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The French Republic unveiled

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Abstract

How long can a beard be before it becomes a political weapon? How can one distinguish between a discreet and ostentatious deployment of signs of cultural difference? What signs of cultural identity are acceptable in the public sphere? In this article I shall argue that these questions can only be answered by understanding the French republican model. First, I shall suggest that France continues to 'veil' itself in a mythical past concerning the Republic and race. I shall then argue that contemporary debates about the visibility of signs of cultural difference in the public sphere often reproduce this mythologized view of the French republic. Finally I shall suggest that there is a need to demythologize republican memory and expose the hidden mechanism of the republican model for a proper understanding of the present. This article is not about beards, headscarves or any other sign of cultural difference *per se* but, by reversing the gaze on republican France, attempts to unveil the hidden ideology of the French republican model which constructs beards and headscarves as political weapons.

Keywords: France; race; republic; difference; secularism; disavowal.

Beards, headscarves . . . and other offensive weapons

In the Marx Brothers' classic film, *A Day at the Races*, Groucho taunts his habitual rival, Sig Ruman, in the following way: 'Don't point that beard at me – it might go off'.

This is not so far-fetched. In the debate on the ban on ostentatious signs of religious affiliation in French schools in 2004 (see Nordmann ed. 2004 and Lorcerie ed. 2005),[1] it was suggested by the French Education Minister, Luc Ferry, that beards of a certain length and worn in a particular way could indeed be a weapon, admittedly a cultural/political weapon rather than a piece of deadly hardware but no less dangerous for that. Worn by a Muslim and interpreted by the state as a sign of religious affiliation – and, as such, breaching the long-standing secular code of French schooling ('*laicité*') – the beard

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could signal a challenge to the very principles of the Republic, despite the fact that Jules Ferry, Clemenceau and other giants of the French Third Republic sported, apparently unashamedly, an abundance of facial hair. As David Macey notes ironically, Jules Ferry's beard 'was presumably a republican beard' (Macey 2004, p. 6).

France is clearly not the only western country to fear the Muslim beard. In the police raid on a suspected terrorist house in Forest Gate, London on 2 June 2006, Mohammed Abdul Kayar, who was shot and wounded by the police, stated 'The only crime I have committed is being Asian and having a long length beard' (reported in the *Guardian*, 14 June 2006). How long can a beard be before it becomes a political weapon? How can one distinguish between a discreet and ostentatious deployment of signs of cultural difference? What signs of cultural identity are acceptable in the public sphere? At the time of the French debate on this issue, when, as is well known, the Islamic headscarf was the object deemed most offensive to secular eyes, there were contradictory answers to these questions. For example, while his government was reinforcing the ban on headscarves in schools to protect the neutrality of the public sphere from the threat of cultural diversity, Jacques Chirac was lobbying UNESCO to support a worldwide charter to protect cultural diversity in an attempt to safeguard the French language and cinema from the global dominance of American English and the Hollywood blockbuster.

However, once again it would be wrong to suggest that it is only in France that such contradictions occur over the question of diversity in the public sphere. Shortly after supporters of multiculturalism in Britain had condemned France for its illiberal ban on headscarves, Britain was faced with its own variation of the headscarf affair when, in June 2004, a fifteen-year-old Muslim girl in Luton, Shabina Begum, decided (or was it decided for her?) to come to school wearing a jilbab (the Muslim full-length headed gown). For some of those in Britain who had actually supported the right of French Muslim girls to wear their headscarves, this particular display was a bridge too far and they supported the judge's decision to uphold the school's ban of the jilbab (a decision which was overturned on appeal, then subsequently reinstated).

Confusion and contradiction surrounding signs of cultural difference are clearly not confined to any single country. This is especially the case in a climate of ever-accelerating trans-national and globalizing cultural and political processes. However, the fact that signs cannot be contained within a national context does not necessarily mean that their interpretation is not still dependent, to a certain extent, on a national story. In this article I shall first argue that France continues to 'veil' itself in a mythical past concerning the Republic and race. I shall then argue that contemporary debates about the visibility of signs of

cultural difference in the public sphere often reproduce this mythologized view of the French republic. Finally I shall suggest that there is a need to demythologize republican memory and expose the hidden mechanism of the republican model for a proper understanding of the present. Although understanding the past does not automatically guarantee a problem-free future, it is fairly safe to say that a mythologized past invariably reduces the possibility of any understanding at all. This article is not about the headscarf, the beard or any other sign of cultural difference *per se* but, by reversing the gaze on republican France, attempts to unveil the hidden ideology of the French republican model which constructs headscarves and beards as political weapons.

Paradoxes of the republican model

In his writings on Jews in modern France, the historian Shmuel Trigano points up the essential paradox of Enlightenment universalism. He demonstrates how the attempt to strip the Jew of his attachment to a collectivity and convert him into a citizen (as part of the process of emancipation) reinforces the very collectivity that the process is set against dissolving. In other words, by attempting to convert the other into the same, the boundaries of the other are, paradoxically, fixed ever more firmly (Trigano 1982, Bauman 1991, Silverman 1992). Hence, the very fact that the Jew must undergo the process of transformation and assimilation in order to become a citizen (or 'regeneration' as it was termed at the time of the emancipation of the Jews just after the French Revolution) is a permanent reminder of the essential difference between Jews and 'natural' Frenchmen and women in the first place: the former will always be 'acculturated' (and hence duplicitous, mimics) compared to the latter, for whom culture and mores do not have to be acquired but are as much a part of their make-up as their very own skin. Trigano (1985, p. 253) puts it thus:

> At the dawn of modern France, a process was thus set in motion that eventually led to the collectivization of the Jews – despite the fact that such a phenomenon was ruled out by the logic of the one and indivisible Republic. This irrepressible tendency of the republican system to turn the Jews into the very entity that the system forbade them to become could be likened to the psychoanalytic logic of the return of the repressed.

Though Trigano's thesis concerns the situation of the Jew under conditions of modernity, it could be generalized to explain a fundamental paradox concerning the French Republican model of

the nation and the question of cultural/racial difference (cf. Wilder 2005, p. 18). Trigano's use of the psychoanalytic notion of the 'return of the repressed' elucidates the way in which the disavowal of difference on the conscious level is premised on the fetishization of difference on an unconscious level (Bellamy 1997). The splitting and Manichaean boundary-drawing at the heart of this Enlightenment model – dependent on the by-now familiar binary oppositions between universalism and particularism, assimilation and difference, citizen and subject, civilization and barbarity, secularism and faith, public and private, individual and collectivity, and so on – ensures that any ambivalence remains firmly repressed and displaced. On the other hand, the victims of this double-bind, whose difference is both denied and fetishized at the same time, are fully immersed in this modern ambivalence (Bauman 1991). Jean-Paul Sartre's classic exposé of the situation of the Jew in his 1946 text *Réflexions sur la question juive* (trans. as *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Sartre 1948), though flawed in many ways (see Galster ed. 2005), is still a powerful reminder of the trap for the Jew set by the universalist democrat who offers the Jew an invitation to join humanity on the condition that he erases the stigma of his Jewishness (see also Arendt 1962, pp. 56–68). Frantz Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* (trans. as *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon 1986), indebted in great part to Sartre's text, reveals the same trick played on the Black in the colonial context and unmasks the objectifying, racializing, essentializing and dehumanizing gaze at the heart of French universalism. In his preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sartre describes this as 'a racist humanism since the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters' (Sartre 1966, p. 22). The Republic does not recognize race and yet, through a process of disavowal, fetishization and projection, politicizes and racializes self and other in a most profound way so that the other becomes 'the repositary of (our) repressed fantasies' (Fuss 1999, p. 295). The problem with contemporary debates in republican France, even after decades of postcolonial and post-modern questioning of western universalism, is that the pillars of this fantasy are still firmly in place.

If Trigano is correct that the above process is an 'irrepressible tendency of the republican system', the lesson of republican history is that it is a tendency that is still largely unacknowledged. 'Race' was not banished with the call for equality and liberty (as many republicans would have us believe) but, from the outset, was built into the very fabric of the Republican nation and returns in distorted form today, particularly in debates on immigration, headscarves, the suburbs ('*la banlieue*'), national identity and so on. In her remarkable post-war work on *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt makes what appears to be an exaggerated claim that 'the

representatives of the great nations knew only too well that minorities within nation-states must sooner or later be either assimilated or liquidated' (Arendt 1962, p. 273). The progressive nationalization of the home community during the second part of the nineteenth century, and especially the legalization of the boundaries of the nation in relation to those who were subsequently defined as stateless and illegal people, did not in itself signal the onset of totalitarianism. However, by highlighting the accelerating racialization of the nation from the end of the nineteenth century, Arendt's argument demonstrates that, rather than being a formation totally alien to parliamentary regimes, totalitarianism was instead an offshoot of incipient tendencies within the nation-state, 'perplexities', as Arendt says, which even date back to the Rights of Man, where the human (universal) and the national were already confused (Arendt 1962, pp. 290–302; see Noiriel 1988 and Silverman 1992).[2] Ruling in the name of a sovereign people, hence leaving unprotected those who are deemed outside the boundaries of the nation, was not simply the invention of totalitarian rulers guided by the principle of race but profoundly inscribed within the nation-state of the nineteenth century.[3]

Arendt demystifies and demythologizes 'race' and shows how it emerges within, not outside, the structures of the parliamentary nation-state. Yet conventional wisdom in France (and often in Britain as well) on models of the nation presents an opposition between the ethnic or racial model and the political or contractual model, which is often portrayed as the same opposition between the republican universalism of the French Enlightenment and the ethnic or racial particularism of German romanticism based on the concept of the 'volk' (in France, see especially Finkielkraut 1987). However, the process of cultural homogeneity enforced through the institutions of the nation-state in the latter part of the nineteenth century could breed imagined communities or, in the words of Etienne Balibar, 'fictive ethnicities' every bit as exclusive as those movements founded on more overtly racial models of the nation. Arendt's analysis shows how the political model and the ethnic/racial model of the nation are not opposites but profoundly imbricated (Silverman 1992, pp. 19–27; Silverstein 2004, p. 20). Using the psychoanalytic terms above, the proclaimed race-free depiction of (French) Enlightenment universalism is premised on a disavowal of its own fetishized racial ambivalence and projection of it on to the (German) romantic tradition of race.

Though largely unacknowledged, this particular paradox of French republicanism has received a degree of critical attention in recent years. Etienne Balibar has consistently highlighted the historical articulations rather than oppositions between race and nation (see especially his contributions in Balibar and Wallerstein 1988) while Jean-Loup Amselle notes that 'at the heart of republican assimilation

(. . .) lies a raciological principle' (Amselle 2001, pp. 13–14). Yet, as Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall rightly point out, '(m)any scholars in France have been curiously resistant to any discussion of race as a factor in national life' (Peabody and Stovall 2003, p. 5). There has been even more resistance to any discussion of similar connections between the Republic and Empire. Fanon is hardly discussed in France (and when he is, 'the readings are negative', Macey 2000, p. 21). Yet his indictment of a Manichaean racialized order at the heart of French universalism has lost none of its persuasive force. In that same post-war moment, Arendt's work too analyses the connections between Empire-building outside Europe and racial politics inside Europe. The power of the republican myth has meant that France has been slow to re-evaluate these connections, so that in their ground-breaking work on this issue, Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard and Françoise Vergès can justifiably claim that 'the centrality of a racial division, of imaginary frontiers of the nation which are articulated with (invented) racial frontiers is simply not questioned' (2005, p. 95). They demonstrate how, in the context of the colonies, 'the inequality of races' and 'republican principles' are not at all incompatible: the link is simply disguised by what they call 'the double discourse of republican law' (p. 98) (and what Patrick Weil, playing with Michel Foucault's title *Les Mots et les choses*, has described as 'the confusion between the words of the law and the thing-ness of lived experience', Weil 2002, p. 275; see also Cooper and Stoler eds, 1997).

Unveiling the paradoxes of the republican model ('its untheorized and repressed aspects', Bancel, Blanchard and Vergès 2005, p. i) is not simply a question of pointing up contradictions or revealing hypocrisy, as, for example, the republican use of an egalitarian rhetoric at home while racializing and subjugating others in the colonies, the use of ethnic criteria in a supposedly 'race-free' immigration policy and theories of a 'threshold of tolerance' in a supposedly 'race-free' housing policy, and so on. This suggests two opposing practices brought together in contradictory fashion, and also a conscious and instrumentalist exploitation of racial categories behind the façade of a race-free republic. But as Gary Wilder rightly points out in his excellent book on France and Empire, the republican nation-state and colonial ambitions are part of the *same* process (which he terms 'the imperial nation-state'): 'a (cultural) racism that was simultaneously universalizing and particularizing (. . .) operate(d) within rather than against a republican framework' (Wilder 2005, p. 143).[4] In his recent study of the Algerian War, Todd Shepard makes a similar point: the (fictional) rewriting of decolonization by French officials at the moment of Algerian independence in 1962 as the logical outcome of colonialism and of France's historic mission towards progress removes blame from the French Republic and, conveniently, 'avoid(s) grappling

with questions of "racial" or "ethnic" difference, or with racism' (Shepard 2006, 7–8). These studies show how Republicanism speaks with two tongues at the same time, the second one often operating at the unconscious level through the discourse on the nation. Constructed on the building-blocks of universalism, '*laicité*', citizenship and assimilation, the republican model disavows its own role in racializing self and other and, through this Enlightenment sleight of hand, presents itself as the neutral opponent of all particular identities in the public sphere. Unveiling the historical foundations of the republican model may allow us to reinterpret contemporary debates on signs of cultural difference.

Visible differences

As all republicans know, a major function of the French state is to preserve the public sphere as a space of uniformity, neutrality and equality, consigning differences to the private sphere. The Republic therefore operates on a colour-blind basis. As Nordmann and Vidal point out, the French state has traditionally practised 'a policy of invisibility' (2004, p. 11). However, if the presence of race within the structures of the Republic has been conjured away, as I have suggested above, then this 'policy of invisibility' needs to be reassessed. Paul Gilroy observes that '(w)hen it comes to the visualization of discrete racial groups, a great deal of fine-tuning has been required' (2000, p. 42). In his essay on 'Racism and Culture', Fanon calls the subterfuge of race in liberal discourse 'a verbal mystification' (1970, p. 47). The very fact that beards, headscarves and so on can provoke a national crisis may be symptomatic of the return of the repressed of this 'fine-tuning' and 'verbal mystification' in contemporary France.

The unconscious effects of the republican model, as outlined by Trigano regarding the Jew or Bancel *et al.* regarding colonialism, are paradoxically an accentuation of the perception of difference rather than making differences invisible. By disavowing the other's difference while at the same time fetishizing it through racialization or exoticization (thus declaring implicitly that you can and you cannot be like us, you are both same and different at one and the same time), the republican model politicizes difference while proclaiming the opposite. And the more the state attempts to police the boundaries between public (universalist) and private (particularist) spheres, the sharper the public perception of difference becomes. As Zygmunt Bauman says (in Foucauldian manner):

> *The rule precedes reality*. Legislation precedes the ontology of the human world. The law is a design, a blueprint for a clearly circumscribed, legibly marked, mapped and signposted habitat. It

> is the law that brings lawlessness into being by drawing the line dividing the inside from the outside. (2004, p. 31; emphasis in original)

Laws of uniformity politicize, and often pathologize, what might not have been political signs beforehand. Consequently, in a climate of boundary-policing, headscarves and beards can be instantly politicized whatever their initial intention. The ultimate paradox of the republican model is therefore that it politicizes certain differences (considered unacceptable in the public sphere) while depoliticizing others (considered 'neutral' and 'value-free') and then turns this process on its head by maintaining that it is those who insist on flaunting their differences in the public sphere who are politicizing and endangering the neutrality of that space.

If this is accurate then the ways in which French republicans habitually demonize the American and British model for institutionalizing differences could be reinterpreted as the disavowed ambivalence over racialized difference, inherent in the republican system, projected on to a 'foreign' system which explicitly recognizes difference. If the disavowal and projection of race on to the German romantic tradition characterized the modern era, the postmodern era swaps the demon of the 'volksgeist' for that of the 'Anglo-Saxon' tradition of multiculturalism (Finkielkraut 1987). Now the republican fear is social division according to community or ethnic attachment, the development of 'American-style' ghettos, segregation and even soft forms of apartheid. Françoise Gaspard and Farhad Khosrokhavar define this fear as 'the fragmentation of French society into religious or ethnic "communities", closed in on themselves and potentially antagonistic and consequently a threat to national cohesion' (1995, p. 211).

Yet any cursory glance at immigration policy and social processes in France since 1945 reveals that what is projected as an 'Anglo-Saxon' disease is, in reality, profoundly inscribed in the French social and national landscape, first in the form of '*bidonvilles*' (shanty towns) outside the major cities, then in the suburbs of those same cities, in which an ethnic or religious underclass has become divided from mainstream French society. Forms of racialized segregation are not absent from French national life but the role of race in social stratification is, once again, rarely acknowledged.[5] Consequently, where racialization is a *de facto* part of everyday life, no effective policy or practice can be put in place to address the situation because, *de jure*, racial categories are profoundly disavowed. At its worst, the Republican model creates the beast but dare not speak its name.

In the light of the above, we might reconsider whether differences are more visible in a more pluralist and multicultural public sphere, like that of Britain, or in a more rigidly uniform public sphere like that

of France. Although it would seem to be logical that pluralism recognizes differences, while the insistence on uniformity suppresses differences, it could actually be the case that differences are rendered more, not less, visible in homogenising states. In other words, the more the state insists on uniformity and the neutrality of the public sphere, paradoxically the more it renders visible the very differences it wishes to erase; the more it insists on invisibility, the more it constructs the visibility of particular differences. At a time when racism focuses especially on the surface signs of cultural difference (headscarves, beards, odours, synagogues, gravestones and so on) – in the words of Etienne Balibar, a 'racism without races' (Balibar and Wallerstein 1988, pp. 32–3; see also Taguieff 1995) – one has to question the role of the republican state in fostering a climate in which signs of difference are stigmatized and outlawed.

Paradoxically, then, France's republican-inspired boundary-policing approach to cultural difference in the public sphere arguably produces a more profound fetishization and racialization of expressions of difference and cultural identity today than those states in which race is institutionalized. The explosion of sociological literature on identity in recent years has highlighted the ways in which ethnic and cultural signs are frequently manipulated today not as markers of racial belonging but as symbolic markers of identity (Maffesoli 1988). These signs may be fleeting proclamations of a shifting identity rather than organic manifestations of an essential self and a homogeneous community. By attaching monolithic political motives to what might be a playful postmodern approach to identity and ethnicity (even a fashion statement), the French state is seriously misreading contemporary urban youth culture and contributing to its racialization. By seeing in every headscarf or beard a potential threat to secularized, western civilisation, French republicans are often unable to see a more complex picture in which the playful and symbolic deployment of cultural/ethnic signs for some, as a fundamental part of what Said Bouamama has called the 'contemporary need for identity' (2004, p. 42), coexists with the need by others to root those signs in a cultural tradition. The desire for difference and a fear of ceaseless difference are the twin markers today of an age of rootlessness in which signs are less and less bound organically to a community and increasingly part of the individual drama of recognition (Silverman 1999).

Furthermore, the boundary-policing approach to the visibility of cultural difference is also a distraction from other threats. The energy, passion and resources deployed to regulate the question of visibility are in inverse proportion to the ability to control the real forces which determine lives today. As Zygmunt Bauman points out, these are global and are largely outside the control of any national law:

> Uncertainty and anguish born of uncertainty are globalization's staple products. State powers can do next to nothing to placate, let alone quash uncertainty. The most they can do is to refocus it on objects within reach; shift it from the objects they can do nothing about to those they can at least make a show of being able to handle and control. Refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants – the waste products of globalization – fit the bill perfectly. (2004, p. 66)

The accompanying paradox is that France has become more intent on drawing boundaries and reinforcing punitive rules for failure to conform at the very time that boundaries have broken down under the weight of new global flows of commodities, communications and cultures (although France is by no means alone in this). Regulation at home goes hand in hand with deregulation in the international arena. Having lost its historical mission to forge a common culture (which it pursued in messianic fashion, largely through the developing institutions of the nation-state in the latter part of the nineteenth century), France can hardly regiment its population today in the same way as in the past and indulge in the same cultural crusade. The regulation of cultural difference in the public sphere is really a symbolic, and largely superfluous, side-show concealing far more serious problems about the French nation-state in a postmodern and postcolonial era.

Republican memory

It took France over twenty-five years to revise myths of collaboration and resistance during the war and equally as long to re-open the account on the Algerian war of independence (even for it to be named a 'war'; see Stora 1991 and House and MacMaster 2006) The process of 'decolonizing mentalities' (Henri Giordan cited in Lebovics 2004, p. 125) is not always easy. However, the fact that France has been able to re-visit its national stories about the past at least demonstrates an ability to confront difficult truths, no matter how divisive this can be. Perhaps the confrontation with some uncomfortable truths about the republican model is the final (and most difficult?) confrontation of them all as part of France's ongoing 'duty of memory' (Bancel, Blanchard and Vergès 2005, p. ii).

Alain Touraine warns of the dangers of not doing this:

> those who adopt a defensive position lose all possibility of creating a new space for freedom. In the name of the Republic, they limit the realm of democracy; in the name of traditional norms, they become incapable of recognising new rights, of creating new spaces for freedom and even of giving a new meaning to the national space (2001, p. 89–90).[6]

Touraine is suggesting that it is precisely an ossified and mythologized version of the Republic that stands in the way of a new democratic politics. To present equality and difference, equality and freedom, integration and multiculturalism as opposites – a familiar weapon in the republican armoury for attacking the rise of democratic freedoms based on identity and community – is both a misleading and outdated dichotomy.[7] Deeply rooted in the Enlightenment binary opposition between universalism and particularism, this memory of the Republic continues to disavow its own ambivalence around race and its own part in the construction of visible differences.[8]

The danger of not confronting the connections and echoes between the Republic and its others is that (particular) cultural identities will continue to be considered antithetical to national belonging, national identity and (most seriously of all) national security. This plays into the hands of racist organizations like the *Front National* whose political capital derives more or less exclusively from the implicit assumption that national belonging depends on cultural belonging. As the journalist Gary Younge points out, traditional republican rhetoric offers a loaded choice to minorities – 'convert or be damned': 'Faced with a nation where one-fifth of the electorate vote fascist and the state wants your headscarf, some young French Muslims may well end up in the arms of a misogynous imam' (the *Guardian*, 15th November 2004). Stigmatizing differences according to the principles of the secular Left at the time of the Dreyfus Affair today risks alienating the very people to whom any new democratic project must base its appeal.

Unreconstructed republican memory rests on an anachronistic vision of social life, dependent on boundaries constructed in the modern era which, in an age of deterritorialized and hybridized identities, are shown to be wanting. However, as is frequently the case, rhetorical principles and doctrinaire official discourse based on a mythologized past are out of step with realities on the ground. As the French sociologist François Dubet says in relation to the school, 'practices are more flexible and moderated than principles and those who criticize the rigours of a national republican universalism are referring more to Jules Ferry than the practices of teachers themselves' (2001, p. 103). Republicanism is not a monolithic block and contemporary actors subvert the rigidity of outmoded structures in all sorts of ways (Silverstein 2004). Perhaps it is now time for the outworn rhetoric and mythologized national memories to catch up with the more nuanced practice.

The first chapter of Frantz Fanon's book on the Algerian war of independence, *A Dying Colonialism*, is entitled 'Algeria unveiled'. It explores the psycho-sexual drives which propel the male colonizer's desire to see beyond the Algerian woman's veil. Fanon attempts to

unveil the colonizing look of the French Republic (and its accompanying fantasies) in *its* attempt to unveil Algeria, just as Edward Said would do two decades later in his pioneering work on Orientalism. 'Decolonizing mentalities', central to the projects of Fanon and Said, has still not run its course. A more complete unveiling of the Republic is surely necessary if a constructive politics is to emerge, if only to avoid the absurdity of state surveillance of the length of beards or the bits of cloth people wear on their head.

Notes

1. For earlier debates on the question, see Silverman 1992 and Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995. Of the voluminous works on the wider questions of the French republic, '*laicité*' and Islam, see Gauchet 1998 ; Cesari 1998 ; Kaltenbach and Tribalat 2002 and Roy 2005.
2. Arendt notes '(e)ven the emergence of totalitarian governments is a phenomenon within, not outside, our civilization' (Arendt 1962, p. 302).
3. For an interesting analysis of how Michel Foucault conceives the role of race in the construction of a normalized European bourgeois order, see Stoler 1995.
4. Wilder is particularly critical of Alice Conklin's approach to French Third Republic colonialism in her book *A Mission to Civilize* (Conklin 1997) 'because Conklin conflates republicanism with universalism, which is assumed to be inherently opposed to colonial racism (reduced to particularism). She does not recognize the ways in which contradictions between universality and particularity were internal to republican, colonial, and racial discourses and practices' (Wilder 2005, p. 7).
5. This is a most sensitive debate in France. French analyses of the 'problems of the suburbs' have classically tended to highlight differences of class rather than race and dismissed the comparison between French suburbs and American-style ghettos as being the misguided analysis of race-obsessed 'anglo-saxon' social theorists. Loic Wacquant, for example, categorically refutes the comparison between the French 'red belt' and the American 'black belt' in cities (see for example Wacquant 2006. See also the article 'Les nouveaux parias de la république' by Stéphane Béaud and Gérard Noiriel, *Le Monde*, 20 February 2004). The tendency to downplay race as a factor in social segregation could be seen as another example of the denial of race in the republican sphere. (For a corrective to this argument and an historical account of the complex interplay between race and class in the suburbs of Paris, see Stovall 2003.) However, as I argue above, even the comparison itself between French and American 'ghettos' frequently achieves the same goal, as the creation of ethnic ghettos in France is explained as a post-war phenomenon which accompanies the arrival of non-European immigrants and racializes the race-free republican model of assimilation hitherto in place.
6. It should, however, be noted that, during the more recent debate on the headscarf, Touraine was opposed to extending democratic rights in breach of the law on secularism in schools, believing that the law had helped to stem the rising tide of fundamentalism. For a more complete outline of his position, see Renaut and Touraine 2005.
7. See for example the debate in the late 1980s (but which persists today) on republicanism versus democracy, expressed (amongst others) by Régis Debray (1989) and Alain Finkielkraut (1987). For a slightly more nuanced perspective by Debray on the more recent discussion of headscarves and secularism, see his contribution to the debate, as member of the government commission set up to look into the question under the presidency of Bernard Stasi, in Debray 2004. The commission's findings were published as *Laicité et République* (La Documentation française, 2004).

8. In his many analyses of race and racism, Pierre-André Taguieff habitually presents universalism and particularism, assimilation and difference as the 'two logics' of racism rather than seeing more complex interconnections between them. The psychoanalyst Daniel Sibony, on the other hand, suggests that the two logics are in fact one in that both are concerned with 'fixing' the other (Sibony 1997, p. 36).

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