature. "Nativism" has always been implicit in the history of French national ideology until, at the end of the nineteenth century, colonization on the one hand, and an intensification of the importation of labour and the segregation of manual workers by means of their ethnic origin on the other, led to the constitution of the phantasm of the "French race." It was, by contrast, very quickly made explicit in the history of American national ideology, which represented the formation of the American people as the melting-pot of a new race, but also as a hierarchical combination of the different ethnic contributions, at the cost of difficult analogies between European or Asian immigration and the social inequalities inherited from slavery and rein-

are rather the stuff of political struggles—but they deeply modify the conditions in which problems of assimilation, equality of rights, citizenship, nationalism and internationalism are posed. One might seriously wonder whether in regard to the production of fictive ethnicity, the “building of Europe”—to the extent that it will seek to transfer to the “Community” level functions and symbols of the nation-state—will orientate itself *predominantly* towards the institution of a “European co-lingualism” (and if so, adopting which language) or *predominantly* in the direction of the idealization of “European demographic identity” conceived mainly in opposition to the “southern populations” (Turks, Arabs, Blacks).<sup>21</sup> Every “people,” which is the product of a national process of ethnicization, is forced today to find its own means of going beyond exclusivism or identitarian ideology in the world of transnational communications and global relations of force. Or rather: every individual is compelled to find in the transformation of the imaginary of “his” or “her” people the means to leave it, in order to communicate with the individuals of other peoples with which he or she shares the same interests and, to some extent, the same future.

## NOTES

1. See Gérard Noiriel, *Le Creuset français. Histoire de l'immigration XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Editions du Seuil, Paris 1988.
2. If one did, however, have to choose a date symbolically, one might point to the middle of the sixteenth century: the completion of the Spanish conquest of the New World, the break-up of the Habsburg Empire, the end of the dynastic wars in England and the beginning of the Dutch War of Independence.
3. Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism*, vol. 2, *The Wheels of Commerce*, transl. Siân Reynolds, Collins, London 1982, and vol. 3, *The Perspective of the World*, transl. Siân Reynolds, Collins, London 1984; Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, vol. 1, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origin of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Academic Press, London 1974, and vol. 2, *Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy*, Academic Press, London 1980.
4. See Braudel, *The Perspective of the World*, pp. 97–105; Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture*, pp. 165 et seq.
5. From this point of view, there is nothing surprising about the fact that the “orthodox” Marxist theory of the linear succession of modes of production became the official doctrine in the USSR at the point when nationalism triumphed there, particularly as it made it possible for the “first socialist state” to be represented as the new universal nation.
6. Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA 1976.
7. Gérard Noiriel, *Longwy, Immigrés et prolétaires, 1880–1980*, PUF, Paris 1984; *Le Creuset français*.
8. For some further remarks on this same point, see my study, “Propositions sur la citoyenneté,” in C. Wihtol de Wenden, ed., *La Citoyenneté*, Edilig-Fondation Diderot, Paris 1988.
9. On all these points, the work of Kantorowicz is clearly of crucial significance: see *Mourir pour la patrie et autres textes*, PUF, Paris 1985.

10. I say “included within them,” but I should also add “or excluded by them,” since the ethnicization of the “others” occurs simultaneously with that of the “nationals”: there are no longer any historical differences other than ethnic ones (thus the Jews also have to be a “people”). On the ethnicization of colonized populations, see J.-L. Amselle and E. M'Bokolo, *Au coeur de l'ethnie: ethnies, tribalisme et Etat en Afrique*, La Découverte, Paris 1985.
11. Ernest Gellner (*Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford 1983) and Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*, Verso, London 1983), whose analyses are as opposed as “materialism” and “idealism,” both rightly stress this point.
12. See Renée Balibar, *L'Institution du français. Essai sur le colingualisme des Carolingiens à la République*, PUF, Paris 1985.
13. Jean-Claude Milner offers some very stimulating suggestions on this point, though more in *Les Noms indistincts* (Seuil, Paris 1983), pp. 43 et seq. than in *L'Amour de la langue* (Seuil, Paris 1978). On the “class struggle”/“language struggle” alternative in the USSR at the point when the policy of “socialism in one country” became dominant, see F. Gadet, J.-M. Gaymann, Y. Mignot and E. Roudinesco, *Les Maîtres de la langue*, Maspero, Paris 1979.
14. Let us add that we have here a sure *criterion* for the commutation between racism and nationalism: every discourse on the fatherland or nation which associates these notions with the “defence of the family”—not to speak of the birth rate—is already ensconced in the universe of racism.
15. Philippe Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, Plon, Paris 1960, revised edn. 1975 (*Centuries of Childhood*, transl. Robert Baldick, London, Cape 1962); Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family*, Basic Books, New York 1975; Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1983.
16. See Louis Althusser, “Ideology and State Ideological Apparatuses,” *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, New Left Books, London 1971.
17. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, transl. Robert Hurley, Allen Lane, London 1977.
18. See P. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, transl. Richard Nice, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1984: *Ce que parler veut dire: l'économie des échanges linguistiques*, Fayard, Paris 1982; and the critique by the “Révoltes logiques” collective (*L'Empire du sociologue*, La Découverte, Paris 1984), which bears essentially on the way that Bourdieu fixes social roles as “destinies” and immediately attributes to the antagonism between them a function of reproducing the “totality” (the chapter on language is by Françoise Kerleroux).
19. See some most valuable remarks on this point in Françoise Gadet and Michel Pêcheux, *La Langue introuvable*, Maspero, Paris 1981, pp. 38 et seq. (“L'anthropologie linguistique entre le Droit et la Vie”).
20. On American “nativism,” see R. Ertel, G. Fabre and E. Marienstras, *En marge. Les minorités aux Etats-Unis*, Maspero, Paris 1974, pp. 25 et seq., and Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States. From the 1960s to the 1980s*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1986, p. 120. It is interesting to see a movement developing today in the United States (directed against Latin American immigration) calling for English to be made the *official language*.
21. Right at the heart of this alternative lies the following truly crucial question: will the administrative and educational institutions of the future “United Europe” accept Arabic, Turkish or even certain Asian or African languages on an equal footing with French, German and Portuguese, or will those languages be regarded as “foreign”?