

munity 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).³ 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.

[³ 'The nation form', in É. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class* (London: Verso, 1991), 96–100.]

ROGERS BRUBAKER

28 Civic and Ethnic Nations in France and Germany

For two centuries, locked together in a fateful position at the center of state- and nation-building in Europe, France and Germany have been constructing, elaborating, and furnishing to other states distinctive, even antagonistic models of nationhood and national self-understanding. In the French tradition, the nation has been conceived in relation to the institutional and territorial frame of the state. Revolutionary and Republican definitions of nationhood and citizenship—unitarist, universalist, and secular—reinforced what was already in the ancien régime an essentially political understanding of nationhood. Yet while French nationhood is constituted by political unity,

it is centrally expressed in the striving for cultural unity. Political inclusion has entailed cultural assimilation, for regional cultural minorities and immigrants alike.

If the French understanding of nationhood has been state-centered and assimilationist, the German understanding has been *Volk*-centered and differentialist. Since national feeling developed before the nation-state, the German idea of the nation was not originally political, nor was it linked to the abstract idea of citizenship. This prepolitical German nation, this nation in search of a state, was conceived not as the bearer of universal political values, but as an organic cultural, linguistic, or racial community—as an irreducibly particular *Volksgeist*. On this understanding, nationhood is an ethnocultural, not a political fact. [...]

The politics of citizenship *vis-à-vis* immigrants is similar in form in France and Germany but sharply different in content. In both cases it pivots on national self-understanding, not on state or group interests. But the prevailing elite self-understandings are very different.¹ The French understand their nation as the creation of their state, the Germans their nation as the basis of their state. There is a strong assimilationist strand in the prevailing French self-understanding that is lacking in the prevailing German self-understanding. France is not a classical country of immigration, but it is a classical country, perhaps the classical country, of assimilation.² And schemes of self-understanding referring originally to the assimilation of the French periphery by the Parisian center have been easily and in a sense automatically and unconsciously transferred to the assimilation of immigrants.³ In the last two decades both the desirability and the possibility of assimilating immigrants have been contested, as has the legitimacy of the Jacobin-Republican model of internal assimilation. Yet the prevailing elite understanding of nationhood, while contested, remains more assimilationist in France than in Germany. As a result, the idea of North African immigrants being or becoming French remains much more plausible and natural than the idea of Turkish immigrants being or becoming German.

Despite similar immigrant populations and immigration policies, French and German citizenship policies *vis-à-vis* immigrants remain sharply opposed. In part, this reflects the absence of compelling state or group interests in altering definitions of the citizenry. But it also reflects the fact that existing definitions of the citizenry—expansively combining *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* in France, restrictively reflecting pure *jus sanguinis* in Germany—embody and express deeply rooted national self-understandings, more state-centered and assimilationist in France, more ethnocultural in Germany. This affinity between definitions of citizenship and conceptions of nationhood makes it difficult to change the former in fundamental ways. In France, the center-right government headed by Jacques Chirac was unable, in 1986–87, to adopt even a mildly restrictive reform of citizenship law, in part because its

elite national self-understanding. In Germany, naturalization policies were liberalized in 1990. But there is no chance that the French system of *jus soli* will be adopted; the automatic transformation of immigrants into citizens remains unthinkable in Germany. And liberalized naturalization rules alone will do little to further the civic incorporation of immigrants. Immigrants as well as Germans continue to associate the legal fact of naturalization with the social and cultural fact of assimilation, yet neither German political culture in general nor the specific social, political, and cultural context of the postwar immigration is favorable to assimilation. Add to this the fact that dual citizenship is permitted only in exceptional cases, and it seems likely that naturalization rates will remain quite low, and that the citizenship status and chances of immigrants in France and Germany will continue to diverge.

I should emphasize that I am not trying to account for the fine details of particular policy outcomes. Clearly these depend on a host of factors unrelated to patterns of national self-understanding. The policymaking process is highly contingent. Yet if elite understandings of nationhood have little bearing on the timing or detailed content of legislative change, they do help explain the otherwise puzzling persistence of broadly different ways of defining the citizenry. They limit the universe of debate and make a fundamental restructuring of citizenship improbable.

It might be objected that the appeal to elite understandings of nationhood is unnecessary. In the absence of pressing interests in citizenship law reform, on this argument, differences would persist out of mere inertia. This ignores the fact that there are pressures for convergence, although these do not arise in the first instance from state or group interests. In Germany, the anomaly of settlement without citizenship has generated widespread demands, endorsed even by the present center-right government, for easier access to citizenship. In France, the automatic attribution of citizenship to immigrants who, nationalists argued, were neither assimilated nor assimilable, generated a strong campaign on the right for a more restrictive citizenship law. Mere inertia explains nothing.

But suppose the argument from inertia were reformulated. French and German definitions of the citizenry, it might be argued, are resistant to fundamental modification not because they are consonant with political and cultural traditions, but simply because they are *legal* traditions. The expansive French combination of *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli* was established a century ago; its roots extend back to the Revolution and even to the ancien régime. And German states—Prussia and other states before unification, Imperial Germany, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, and both German states after 1949—have relied exclusively on *jus sanguinis* ever since citizenship law was first codified in the early nineteenth century. The citizenship law of both countries has been modified in detail on numerous occasions over the years.

system of pure *jus sanguinis* in Germany—have long been fixed. They have taken on the inertial weight and normative dignity of tradition. This inertial force is only increased by the gravity and symbolic centrality of citizenship. States do not tinker with the basic principles of citizenship law as they might with the fine print of the tax code. The appeal to self-understanding, on this argument, is unnecessary. France and Germany continue to define their citizenries in fundamentally different ways because they have been doing so for more than a century.

This is more satisfactory than the crude argument from inertia. But tradition can not be equated with duration. The longevity of a practice alone does not establish its 'traditional' quality. Tradition is a constructed, not a purely objective property.⁴ The appeal to tradition is an elementary form of political rhetoric. To present a policy or practice as traditional can contribute to its preservation by investing it with normative dignity and thereby raising the political cost of challenging it. Tradition is therefore a contested category. Policies and practices are the objects of representational struggles that seek to deem them 'traditional' or to deny them this dignity—instances of the general and perpetual struggle over the representation and characterization of the social world.⁵ The appeal to tradition that was central to the French mobilization against the attempt to curb *jus soli* was not an appeal to endurance as such. It was an appeal to legitimate endurance, to the endurance of something deserving to endure, to an enduring consonance between a legal formula and a political-cultural self-understanding. Thus opponents of citizenship law reform characterized *jus soli* as a specifically *Republican* tradition, while proponents of the reform contested this characterization, arguing that *jus soli* reflected not Republican principles but the military and demographic needs of the state. In Germany too appeals to tradition invoked not simply the endurance of a legal form but rather the enduring congruence between a legal form (*jus sanguinis*) and a principle of political-cultural self-understanding (that Germany is not a country of immigration).

Endurance matters, but it is not alone decisive. Long-standing practices do have normative force, but only when the practices have some material or symbolic value or meaning that cannot be reduced to, although it may be strengthened by, their perdurance. The long-standing French and German definitions of the citizenry have indeed assumed the inertial weight and normative dignity of tradition. But this does not mean that self-understandings are irrelevant. If *jus soli* in France and *jus sanguinis* in Germany are construed and defended as traditions, this is not simply because of their endurance, but also because they embody and express deeply rooted habits of national self-understanding. They are understood and defended as legal traditions because of their consonance with political and cultural traditions. It is this consonance that gives their long endurance its normative force.

the honour of creating the aesthetic and spiritual values that make life worthwhile.⁵⁰

For Lévi-Strauss, then, the essence of being human lies in our inequality. Hence 'the struggle against all forms of discrimination' must be necessarily detrimental to humankind since it helps destroy 'the aesthetic and spiritual values that make life worthwhile'. For the Enlightenment *philosophes* human creativity arose out of human sociability. Human beings were uniquely creative because they were uniquely capable of co-operating in a conscious manner, because the essence of humanity was the desire to overcome differences. In Lévi-Strauss's anthropologist philosophy, co-operation is itself a danger to humanity: 'In order to progress, men must collaborate; and in the course of this collaboration they see a gradual pooling of their contributions whose initial diversity was precisely what made their contributions fecund and necessary.'⁵¹

This paradoxical relationship between progress and regression is exactly the same as that which had troubled Gobineau. For Gobineau, 'civilisation' arose through conquest and hence through racial mixture: 'Thus mixed, mixed everywhere, always mixed, there is the clearest, most assured, most durable work of the great societies and powerful civilisations, the work that, unquestionably, lives after them.' But intermixing begat the degeneration of the race: 'Peoples only degenerate as a result of, and in proportion to, the intermixings they undergo.' Such intermixing meant that a 'people no longer possesses the intrinsic value it once had, because it no longer has in its veins the same blood, for successive alloys have gradually modified its values.'⁵²

From the standpoint of civilisation, then, intermixture provided the fuel for advancement. What made the 'white race' the most civilised was its ability to assimilate other peoples and races: 'The essentially civilising tendencies of this elite race have continually driven it to mix with other peoples.'⁵³ From the standpoint of the race, however, intermixing was fatal because it caused racial degeneration and the creation of a 'mongrel race'.

The result, in Gobineau's eyes, is what Tzvetan Todorov calls 'a tragic paradox' for humanity: 'As soon as society is strong enough it tends to subjugate others; but as soon as it subjugates others its own identity is threatened, and it loses its strength'.⁵⁴ If we replace in Gobineau's reasoning the concept of race with that of culture, we can see that Lévi-Strauss's argument expresses the same paradox for humanity: progress requires what Lévi-Strauss calls a 'coalition' of cultures. But contact between different cultures weakens them, often fatally.

Lévi-Strauss's answer is to encourage the creation of barriers between different human groups to minimise the impact of cultural mongrelisation. The ideal situation, he argues, would be where 'communication had become adequate for mutual stimulation by remote partners, yet

was not so frequent or so rapid as to endanger the indispensable obstacles between individuals and groups or to reduce them to the point where overly facile exchanges might equalise and nullify their diversity'.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, '[t]he upheavals unleashed by an expanding industrial civilisation, and the rising speed of transportation and communication, have knocked down these barriers'.⁵⁶ Lévi-Strauss therefore calls on 'international institutions' to see the 'necessity of preserving the diversity of cultures in a world threatened by monotony and uniformity'.⁵⁷

For Lévi-Strauss, then, different cultures and peoples should only communicate if there was no danger of one contaminating the other. Peoples and cultures should, as far as possible, remain where they 'belong'. Every culture needs to ensure that there are not too many foreign elements undermining its distinctive cultural identity. 'One might wonder about the political opportuneness of this doctrine', Todorov observes, 'in an era when the nations of Western Europe are seeking to protect themselves against human invasions originating in the Third World'.⁵⁸ This is a theme I shall pick up again in the next chapter.

In the work of Lévi-Strauss we can not only see articulated the various themes of the discourse of culture but also their consequences being drawn out. We can see clearly the relationship between the discourse of culture and the discourse of race and the anthropologist belief that animates both. We can see how the rejection of universalism is linked to a despair about social progress. We can see, too, how the advocacy of cultural particularism leads to support for social inequality.

THE MEANING OF MULTICULTURALISM

The discourse of culture provided in the postwar era a new language for the discussion of social differences and a new basis for considerations of social policy. Cultural pluralism, value relativism, mutual tolerance – these became the fundamentals of the postwar liberal approach to social and cultural differences. When, in 1963, US president John F. Kennedy told his audience that 'if we cannot end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity',⁵⁹ he was drawing upon the tradition of pragmatism and relativism that has informed much political discourse in the wake of the collapse of nineteenth-century positivism. When in 1968 the British home secretary Roy Jenkins announced that Britain had abandoned a policy of assimilation for immigrants, and instead had embarked on a policy of pluralism which he described as the promotion of 'cultural diversity, coupled with equal opportunity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance',⁶⁰ he was adopting a language familiar to anthropologists from Boas to Lévi-Strauss.

There are few beliefs more entrenched in the modern liberal imagination than that of the virtues of a 'multicultural' society. The degree to which the Bosnian city of Sarajevo has assumed symbolic significance in contemporary Western discourse expresses the measure of attachment to the principles of a multicultural, multiethnic community, which the city is said to embody. Just as in the thirties the struggle for Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War became symbolic of the defence of democracy against fascism, so the siege of Sarajevo has assumed a mythic status as a struggle between pluralism and barbarism. On the other hand there are few crimes which contemporary society regards as more monstrous than that of 'ethnic cleansing', the attempt to eliminate diversity and difference and to create an ethnically and culturally homogenous society. From Bosnia to Rwanda, 'the forcible expulsion of rival ethnic groups' has become the measure of the breakdown of civilised values.⁶¹

The idea of a plural or multicultural society is, however, a deeply ambiguous one. Just as the discourse of culture has recast the concept of race in a new form, so multiculturalism represents not a means to an equal society, but an alternative to one, where equality has given way to the toleration of difference, and indeed of inequality. From a racial viewpoint, economic, social and technological inequalities are the natural outcome of racial differences. From the standpoint of multiculturalism, on the other hand, differences are welcomed as expressions of cultural diversity. In the final analysis both philosophies attempt to impute rational meaning to inequality.

We may recall that Franz Boas had confronted the racist implications of nineteenth-century positivism by turning the Victorian evolutionary ladder on its side. Humanity, for Boas, was stratified vertically, not horizontally. This idea lies also at the heart of the concept of a 'plural society':

According to this tradition, what we are concerned with in the study of race relations ... are neither hierarchically arranged castes, nor classes in conflict, nor a system of roles arranged hierarchically according to their evaluation in terms of some set of ideal values [but] segments which cut across the strata, producing vertical rather than horizontal divisions within the society.⁶²

The concept of a plural society first emerged through the analysis of colonial societies. In a study of Indonesia and Burma, the anthropologist J. S. Furnivall wrote that 'the first thing that strikes the visitor is the medley of peoples - European, Chinese, Indian and native' that constitute the society. The different groups, Furnivall wrote, 'mix but do not combine'. Each group, 'holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its ideas and ways'. The result was 'a plural society, with

different sections of the society living side by side but separately within the same political unit.⁶³

The concept of a plural society proved attractive both to colonial administrators, grappling with the problem of imposing law and order on their territories, and to Western liberals keen to protect colonial subjects from the ravages of imperialism. Pluralism quickly moved from being a description of colonial society to an *explanation* for it. The inequalities of colonial society were rationalised as products of the different cultural outlooks and lifestyles of the various groups that constituted that society. For colonial administrators this provided a rationale for the policy of 'indirect rule', the maintenance of Western control through 'traditional' African or Asian institutions. For Western liberals it was an argument for preserving 'native' cultures and allowing them to follow their own path to modernity.

The pluralists adopted what we might call the *Star Trek* principle of cultural development. In that popular sci-fi series, Starfleet's 'Prime Directive' forbids the crew of the *Starship Enterprise* from interfering in any way in the development of any other cultures they might meet, each of whom must proceed on its own unique path. In particular our heroes are proscribed from imparting their superior knowledge to less-developed peoples, in case this should disrupt the normal functioning of that particular society. The same belief animated many early twentieth-century scholars and colonial administrators.

In 1926 the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures was established in London to research African societies and cultures and to devise policies for their preservation. In its five-year research plan published in 1932 the Institute feared that 'the interpenetration of African life by the ideas and economic forces of European civilisation' could lead to the 'complete disintegration' of African societies. The Institute aimed, therefore, to determine 'the right relations between the institutions of African society and alien systems of government, education and religion, in preserving what is vital in the former and eliminating unnecessary conflict between the latter and African tradition, custom and mentality'.⁶⁴ Like functionalists, and *Star Trek* scriptwriters, the Institute believed that every culture was adapted to its particular environment, and so primitive Africans had to be protected from the ravages of modern Western ideas.

In reality, however, the so-called 'African tradition, custom and mentality' were not relics from an ancient past but the products of the colonial epoch. Tribal units, village elders, ancient rituals - all were the fruits of the confrontation between the pre-existing African societies and colonial society. The people of Uganda, Aidan Southall notes, 'have been almost universally misrepresented as primeval tribes, each with their distinctive language, culture, sense of identity and clear-cut boundaries'.

However, Southall continues, 'There is no evidence that the peoples of Uganda - or for that matter the rest of Africa - could ever be so categorised, until the exigencies of colonial administration forced some of these qualities upon them'.⁶⁵ Wim van Binsbergen similarly observes that 'Modern central African tribes are not so much survivors from a pre-colonial past but largely colonial creations by colonial officers and African intellectuals'.⁶⁶ Throughout Africa, Terence Ranger has observed, 'customary law, customary land-rights, customary political structures and so on were in fact *all* invented by colonial codification'.⁶⁷ The aim of colonial policy, Frantz Fanon has observed, was not so much to destroy pre-existing cultural forms, as to mummify 'native' culture as a form frozen in time, and thereby to deny its creative character.

The setting up of the colonial system does not of itself bring about the death of the native culture. Historic observation reveals, on the contrary, that the aim sought is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture. This culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. Both present and mummified, it testifies against its members. It defines them without appeal... Thus we witness the setting up of archaic, inert institutions, functioning under the oppressor's supervision and patterned like a caricature of formerly fertile institutions.⁶⁸

The plural outlook ignored the dynamic interplay of the various groups making up colonial society, and instead represented the products of their mutual interaction as cultural forms created by autonomous segments of society, each supposedly following its own particular path in isolation.⁶⁹ The social and economic cleavages caused by colonial rule, and the limits on social development imposed by colonial policy, were reread as the fruits of such autonomous cultural development. Like racial theory, plural theory provided an apology for social inequalities, portraying them as the inevitable result of cultural differences.

In the interwar years the concept of a plural society was applied almost exclusively to colonial states. Certainly some anthropologists were inclined to see plural forms in Western nations. According to Furnivall, for example,

one finds a plural society in the French provinces of Canada, where two peoples are separated by race, language and religion, and an English lad, brought up in an English school, has no contact with French life, and in countries such as Ireland where, with little or no difference of race or language, the people are sharply divided in their religious allegiance.

He added that:

Even where there is no difference of creed or colour, a community may still have a plural character, as in Western Canada, where people of different racial origin tend to live in distinct settlements and, for example, a North European cannot find work on the railway, because this is reserved for Dagoes or 'Wops'.⁷⁰

In America, Horace Kallen coined the term 'cultural pluralism' to describe the way that different immigrants groups had integrated into American society while also maintaining their particularist identity.⁷¹ Such arguments, however, had little broader impact. Indeed, the idea of a plural society was developed in contrast to the concept of the homogeneous nation-state, regarded as characteristic of Western Europe. Kallen was an isolated figure in the interwar years, while Furnivall himself considered 'typically' plural societies to be 'tropical dependencies where the rulers and the ruled are of different races'.⁷²

In the years following the Second World War, however, the concept of a plural society became applied in an increasingly promiscuous way to Western societies as 'the notion of pluralism... passed into the anthropologists' *lingua franca* (or pidgin?) as a loose and apparently useful descriptive term for labelling all multi-ethnic societies'.⁷³ Not just anthropological but sociological and political discourse now appropriated the concept of a plural society. A currently popular sociological textbook tells us that 'virtually all modern societies are pluralistic to some extent',⁷⁴ while few politicians today would dissent from the view that multiculturalism is a 'good thing'.

The impact of mass immigration and the political context in which this immigration took place combined to engineer this transformation. Eleven million foreign workers came to Europe in the fifties and sixties, encouraged by the economic boom. One in seven of all manual workers in Britain and West Germany today originally entered as immigrants. In France and Belgium a quarter of the industrial workforce is of foreign origin. Switzerland's foreign population rose from 90 000 in 1950 to over one million (16 per cent of its population) by 1973.⁷⁵

The political context in which this mass immigration occurred was an ambiguous one. On the one hand, immigrants were seen as 'different' or alien, a view that, as we saw in Chapter 1, was promoted by the dominant 'race relations' paradigm. The racialisation of immigration heightened the sense of the heterogeneity of society. On the other hand, in the liberal climate of the postwar years, racial arguments could not be openly expressed. Pluralism provided a language through which to understand social differences without having to refer to the discredited discourse of race. It provided both a sense of continuity with prewar

racial discourse and a means of asserting the aversion to racism that exemplified the postwar years.

Key to such an ambiguous use of pluralism has been the presentation of social differences in terms neither of culture nor of race but of *ethnicity*. 'Ethnicity' is a peculiarly postwar word. The Oxford English Dictionary gives a first recorded usage in 1953. In fact the American Chicago school of social anthropologists had used the term in the forties, but Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, writing in the mid-seventies, could still claim that 'ethnicity seems to be a new term'.⁷⁶ Malcolm Chapman observes that both the terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' came into use in the postwar period as 'the discourse of race became very properly self-conscious about the employment of its central terms during the 1930s and 1940s'.⁷⁷

Huxley and Haddon first suggested that 'race' should be replaced by 'ethnic group' in their influential book, *We Europeans*. As we saw in Chapter 4, Huxley and Haddon were not so much opposed to the concept of racial differences as to its political uses, particularly by Nazi Germany. Introducing the term 'ethnic group' in place of 'race', they suggested, would remove the political connotations of racial difference, and allow social distinctions to be studied in a neutral, value-free fashion. In the postwar years ethnicity has indeed come to replace race as a politically acceptable means of describing social differences. In contemporary discourse, a 'plural' society is generally considered to be a 'multiethnic' one. As Anthony Giddens puts it, 'Plural societies are those in which there are several large ethnic groupings, involved in the same political and economic order but otherwise largely distinct from one another'.⁷⁸

Like race, ethnicity is a term that is used in a fairly promiscuous way, without there ever being a consensus as to its meaning, and there continue to be fierce debates among sociologists and anthropologists as to what exactly ethnicity is. However, there is a general sense that if race describes differences created by imputed biological distinctions, ethnicity refers to differences with regard to cultural distinctions. Sandra Wallman has noted that in ordinary discourse, the distinction between race and ethnicity is akin to the distinction between immutable and mutable differences:

The word 'race' is still used when the speaker wishes to indicate objective and immutable differences between human groups and individuals, ie it continues to denote difference that *seems to be* immutable. In the same popular language, ethnicity... implies a degree of choice and a possibility for change which 'race' precludes.⁷⁹

The same distinction between race and ethnicity is reproduced in academic and political discourse too. The anthropologist M. G. Smith, for

instance, distinguishes between 'race relations' and 'ethnic relations', 'reserving the first term for relations between peoples of differing racial stock and the second for relations between people of the same racial stock who feel themselves, and are felt by others, to differ ethnically by virtue of their differing descent and culture'. 'Unlike ethnic identity', Smith continues, 'racial identity and/or difference is immutable, manifest and *normally* unambiguous in multiracial societies and contexts'. By comparison, 'ethnicity is generally latent and situational in its assertion'.⁸⁰ John Rex, whose approach to the study of race relations is in contrast to that of Smith and who acknowledges that neither race nor ethnicity has any objective reality, nevertheless also uses the term 'ethnicity' to describe 'race relations situations' in which group differences are seen in terms of culture or behaviour rather than physical appearance.⁸¹ Milton Yinger delineates an ethnic group as being defined by three conditions:

[A] segment of a larger society is seen by others to be different in some combination of the following characteristics - language, religion, race and ancestral homeland with its related culture; the members also perceive themselves in that way; and they participate in shared activities built around their (real or mythical) common origin and culture.⁸²

Similarly, Giddens argues that 'ethnicity refers to cultural practices and outlooks that distinguish a given community of people':

Members of ethnic groups see themselves as culturally distinct from other groupings in a society, and are seen by those others to be so. Many different characteristics may serve to distinguish ethnic groups from one another, but the most usual are language, history or ancestry (real or imagined), religion, and styles of dress or adornment.⁸³

Both these definitions are tautological: an ethnic group is that which is defined as an ethnic group. But their very utility lies in their tautology. Defining ethnicity in this fashion allows us to divide humanity into discrete groups without feeling the taint of racial ideology. Ethnicity does away with objective, biological distinctions and instead introduces subjective, cultural differences. As Giddens puts it, 'Ethnic differences are *wholly learned*, a point which seems self-evident until we remember how often some such groups have been regarded as "born to rule" or, alternatively, have been seen as "unintelligent", innately lazy, and so forth'.⁸⁴ Ethnicity is defined through learned or cultural criteria and boundaries between ethnic groups are fluid. Yet in actual use, the concept of ethnicity is not so different from that of race. When, for instance,

Giddens gives examples of ethnic groups, he draws heavily on popular conceptions of racial difference:

Most modern societies include numerous different ethnic groups. In Britain, Irish, Asian, West Indian, Italian and Greek immigrants, among others, form ethnically distinct communities within a wider society. The United States is considerably more differentiated ethnically than Britain, and incorporates immigrant communities from all corners of the globe.⁸⁵

Ethnicity here seems to be defined through the status of being an immigrant and determined by differences of 'race' or nationality. The concept of ethnicity therefore allows Giddens to proclaim differences according to cultural practices that are wholly learned, while in practice using it to define social groups according to old-fashioned criteria of race or nationality. Yinger's argument that ethnicity allows us to distinguish between 'socially defined and biologically defined races'⁸⁶ shows how ethnicity provides a politically acceptable way of referring to imputed racial differences. As Malcolm Chapman notes, 'In many ways, "ethnicity" is "race" after an attempt to take the biology out'.⁸⁷

Indeed it is more than that, for ethnicity incorporates biological notions of race as another aspect of identity. Harold Abramson has argued that while 'race is the most salient ethnic factor, it is only one of the dimensions of the larger cultural and historical phenomenon of ethnicity'.⁸⁸ Or, as Sandra Wallman puts it, 'Once it is clear that ethnic relations follow on the social construction of difference, phenotype falls into place as one element in the repertoire of ethnic boundary markers'.⁸⁹

Ethnicity bridges the gap between racial and cultural definitions of social difference. The ambiguous relationship between race, culture and ethnicity within the pluralist framework can be seen in the seminal Swann report on British education, which spelt out the essential attributes of a pluralist society:

[A] multi-racial society such as ours would in fact function most effectively and harmoniously on the basis of a pluralism which enables, expects and encourages members of all ethnic groups, both minority and majority, to participate fully in shaping the society as a whole within a framework of commonly accepted values, practices and procedures, whilst also allowing and, where necessary, assisting the ethnic minority communities in maintaining their distinct ethnic identities within this common framework.⁹⁰

This passage is a remarkable hodgepodge of contradictions. Britain is a 'multi-racial society'. Its multiracial character is expressed through a

patchwork, not of races, but of 'ethnic groups'. Both the differences between ethnic groups, and their common integration into British society, is expressed through 'values, practices and procedures' – in other words through cultural norms. Ethnic groups, however, retain a homogeneous, essentialist character, each with its own 'distinct identity'. The passage reveals how ideas of race, ethnicity and culture all elide into the concept of multiculturalism. As in the discussion of pluralism in colonial society, the multiculturalist approach overestimates the homogeneity and autonomy of the various ethnic groups and underestimates the degree to which all groups are reciprocally implicated in the creation of cultural forms within a common framework of national political, social and economic institutions. The multicultural approach sees immigrant communities as somehow external to the nation. Thus the Swann Report regards the values of the various ethnic groups as distinct from 'British' values. Similarly, a discussion of French immigration considered immigrants to 'be torn between two cultural and social worlds' since 'they wish (as is only normal) to enter into the new world without losing their identity, to transform themselves whilst remaining faithful to themselves'.⁹¹ But as Maxim Silverman, who cites the quote, notes, 'it is difficult to see what "their identity" was before becoming split, or what is meant by "whilst remaining faithful to themselves"'.⁹²

The 'nation' and 'immigration', Silverman argues, 'are not opposites but part of a more complex whole'.⁹³ He adds that

Just as 'nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth' so too should it be recognised that the inherent destiny of minorities is also a myth. Their 'essence' and 'roots' are as dependent on a retrospective unity as are those of the nation. The frontiers (both geographical and metaphorical) defining the nation-state and minorities are produced at the same time and by the same process.⁹⁴

The tendency within multiculturalist discourse to portray ethnic groups or 'minorities' as external to the national body arises from the nature of the discourse. Pluralism developed in the postwar years not as a means to establish equality but as an accommodation to the persistence of inequality. As immigrants remained ghettoised, excluded from mainstream society, subject to discrimination and clinging to their old habits and lifestyles as a familiar anchor in a hostile world, so such differences became rationalised not as the negative product of racism or discrimination but as the positive result of multiculturalism.

with them in such a fashion that the main themes of my own thesis are clarified.

THE WEST AND ITS 'OTHERS'

'The world begins to be decolonised', Stuart Hall writes, at 'that moment when the unspoken discovered that they had a history which they could speak' and that they had 'languages other than the languages of the master'.⁹ The central argument in contemporary theories of difference is the idea that Enlightenment discourse, by establishing universal norms and by equating such norms with European societies and cultures, has ensured the silence of non-European peoples and cultures. 'Without significant exception', Edward Said has argued,

the universalising discourses of modern Europe and the United States assume the silence, willing or otherwise, of the non-European world. There is incorporation; there is inclusion; there is direct rule; there is coercion. But there is only infrequently an acknowledgement that the colonised people should be heard from, their ideas known.¹⁰

Western science and philosophy, such critics believe, have established a form of knowledge whereby non-Western societies and cultures are represented solely in terms of the categories of Western thought, and in which Western society acts as a standard against which all other societies are judged. This inevitably leads to the silencing of other voices. At the same time the differences between Western and non-Western cultures are rationalised through non-Western peoples being defined as the 'Others', distinguished solely through their antagonism to the dominant image of the 'self', and against whose peculiarities the self-image of the West is created. The result has been the acquisition of an aura of superiority for Western cultures and an imposition of a sense of inferiority upon non-Western ones.

From the Renaissance onwards, Stuart Hall explains, Europe began to define itself in relation to a new idea - 'the existence of many new "worlds" profoundly different from itself'.¹¹ This gave rise to the discourse of the Other, which 'represents what are in fact very differentiated (the different European cultures) as homogeneous (the West)'. Further 'it asserts that these different cultures are united by one thing: the fact that they are all different from the Rest'. At the same time the 'Other' (or the 'Rest' in Hall's terminology) 'though different among themselves, are represented as the same in the sense that they are all different from the West'.¹²

The sense of 'otherness' that Western discourse imposes on non-Western peoples and cultures is seen as the source of the modern ideas of race. 'The figure of the "Other"', writes Hall, was 'constructed as the absolute opposite, the negation of everything the West stood for'.¹³ Through the representation of an absolute difference between the West and its Others, the idea of difference took on a racial form. '[R]ace emerged with and has served to define modernity by insinuating itself in various fashions into modernity's prevailing conceptions of moral personhood and subjectivity', David Goldberg believes. 'By working itself into the threads of liberalism's cloths just as that cloth was being woven, race and the various exclusions it licensed became naturalised in the Eurocentric visions of itself and its self-defined others, in its sense of Reason and rational direction'.¹⁴

Since the framework of 'the West and its Others' is so central to contemporary theories of the meaning of race, I want to examine more closely some of its assumptions. The concept of the Other was developed in the phenomenological tradition, particularly by Edmund Husserl, as a constitutive factor in the subject's self-image. The Other was conceived as the perceiving, conscious, meaning-conferring other person who helps, or forces, the conscious subject to define its own world picture and its view of its place in it. Through the work of writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault, the concept of the Other entered poststructuralist discourse.¹⁵

In poststructuralist discourse the Other is a social object, the difference against which the Self is measured. In Michel Foucault's seminal work, *Folie et Dérision*, lepers were the Others of medieval society, a prime source of contamination, whose exclusion from everyday life helped provide society with a sense of its normality. As leprosy became less common, so it was less able to play its previous symbolic role. Instead, argues Foucault, a new Other was born: those who were non-productive - the criminal, the homeless and, especially, the mad. 'A new leper is born', writes Foucault, 'who takes the place of the first'.¹⁶

The Other, then, is that which lies outside a particular culture or society's epistemological boundaries. Not only is everything beyond the boundary treated as the Other, but society requires an Other without which there can be no sense of Self. A single category that can encapsulate the idea of an object of study, an object of exclusion and an object through the perception of whose difference self-identity can be affirmed has proved very attractive in the study of race. Most contemporary studies define racial difference in terms of the Other.

The distinction between the West and its Other is, for many contemporary theorists, implicit in the categories of Enlightenment universalism. Stuart Hall has pointed out how the establishment of the Other was fundamental to the development of Enlightenment thought:

This 'West and the Rest' discourse greatly influenced Enlightenment thinking... In Enlightenment discourse, the West was the model, the prototype and the measure of social progress. It was western progress, civilisation, rationality and development that were celebrated. And yet... without the Rest (or its own internal 'others') the West would not have been able to recognise and represent itself as the summit of human history. The figure of 'the Other', banished to the edge of the conceptual world and constructed as the absolute opposite, the negation, of everything which the West stood for, reappeared at the very centre of the discourse of civilisation, refinement, modernity and development in the West. 'The Other' was the 'dark' side - forgotten, repressed and denied; the reverse image of enlightenment and modernity.¹⁷

According to such critics, through the discourse of universalism the characteristics of the West and its Others were eternalised and the differences established as absolute. Thus Peter Hulme observes that Western understanding of non-Western cultures creates a distinction between 'self' and 'other' by 'establish[ing] characteristics as eternal verities immune from the irrelevances of the historical moment: "ferocious", "hostile" "truculent and vindictive" - these are present as innate characteristics irrespective of circumstances'.¹⁸

Many of these ideas have been central to my thesis in this book. I have argued, for instance, that the discourse of race helped recast social differences as natural ones, eternalising what were historically contingent features. I have argued, too, that in certain circumstances the notion of the 'other' has helped established a sense of self-identity. Despite this I want to argue that the framework of 'the West and its Others' is unhelpful in understanding the concept of race. The category of the Other is ahistorical and takes little account of the specificities of time and place in the creation of the discourse of race. Instead it steamrollers historical, social and geographical differences into a single discourse of 'the West and its Others'.

The category of the Other eternalises human modes of perception. It takes historically specific ways of constructing identity and endows them with an eternal validity. In *Britons*, her entertaining study of the development of British national identity, Linda Colley argues that the idea of being British arose in opposition to perceived enemies:

It was an invention forged above all by war. Time and time again, war with France brought Britons, whether they hailed from Wales or Scotland or England, into a confrontation with an obviously hostile Other and encouraged them to define themselves collectively against it... And, increasingly as the wars went on, they defined themselves in

contrast to the colonial peoples they conquered, peoples who were manifestly alien in terms of culture, religion and colour... Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and above all in response to conflict with the Other.¹⁹

Colley's reconstruction of the forging of British national identity seems to me to be largely correct, if somewhat one-sided. Indeed I argued in previous chapters that, in a similar fashion, contemporary British (and Western) identity is being recast in opposition to immigrants, the Third World, and other 'outsiders'.

What is fallacious in Colley's argument, however, is her assumption that the creation of national identity in the modern world should act as a template that is true for all time and all forms of identities: '[M]en and women decide who they are by reference to who and what they are not. Once confronted by an obviously alien "Them", an otherwise diverse community can become a reassuring or merely desperate "Us"'.²⁰ This suggests that the perception of 'Them' and 'Us' is in some way an epistemological constant, built into human 'nature'. It is an argument that derives partly from the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who believed that the human brain operates by classifying the world in terms of pairs of opposites. Both pre-literate and modern societies, argued Lévi-Strauss, think of the world in terms of binary opposites: solid/liquid, clean/dirty, truth/lie, body/soul, white/black, male/female. One side of the opposition, for instance clean, or white, is privileged, or given positive affirmation, while the other, dirty or black, has negative connotations. The meaning of the positive element is generally established through the exclusion of the negative half. In other words, clean means 'not-dirty' and white means 'not-black'. This provides the epistemological template for thinking about the world exclusively in terms of Us and Them, or Self and Other.²¹

For Edward Said this epistemological constant has become the basis for the distinction between the West and its Others. The distinction is not simply epistemological but ontological, woven into the very being of the West. In *Culture and Imperialism* Said posits the existence of 'a fundamental ontological distinction between the West and the rest of the world' whose boundary we may consider 'absolute':

Throughout the exchange between Europeans and their 'others' that began systematically half a millennium ago, the one idea that has scarcely varied is that there is an 'us' and a 'them', each quite settled, clear, unassailably self-evident. As I discuss it in *Orientalism*, the division goes back to Greek thought about barbarians, but, whoever originated this kind of 'identity' thought, by the nineteenth century it had

become the hallmark of imperialist cultures as well as those cultures trying to resist the encroachments of Europe.²²

Having established a transhistorical, ontological distinction that collapses the subtleties of two millennia of history, Said subsequently reads history backwards, conceiving of the past in terms specific to the present so that all encounters between Europeans and their Others, whatever their form, comprise part of 'the distinction between the West and the rest of the world'. For instance, the acquisition of Ireland by England's Henry II in the twelfth century is deemed to be an imperialist conquest and the English nobility's attitudes towards the Irish is assumed to be racial in form:

The high age of imperialism is said to have begun in the late 1870s, but in English-speaking realms it began well over seven hundred years before ... Ireland was ceded by the Pope to Henry II of England in the 1150s; he himself came to Ireland in 1171. From that time on an amazingly persistent cultural attitude existed towards Ireland as a place whose inhabitants were a barbarian and degenerate race.²³

Said does not tell us what it is about the Pope's award of Ireland to Henry II that is of the same moment as the European powers' scramble for Africa from the 1870s onwards. Nor does he explain in what way twelfth-century perceptions of the Irish show a continuity with nineteenth-century perceptions of Africans. That continuity is simply assumed. Such assumptions are rarely valid. Human consciousness is not static or innate but is constantly recreated through changing social and 'historical' circumstances. Without investigating social phenomena in their specificity, we fall into the trap of projecting specifically contemporary values and judgements on to past epochs.

In Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* the narrator Ishmael observes sourly that 'a purse is but a rag unless you have something in it'. The outward appearance of something tells us little. Only through understanding an object or phenomenon in its context can we appreciate its content or meaning. This is particularly so with social phenomena, such as 'race'. 'A Negro is a Negro', wrote Marx. 'He only becomes a slave in certain circumstances'.²⁴ Possessing a black skin does not mean that one is a slave, nor indeed that one is an object of racism. However, we have a tendency to assume this because we mistakenly assume that the contemporary signification of blackness has always been so.

Take, for instance, the contemporary reading of Shakespeare's *Othello*. Today the play is generally taken to be an example of the racist outlook of the Elizabethan period.²⁵ Yet as C. L. R. James has pointed out, this interpretation is simply the product of our own 'race-ridden conscious-

ness'. For Elizabethan audiences, what was important was not Othello's 'race' but the fact that he was a stranger:

[Y]ou could strike out every single reference to his black skin and the play would be essentially the same. Othello's trouble is that he is an outsider. He is not a Venetian. He is a military bureaucrat, a technician hired to fight for Venice, a foreign country. The senate has no consciousness whatever of his colour. That is a startling fact but true. They haven't to make allowances for it. It simply has no place in their minds.²⁶

The meaning of a black skin has not always been the same. Nor have the concepts of self and of difference. In the past people perceived of themselves and of others in very different fashion, indeed in ways that would strike us as irrational and incomprehensible. In Chapter 2 we saw how precapitalist, pre-Enlightenment views of difference resonated with ideas and fears we could barely conceive of today. We saw in the tale of Bemoir how it was possible for Europeans to regard the same African both as 'one of us' and as an 'other' depending literally on where he stood in relation to the mental map of Europe.

We saw too how the idea of difference became transformed in the Enlightenment through the idea of equality and a single humanity. I argued in Chapter 3 that the discourse of race did not arise out of the categories of Enlightenment discourse but out of the relationship between Enlightenment thought and the social organisation of capitalism. The disparity between the abstract belief in equality and the reality of an unequal society slowly gave rise to the idea that differences were natural, not social. The emergence of the modern idea of race was predicated on a wide number of social, political and economic developments which I discussed in Chapters 3 and 4; the consequence of these developments was the degradation of the universalistic outlook.

We saw how the idea of race emerged not so much with reference to populations which were external to Western society, populations which were exotic or distant or physically distinct, but rather in relation to social gradations within European society. The modern discourse of race developed through the racialisation of social and class differences, through the attribution of racial inferiority to the lower orders of society – the 'dangerous classes'. Such attribution of inferiority came not from some imputed need to posit an image of self in opposition to an Other, but as a way of making sense of social differences.

The racial categories developed in relation to differences within European societies were subsequently transposed to the non-European world. I argued that there was a dialectical relationship between the two: the process of European modernisation established Europe's supe-

riority over the non-Western world at the same time as it revealed the differences and divisions within European societies.

The coming of mass democracy, on the one hand, and of imperialist expansion, on the other, helped transform the nature of the discourse of race. It was at this point that racial difference became identified with the distinction between the West and the Rest. It was also at this point that the Western élites began to understand their own identity primarily in terms of the inferiority of others. This process, we saw, was the consequence of social, political and economic changes which undermined the optimism and self-belief of élite groups in Western society. This process of casting identity in opposition to an Other has become, as we saw in Chapter 7, a principal source of Western identity in the post-Cold War era. At the same time disillusionment with ideas of social progress, together with the impact of the Nazi experience, has helped recast the discourse of race, so that social differences are today explained more in cultural or moral terms than in biological ones.

We can see in this quick resumé of my argument in this book that it is simply not possible to understand the discourse of race within a single framework of the 'West and its Others'. Any such attempt not only disregards the complexities of the development of the discourse of race, but misreads the origins of race, transposing it from differences within Europe to differences between Europe and the non-European world.

There might appear to be a contradiction in this critique of the framework of the 'West and its Others'. On the one hand I am claiming that contemporary theorists of difference regard the idea of the Other as a product of Enlightenment universalism – in other words, as a specifically modern development. On the other hand, I am also arguing that theirs is an ahistoric understanding of the relationship between Self and Other in that they view the dichotomy as an epistemological constant. There is indeed a contradiction here, but it arises out of the very use of the idea of the Other. Poststructuralist and postmodernist discourse tend to regard the Other as both a product of post-Enlightenment philosophy and as a constant in human perception. The conflation of these two ideas in fact plays a major part in the confusion about the relationship between Enlightenment discourse and the discourse of race.

We can understand better both the ahistoricity of the concept of the Other, and the contradictions it embodies, by looking in some depth at a text that was key to developing the framework of the 'West and its Others' – Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Published in 1978, the book became very influential in its discussion of the way in which Western understanding of the Orient – by which Said meant the Middle East – imposed upon it a reality created in the West. The confusions and contradictions in *Orientalism* reflect the broader problems with poststructuralist theories of difference.

ORIENTALISM AND AHISTORICISM

In *Orientalism* Said argues that Western historians, philologists and philosophers have fabricated a complex set of representations about the Orient which for the West have effectively become the Orient. Said suggests that the creation of the Orient in literary, historical and scholarly accounts established a discourse through which the West could assert political and military control over the Orient:

My contention is that, without examining Orientalism as a discourse, one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe that no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism, the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought and action ... [T]his book ... also tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.²⁷

For Said, then, Orientalism constitutes a body of thought which both limits how those in the West are able to think about the Orient and allows the West to establish physical power over it. The discourse of Orientalism establishes a dualism between the West and the Orient which strengthens Western cultures and imprisons those of the Orient. This dualism shapes the reality of the Orient for the peoples of both the West and the Orient itself.

Despite such major claims there is, however, a total lack of precision in Said's work as to what he means by 'Orientalism' and what are the historic and epistemic boundaries that delimit it as a discourse. Said himself observes in his Introduction that 'by Orientalism I mean several things'. But these 'several things' are often so contradictory, and sometimes mutually exclusive, that the term 'Orientalism' is rendered meaningless.

Central to Said's argument would seem to be the idea that Orientalism is a post-Enlightenment discourse, the product of the Enlightenment's universalising categories and one which allowed the West to establish colonial power over the Orient:

Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making