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Author(s): Jeremy Jennings

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Citizenship, Republicanism and Multiculturalism in Contemporary France

JEREMY JENNINGS*

This article focuses on one of the central controversies in French intellectual debate since the late 1980s: the extent to which traditional republican principles might be reconciled with a recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity, particularly with relation to North African immigrant communities. After locating the debate in its historical and ideological contexts, the article traces the emergence of three types of response: a ‘traditionalist’ view, which refuses to make any concessions to the claims of multiculturalism and which reaffirms the need to uphold the orthodox republican principles of the secular state; a ‘modernizing’ republicanism, which endorses some elements of cultural pluralism while maintaining the validity of key republican concepts; and a ‘multiculturalist’ republicanism, which calls for a pluralist conception of civic identity and a recognition of the positive value of minority cultures. The article concludes with an assessment of the broader questions of political theory raised by this debate.

In his essay *On Toleration* Michael Walzer makes a distinction between ‘five regimes of toleration’. These he outlines as multinational empires, international society, consociations, nation-states and immigrant societies. Each of these regimes entails a set of institutional arrangements designed to secure toleration of what he describes as ‘cultural, religious, and way-of-life differences’. Within this broad typology, France figures as one of four ‘complicated cases’, and this for the simple reason that it is both ‘the classic nation-state’ as well as ‘Europe’s leading immigrant society’. It is not part of Walzer’s project to analyse in detail the nature of these French complications, but he does highlight one of their most intriguing aspects. ‘Far more than any other country,’ Walzer writes, ‘France has been a society of immigrants. And yet it isn’t a pluralist society – or at least it doesn’t think of itself, and it isn’t thought of, as a pluralist society’.¹

In short, despite an astonishing level of cultural and ethnic diversity,² France has seen itself as and has sought to become a monocultural society. However, the political malaise that has afflicted France since the late 1980s, combined with the economic problems (most notably, high levels of unemployment) that have

* Department of Political Science and International Studies, University of Birmingham. In writing this article I have benefited greatly from conversations with Cécile Laborde, Lucien Jaume, Joël Roman, Farhad Khosrokhavar and, more recently, Dominique Schnapper. Albert Weale and an anonymous reviewer provided insightful and much-appreciated critical comment upon a first draft. I also thank Françoise Blum and Michel Prat of the Musée Social for their help in obtaining invaluable source material.

¹ Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 38.

² See especially Gérard Noiriel, *Le Creuset français: histoire de l’immigration, XIXe–XXe siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1988).

accompanied the pursuit of greater European integration, has served to push the issue of (legal and 'illegal') immigration towards the top of the political agenda (witness the rise of the Front National). Thus, if France now experiences lower levels of immigration than it did at the beginning of the century, there exists a greater awareness or acknowledgement that France is a multi-ethnic society characterized by considerable cultural diversity. Specifically, attention has turned to North African, 'Muslim' immigration as a focus of concern and to the question of the viability of their 'integration' into French society.

This article examines the extent to which the Republic as a civic and political form is able to respond to this situation, believing that the specific issues raised by the existence of a sizeable immigrant Arab community pose broader questions of relevance to the political theory of French republicanism as a whole. This will be done principally by seeking to assess the nature of the debate that has occurred within France, both at the level of political theory and in wider public discourse. The argument is that it is only with considerable difficulty that the Republic in its French form is able to respond positively to this new reality, if new it is, and thus that fundamental questions are raised about its continuing validity and efficacy as a 'regime of toleration'. In doing this, the article will build upon the analyses of French immigration policy and philosophy already provided by Alex Hargreaves³ and Adrian Favell.⁴

REPUBLICANISM AND CITIZENSHIP

The first position to be rejected is that which states that the Republic is no longer a regulative ideal of significance in French politics. This was an opinion much touted during the bi-centenary celebrations of 1989 and one which has since been strengthened by reference to the general decline in ideological politics (the end of the 'French exception') and to the increasing intrusion of the European Union into French domestic legislation and policy making. To take this view is to fail to realize that there are 'many important areas of French public life in which the legacy of republicanism [is] still potent'.⁵ Indeed, the vacuum created by the demise of more conventional ideologies (most notably Marxism) has been filled for many by a renewed enthusiasm for the republican tradition. Certainly, the rhetoric of the Republic is frequently audible in ministerial pronouncements, especially in the areas of education and immigration. That the Republic remains at the centre of philosophical debate is no better illustrated than by the publication, at the end of 1998, of Blandine Kriegel's *Philosophie de la République*, a text written by one of France's leading political philosophers

³ Alex Hargreaves, *Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁴ Adrian Favell, *Philosophies of Integration: Immigration and the Idea of Citizenship in France and Britain* (Basingstoke, Hants: Macmillan, 1998).

⁵ Sudhir Hazareesingh, *Political Traditions in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 65.

that explores the theoretical foundations as well as political form of the modern Republic.⁶

What is this republican tradition and legacy?⁷ Most obviously, it is one rooted in the inheritance of the French Revolution and one where the claims of popular democracy and sovereignty are wedded to demands for greater social justice. So too it is a tradition that stresses the virtues of civil equality and with that produces a distinctive conception of what it means to be a member of the political community and the nation. Here it is enlightening to quote the remarks of Louis Dumont: 'In his own idea of himself, the Frenchman is a man by nature and a Frenchman by accident, while the German feels he is first a German and then a man through his being a German.'⁸ This intuitive and over-simplistic comparison between what can be termed exclusive and inclusive conceptions of citizenship has been explored in greater detail by Rogers Brubaker,⁹ but the point of Dumont's distinction is simple enough: for the French citizen, belonging is political but it also contains a vocation towards universalism. 'The basic or global French ideology', he writes, 'is as powerful as it is simple, and devoid of concrete elements. At bottom it consists of a single principle: the human subject as universal.'¹⁰ For our purposes, this French perspective can best be illustrated by reference to the elective theory of the nation associated with Ernest Renan's lecture of 1882, 'Qu'est-ce que une Nation?', where, with the emphasis placed upon the individual will of the citizen, the nation is defined as a 'daily plebiscite', 'un plébiscite de tous les jours'.¹¹ Such a conception has no place for either race or ethnicity as defining characteristics for membership of the political community. Re-stated in the contemporary language of Dominique Schnapper, the argument runs like this: 'National identity is not a biological but a political fact: one is French through the practice of a language, through the learning of a culture, through the wish to participate in an economic and political life.'¹² Moreover, one enters this community dressed simply and solely in the garb of an individual citizen divested of all particularistic affiliations.

However, as Dumont also makes clear, a further dimension of this French ideology is not just that the human subject exists as universal but that it is France itself that gives best expression to this aspiration towards universality. 'For our Frenchman,' he remarks, 'the destiny of France is to be the teacher of

⁶ Blandine Kriegel, *Philosophie de la République* (Paris: Plon, 1998).

⁷ See Claude Nicolet, *L'Idée républicaine en France (1789–1924)* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), and Mona Ozouf, 'L'Idée républicaine et l'interprétation du passé national', *Annales*, 53 (1998), 1075–87.

⁸ Louis Dumont, *German Ideology: From France to Germany and Back* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), p. 199.

⁹ Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ Dumont, *German Ideology*, p. 201.

¹¹ Ernest Renan, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation?', *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1947), pp. 887–906, at p. 904.

¹² Dominique Schnapper, *La France de l'intégration* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), p. 63.

mankind.¹³ On this view, from the Revolution of 1789 onwards France has been a model to the rest of the world, the land of the rights of man, of enlightenment, and of individual liberty, a nation destined to spread the benefits of civilization across its national borders and beyond to its colonial Empire and the wider world.

It was in its clashes with the Roman Catholic church that a further key component of republican ideology was forged: *laïcité*. Raised to the level of a constitutional principle that is embodied in the complete separation of Church and State, this doctrine postulates the existence of a secular ethic, grounded in science and philosophy, that would act not only as a civil religion and social bond but also as the means of educating the free and tolerant citizens required by the new democratic order. One of the important implications of this perspective is lucidly explained in a recent interview given by historian Pierre Rosanvallon:

Our history is directed towards a rationalist conception of democracy. In France, democracy is not based upon the confrontation of interests, it is not based upon the negotiation of demands and needs. It wants to establish itself upon an objective image of the general interest. And this general interest is not determined by confrontation; it is understood by reason.¹⁴

Even if we agree with Rosanvallon's further claim that this has not meant that French democracy has 'existed solely in an unambiguously centralising form', we can nevertheless acknowledge that this conception of 'rational government' did inform the efforts of internal colonialism that were intended to eradicate the linguistic and cultural particularisms that were such a feature of nineteenth, as well as twentieth, century France and which, when viewed from Paris, were seen as retrograde and irrational. Behind this lay a sense of the fragility of social consensus and the fear that all particularisms – Breton, Corsican, Occitain, or whatever – posed a threat to national unity.

How peasants were turned into Frenchman is a tale brilliantly told by Eugen Weber,¹⁵ but at its heart lay the process of instruction and therefore the school. Here the story is more complex, and possibly less Jacobin, than sometimes imagined.¹⁶ It was only in 1923 – some forty years after the initial steps to establish a secular education system – that reference to teaching 'duties towards God' was dropped from the programme of civic instruction and that state education became officially non-religious. But from the 1880s onwards the emphasis shifted from 'moral and religious instruction' to that of 'moral and civic instruction' and with that came the stress upon teaching the 'good citizens' of the future to be patriots and loyal defenders of the Republic.

¹³ Dumont, *German Ideology*, p. 200.

¹⁴ Pierre Rosanvallon, 'Les élites françaises, la démocratie et l'Etat: Entretien avec Pierre Rosanvallon', *Esprit*, 236 (1997), 60–72, p. 62.

¹⁵ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870–1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1979).

¹⁶ See Jean-Pierre Chanet, *L'École républicain et les petites patries* (Paris: Aubier, 1996).

From within this perspective of republican secularism, it is the school that figures as the principal site or location of individual emancipation.¹⁷ It is here, leaving behind the dogmas and traditionalisms of family, regional and religious life, that the individual enters the world of progress, justice, toleration and liberty. Yet, with the passing of time, this vision has become increasingly difficult to sustain. A rationalist universalism, rooted in the philosophy of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, now looks more and more like a form of European ethnocentrism, and thus like a form of domination rather than liberation. This problem of legitimacy has been acknowledged at the highest official levels. The *Rapport de la Commission de la nationalité*, which published its findings in 1988, declared that it was a weakening of those institutions which embody 'universal values' that posed 'the real danger for the national future'.¹⁸ Moreover, economic stagnation and mounting unemployment means that the school of republican mythology no longer provides the route to opportunity and social advancement it did in the past. Nor does it seem able to dispense an effective remedy for the high levels of crime (especially amongst the young) that daily disfigures the ideal of republican *civisme*.

If the school has been the principal site for the inculcation of republican virtues, then the army, the conscript army of the Republic, comes a close second. But conscription too, on the grounds of cost and modernization, is being phased out, with the army now providing a technical education for a minority rather than a civic education for the masses. In the eyes of die-hard republicans this is producing what is floridly described as 'an army of mercenaries'; more tellingly, the end of the republican *impôt du sang* is a reflection of a growing unwillingness by individuals to accept the constraints imposed upon them by the collectivity in the shape of the state.

The fact of the matter is, however, that these questions of republican acculturation have been especially pressing for France given that it has been one of the few, if not the only, European country that has needed to import, rather than export, people to survive. The need for this has been both economic and military. Demographic stagnation meant that France had neither the workers to fill its factories and mines nor sufficient men to secure its national defence: hence these people had to come from elsewhere, as they did in large numbers from Poland, Italy, Central Europe and, later, the former colonies.

CITIZENSHIP AND INTEGRATION

What next has to be admitted is that this policy of immigration, when viewed historically from within the republican paradigm, can be regarded as a success

¹⁷ See Yves Deloye, *École et citoyenneté* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1995).

¹⁸ Marceau Long, *Être Français aujourd'hui et demain: Rapport de la Commission de la nationalité* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1988), I, p. 28.

and as a major achievement of the French Republic.¹⁹ This has been so at both an institutional as well as an ideological level, thus providing relatively high levels of public endorsement for the republican model of citizenship. This, however, gives rise to three immediate observations.

The first concerns the continued relevance of the republican model. As Marcel Gauchet recently observed, 'laïcité is one of the major sources of anxiety in an anxious France'.²⁰ This is so because its principal enemy, in the shape of an intransigent Catholic Church laying claim to earthly authority, no longer exists. Thus, this core republican doctrine is only of relevance to what Pierre Birnbaum has called 'la France imaginée', a France associated with the social and political cleavages of the past.²¹ The Republic, on this view, is obliged to reconsider and to re-evaluate the place of religious faith in its midst. Secondly, many are the citizens of today's Fifth Republic who consider themselves to be citizens in name only. This is revealed in the political, as well as academic, debate that from the late 1980s onwards has focused upon the analysis of *les exclus*, the excluded.²² In part, this has been a debate about who exactly the excluded are: the old? the homeless? the poor? and so on; but it has also served to expose as hollow rhetoric the rights and obligations espoused by the Republic for those most subject to the injustices that arise from 'the new age of inequalities'.²³ Moreover, there has been widespread agreement that amongst the 'excluded' are quite definitely the young unemployed, often from immigrant backgrounds, who have found themselves cast out to the suburbs of the big cities, *les banlieues*. Here, for a popular imagination fed by the slogans of the Front National, has been a major source of crime, violence and drug abuse.²⁴ Here too the young of North African descent are suspected of returning not just to the Muslim faith but of converting to Islamic fundamentalism, thereby turning their backs upon the welcoming embrace of French civilization. Thirdly, the republican ideological legacy is not without certain troubling ambiguities. These have best been revealed in Sophie Duchesne's empirical investigation into *Citoyenneté à la française*.²⁵ Drawing upon an extended set of in-depth interviews, Duchesne describes two models which serve to characterize distinct self-representations of French citizenship, those of the *citoyen par héritage* and the *citoyen par scruples*. The latter is the less interesting for our argument. Repudiating the

¹⁹ See, for example, Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux, *De l'immigré au citoyen* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1989); Michèle Tribalet, *Cents Ans d'immigration, étrangers d'hier, Français d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: PUF, 1991); Patrick Weil, *La France et ses étrangers: L'aventure d'une politique de l'immigration 1938-1991* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1991); Vincent Viet, *La France immigrée: Constructions d'une politique 1914-1997* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).

²⁰ Marcel Gauchet, *La Religion dans la démocratie: Parcours de la laïcité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), p. 7.

²¹ Pierre Birnbaum, *La France imaginée: Déclin des rêves unitaires* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).

²² See especially Serge Paugam, *L'Exclusion: L'État des savoirs* (Paris: La Découverte, 1996).

²³ See Jean-Paul Fitoussi and Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Nouvel Âge des inégalités* (Paris: Seuil, 1996).

²⁴ See Christian Jelen, *La Guerre des rues* (Paris: Plon, 1999).

²⁵ Sophie Duchesne, *Citoyenneté à la française* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 1997).

equation of citizenship with nationality, the citizen here minimises the importance of a sense of group belonging, preferring rather to emphasise the universalistic dimensions of relations between all human beings. The citizen's principal obligation, therefore, is not towards a particular (French) state but exists in the form of an acknowledgement between individuals of respect for others. Intolerance and racism are seen as the height of *incivisme*. Here then it is the humanitarian ideal born out of the Republic's revolutionary past that prevails. Similarly, but with an altogether different slant, the first model draws upon a conception of the French nation as an ideal forged in the cauldron of France's revolutionary and imperial wars. Transmuted into the *patrie* of revolutionary liberty, France becomes the location of a conception of citizenship tied to a specific culture (including a cuisine) and a specific national past. To be a citizen is first and foremost to be French, to share a common inheritance and patrimony, to feel rooted in a familial and spatial context. Civic pride and a strong sense of social solidarity follow from this, but do so combined with a fear of internal division and a growing unease about a loss of national identity. The latter concern frequently focuses upon immigrants and the anxiety that they are not sufficiently integrated into the values and duties of French citizenship. 'The people who adhere to this model', Duchesne writes, 'do not all by any means wish that there should be fewer immigrants in France, but they do want that their integration should be facilitated by preventing their physical concentration in areas where as a consequence the French feel dispossessed or lose the sense of their own identity.'²⁶ Such sentiments should not be confused with the narrow jingoism of *le chauvinisme cocardier*, but they do serve to highlight how amongst ordinary citizens a sincerely-held republican conception of citizenship might be less than welcoming and generous when faced with an immigrant population not prepared to submit to the rigours of full assimilation into the rights and duties of the Republic.

Taken together, these three points of inquiry highlight not only a set of difficulties faced by the republican model in general but also serve to indicate the source of a major challenge to its intellectual and ideological dominance. How, in short, might the Republic respond to an immigrant minority, facing social and economic exclusion, which identifies strongly and publicly with a religious faith? This is a question which has received detailed consideration over the last decade or more. According to Favell,²⁷ it was only in the mid-1980s – in response to the political advances of Le Pen – that the goal of French immigration policy became that of 'integration'. If this is so, it is a position denied by the French government, which prefers to emphasize the historical continuity of policy stretching back to the nineteenth century. Referring to the *Rapport de la Commission de la nationalité* cited earlier, it tells us that:

the school of the Third Republic had as its responsibility and goal that of transforming little Bretons, Corsicans, Provençals, the sons of Italian and Polish

²⁶ Duchesne, *Citoyenneté*, p. 87.

²⁷ Favell, *Philosophies of Integration*, p. 56.

miners, the children of the Jewish proletariat of central Europe, into citizens of the Republic, speaking the same language and sharing the same cultural and patriotic values.

Frequently, and mistakenly, referred to as a policy of ‘assimilation’, the core objective has been that of ‘integration’, of bringing ‘naturalized’ citizens and their children into the national community as full members, ‘even if in private they preserved their religious and cultural loyalties’.²⁸ This, the document concludes, was broadly achieved.

Staying with this key policy document, it can be further seen that even here there is a recognition that the goal of integration is becoming a more difficult one. Various factors are cited by way of explanation: the links between mainland France and its former colonies are less strong; the influence of France in the world is less assured; high levels of unemployment touch the unskilled and therefore the immigrant disproportionately; segregation in housing makes establishing ‘neighbouring relations with the French population’ less easy; the traditional institutions of integration – by which is meant not only the schools and the army but also the trade unions and the Church – are now less efficient. Nevertheless, at the top of the list comes the recognition that ‘the foreign population in France has changed’. What this denotes, as the *Rapport* does not disguise, is ‘the reality’ of ‘Islam in France’, its 2.8 million believers making it the ‘second religion practised in France’. Here the document makes specific reference to the ‘fundamentalist threat’, whilst it is principally with regard to this Muslim population that the *Rapport* frames its recommendation on the possible reform of the nationality laws.²⁹ Without going into the precise details of its recommendations, the *Rapport* re-affirmed the status quo, calling for a policy that combined ‘the full integration of immigrants and the affirmation of a strong French identity’. What this meant for Muslims was made abundantly clear. It announced:

In this frame of reference, the Islamic question can be cited as a future test case for the affirmation of such an identity and for a policy of integration. The integration of an Islamic element into the French national community implies an acceptance by Muslims in France of the rules and the law of a republican and, above all, secular (*laïc*) state. For Islam this represents a real upheaval. The French state ... cannot renege on this demand.³⁰

Lest there be any ambiguity, the *Rapport* specified that the Islamic practices of polygamy, inequality between the sexes and arranged marriages were ‘irreconcilable with French values’.

²⁸ Long, *Être français*, I, p. 24.

²⁹ Reform of the nationality code has been a regular feature of parliamentary debate and government initiative during the 1990s, on both the Right (the Pasqua–Debré legislation) and the Left (the Chevènement–Guigou legislation). Each clearly tied together the issues of nationality and immigration, and did so from a ‘republican’ perspective. Jean-Pierre Chevènement, for example, told *Le Monde* (25 September, 1997) that the government’s policy was based upon ‘une stratégie de refondation républicain’.

³⁰ Long, *Être français*, II, p. 87.

The specific policy response to this document was the creation by Socialist Prime Minister Michel Rocard of a *Haut Conseil à l'intégration* designed to advise government on how best to 'integrate' immigrants into society. Its successive annual reports make for fascinating reading: what they reveal is that official attitudes and goals, even if at a policy level being more flexible, have effectively remained unchanged during the 1990s. So, for example, if the 1995 report devoted to '*Liens culturels et intégration*' indicates that Islam should be treated like any other religion practised in France and that efforts should be made by the state to facilitate its organization, it is equally unambiguous in its condemnation of 'the dangers of communitarianism'.³¹ If, therefore, the text is prepared to speak of a 'community', it is only in the form of 'a common sense of belonging, consented to or accepted, without judicial or institutional consequences' and quite definitely not in the shape of 'an organized and institutionalized grouping of part of the population according to ethnic or religious criteria, recognized by the public authorities'.³² Time and time again, the reports make clear that 'French universalism' cannot acknowledge the 'rights of minorities' or accept the claims of communal 'particularisms'. France, the 1997 report announces, 'has always refused to recognize collective rights that are specific to groups or minorities. It is to each man and each woman that it has granted full rights in order to allow him or her individually to take a place in French society'.³³ The 'logic' defended is always that of 'equality before the law' rather than what is dismissed as 'the logic of minorities'.

How can this republican philosophy of integration be summarized? Four basic policy principles can be delineated: (1) the integration of immigrants must be in accord with the secularism of the state: the latter respects religions, philosophies and beliefs but gives them no special support; (2) it is individuals rather than groups that integrate and at no time can or ought the action of integration to contribute towards the constitution of structured communities; (3) integration presupposes rights and duties: an immigrant must respect French law as it is: in return, the law naturally respects their culture and traditions; (4) immigrants and the French must be treated equally, without developing the sentiment that immigrants are better treated than French people who are their neighbours. As such, integration is not designed in order to favour immigrants but for the benefit of all and their collective cohesion.

In short, there remains an unshakeable insistence upon the secularism of the state and the refusal to recognize groups of persons. Only individuals exist in the eyes of the Republic. There can be no possibility of a policy of 'positive discrimination', precisely because it will contribute towards the 'constitution of structured communities'. The Republic, to paraphrase the official position, is

³¹ Haut Conseil à l'intégration, *Liens culturels et intégration* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1995), p. 74.

³² Haut Conseil à l'intégration, *Liens culturels*, p. 9.

³³ Haut Conseil à l'intégration, *Affaiblissement du lien social, enfermement dans les particularismes et intégration dans la cité* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1997), p. 14.

understood as 'one and indivisible', as, in the same way, the French people is conceived as being 'one, without regard to origin'.³⁴

REPUBLICAN DISCOURSE AND DEBATE

At best, therefore, what is being offered is a revamped version of republicanism, with the Arab immigrant replacing the central European Jew and the Breton as the focus of concern. There is quite definitely no official endorsement of multiculturalism, a policy which in French eyes is irredeemably associated with the 'Anglo-Saxon' world. At a policy level, the most immediate question is thus that of the feasibility of this strategy, especially when the 1998 report of the *Haut Conseil à l'intégration* detailed widespread and growing discrimination against immigrants. To an extent the answer will depend upon the capacity of the French state to manage the growing religious and cultural diversification of French society. It will also hinge on electoral outcomes, especially those associated with the possible future of the Front National, the success of the latter making it doubly difficult to implement policy innovations. So too it will be influenced by the degree to which greater European integration and conceptions of European citizenship diminish the appeal and plausibility of policies constructed around a strong sense of national identity and the nation-state. Disaster will surely follow if the Republic clings to an idealized version of the past and if its supporters fail to develop the conceptual apparatus required to describe the reality of present-day French society. If so, the question then becomes: how can France adapt and how far should it go in modifying the basic principles of republicanism? It is to this controversy that the article now turns.

The debate gets under way in 1989 with the *affaire du foulard islamique*, when three girls arrived at school wearing headscarves. The public response was almost unanimously hostile, not to say at times hysterical. What reasons were given to justify this reaction? There was the fear of Islamic fundamentalism, the spectre of the Iranian revolution being either implicit or explicit in many of the responses. There was too the claim that the hallowed principles of the Republic's secular educational system were under direct challenge. Described as 'the Munich of the republican school', the 'profs' were exhorted not to 'capitulate'.³⁵ Thirdly, the wearing of the headscarf was seen not merely as a religious gesture but also as a symbol of male dominance, of the patriarchal character of the Muslim faith. As the school was a 'site of emancipation', it could not tolerate this 'symbol of feminine submission'.

In the decade that has followed, this event has served to structure discussion around three basic positions. Stated simply, these can be described

³⁴ See the special issue of *Revue Française des Affaires Sociales*, 2 (1997) devoted to '*Insertion, intégration: concepts et pratiques*'; especially Gérard Moreau, 'Vingt ans de politique d'immigration', 17–26, and André-Clément Decoufflé, 'L'intégration: quelques idées simples', 29–36.

³⁵ Elisabeth Badinter *et al.*, 'Profs, ne capitulons pas!', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 2–8 November 1989, 30–1.

as traditional republicanism, modernizing republicanism and multicultural republicanism. Each has played an important role in fashioning public debate and discourse.

The classic statement of traditional republicanism is that made by Régis Debray at the time of the *foulard* controversy. Entitled 'Êtes-vous démocrate ou républicain?', Debray's article makes a series of vivid and forceful comparisons between the two, each designed to defend the republican model. He tells us:

The universal idea governs the republic. The local idea governs democracy ... Reason being its supreme point of reference, the state in a republic is unitary and by nature centralized ... Democracy, which blossoms in the pluricultural, is federal by vocation and decentralized out of scepticism ... In a republic, there are two nerve centres in each village: the town hall, where the elected representatives deliberate in common about the common good, and the school ... In a democracy, it is the church (*le temple*) and the drugstore, or (again) the Cathedral and the stock exchange ... In a republic, society should resemble the school, whose first mission is to form citizens capable of judging all things by their natural intelligence alone. In a democracy, it is the school which resembles society, its first mission being to form products adapted to the labour market.

And so on and so on, the comparison being extended over six pages. In a short space it is impossible to do full justice to Debray's eloquence, nor to analyse the significance of each of his chosen contrasts. In a revealing remark, for example, the reader is told that if *homo republicanus* has the 'faults of the masculine', then *homo democraticus* has the 'qualities of the feminine'.³⁶

The logic that underpins this argument was, however, made abundantly clear in another Debray text of the same year, *Que vive la République*. Here Debray argues that 'the enemies of the Republic have taken control of society', the old alliance between throne and altar having been replaced by that between 'money and the image'. As a consequence the state is 'humiliated' before 'civil society', as are 'the public function' before the 'private sector', 'truth' before 'opinion'.³⁷ Politics, he contends, has been reduced to 'a market of opinions'. The only response is the re-invigoration, through the school, of the republican 'faith' in the 'transcendent goals' of liberty and equality. 'Republican idealism', Debray proclaims, 'demands an intransigent rationalism'.³⁸ From within this perspective, as Debray indicated a year later, the *foulard* affair had to be seen as part of 'the dissolution ... of the republican idea' and the victory of 'the dictatorship of particularities'.³⁹

During the 1990s this restatement of traditional republicanism has been

³⁶ Régis Debray, 'Êtes-vous démocrate ou républicain?' *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 30 November–6 December 1989, pp. 49–55.

³⁷ Régis Debray, *Que vive la République* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1989), p. 29.

³⁸ Debray, *Que vive la République*, p. 96.

³⁹ Régis Debray, 'La laïcité: une exception française', in Hubert Bost, *Genèse et enjeux de la laïcité* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1990), pp. 199–206, at pp. 201–2.

developed in a variety of different ways. At times, it has simply taken the form of the incantation of the republican mantra.⁴⁰ More interesting has been the attempt to refashion the principles of republican education, a good example being Guy Coq's *Laïcité et République: le lien nécessaire*. A Catholic and member of the editorial team of *Esprit*, Coq is eager to establish a distinction between *la laïcité légitime* and *la laïcisme* which sees itself as 'a philosophy hostile to religion'.⁴¹ Nevertheless, he accepts the basic republican presupposition that, without a common culture and a sense of common identity, the political as well as physical integrity of France would be 'threatened'. The principal 'political' function of the school thus becomes that of 'strengthening the cultural preconditions of democracy'. And here, once again, the wearing of the *foulard* is identified with *intégrisme*, with the latter explicitly categorized as being 'incompatible' with the Republic. 'To be welcoming', Coq concludes, 'does not mean self-abnegation'.⁴²

Likewise, there has been an attempt to restate the integrative or assimilationist capacities of French immigration policy. Writing in *Le Destin des immigrés*, Emmanuel Todd not only rejects what he contemptuously refers to as 'la poussée différentialiste' but does so by stating that integration takes place whatever ideological objections are placed in its path. 'It would have been wiser', Todd writes, 'to explain to first generation adults from the Maghreb that their children were going to experience an inevitable transformation, the school system representing the easiest route to assimilation of the French tradition'.⁴³ Christian Jelen makes the same argument, pointing out that the reasons given to suggest that the 'new immigrants' from North Africa could not be integrated were earlier used against Polish, Italian and Jewish immigrants, all of whom were now fully integrated into French society. 'Despite handicaps and obstacles of all kinds,' Jelen writes, 'the integration of the Maghrebiens is an irreversible process that has already begun'.⁴⁴ There are two further dimensions of this stance that are worthy of comment. The first is that both Jelen and Todd are deeply critical of British immigration policy with its toleration of the existence of distinct ethnic groups or communities, Todd going so far as to argue that the British passion for a 'différentialisme de classe' has now been replaced by a 'différentialisme de race'.⁴⁵ Secondly, they each see calls for an acknowledgement of the 'right

⁴⁰ See, for example, Jacques Muglioni, 'La république et l'école', *Philosophie politique*, 4 (1993), 73–87; Jean Baubérot, 'La laïcité française et l'Europe', *Philosophie politique*, 4 (1993), 89–100; Alain-Gérard Slama, 'La démocratie sans nation', *La Pensée politique*, 3 (1995), 140–50; Régis Debray, *La République expliquée à ma fille* (Paris: Seuil, 1998).

⁴¹ Guy Coq, *Laïcité et République: le lien nécessaire* (Paris: Félin, 1995), p. 29.

⁴² Coq, *Laïcité et République*, p. 285.

⁴³ Emmanuel Todd, *Le Destin des immigrés: assimilation et ségrégation dans les démocraties occidentales* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), p. 458.

⁴⁴ Christian Jelen, *Ils feront de bons Français: enquête sur l'assimilation des Maghrébins* (Paris: Laffont, 1991), p. 216. See also Christian Jelen, *La Famille, secret de l'intégration* (Paris: Laffont, 1993).

⁴⁵ Todd, *Le Destin des immigrés*, p. 129.

to difference' (as in the wearing of the *foulard*) as part of 'l'illusion multiculturaliste'.

It is this latter theme that has continued to grow in prominence during the 1990s. For the defenders of traditional republicanism, multiculturalism features as nothing less than a new form of tribalism.⁴⁶ Speaking before the Commission de la Nationalité, eminent philosopher Alain Finkielkraut remarked: 'I believe that the fanatics of cultural identity, those who raise collective difference to the level of an absolute, do not proceed differently from racists, even if to be accurate the determinism within which they enclose individuals is not genetic but rather historical or traditional'.⁴⁷ Multiculturalism thus becomes associated with the ideology of the extreme Right. Finkielkraut, for example, does not hesitate to draw the comparison with the ideas of nationalist Maurice Barrès.⁴⁸ Todd sees it as a 'reincarnation' of 'the Maurrasian thematic'. Tzvetan Todorov makes the link with anti-semitism. 'It is', he writes, 'truly depressing, one hundred years after the Dreyfus Affair, to see that it is again the anti-Dreyfusards who are winning; those who think that the identity of an individual is entirely determined by the ethnic or biological group to which he (*sic*) belongs.'⁴⁹ Jelen simply aligns multiculturalism with the ideology of Jean-Marie Le Pen and the Front National.⁵⁰

The tribalization associated with multiculturalism also entails 'Balkanization' or 'Lebanization', the inevitable descent into fratricidal civil war. 'Those who doubt this', Jelen writes, 'should reflect upon the conflagration that occurred in the Lebanon, upon the ethnic, religious and racial fanaticisms that have ravaged or are ravaging Algeria, Rwanda, Zaïre, the Congo, the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union.'⁵¹ Each, on this view, is a society based upon 'particularisms' rather than 'universalisms'.

The latter is a remarkably common theme, and one, as we shall see, that is not limited to the defenders of traditional republicanism. It feeds off traditional French fears about the fragility of their own nation. More remarkable is that national disintegration is also associated with the 'spectre of American multiculturalism'. In this discourse, Lebanonization, Balkanization and Americanization have the same rhetorical force.

There are, of course, misconceptions here: only rarely, for example, is there recognition that affirmative action policies, when conceived and implemented in accordance with liberal values, might unify rather than divide America. Moreover, much use is made of America's own critics of multiculturalism (such

⁴⁶ See Robert Deliège, 'Vers un nouveau tribalisme? Du relativisme au politiquement correct', in Gilles Ferréol, ed., *Intégration, lien social et citoyenneté* (Lille: Septentrion, 1998), pp. 165–95.

⁴⁷ Long, *Être Français*, I, p. 597.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Alain Finkielkraut, *La Défaite de la pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987) and 'La nation disparaît au profit des tribus', *Le Monde*, 13 July 1989.

⁴⁹ Tzvetan Todorov, 'Du culte de la différence à la sacrilisation de la victime', *Esprit*, 212 (1996), 90–102, p. 96.

⁵⁰ Christian Jelen, 'La régression multiculturaliste', *Le Débat*, 97 (1997), pp. 137–43, p. 143.

⁵¹ Jelen, 'La régression multiculturaliste', p. 138.

as Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education*). Multiculturalism, on this view, goes hand in hand with *political correctness* (the horrors of which are a frequent source of conversation amongst the French intelligentsia): hence it is linked to what are seen as dogmatism, intolerance, and left-wing McCarthyism; it is aligned with reverse discrimination, America now demonstrating not Tocqueville's tyranny of the majority but the tyranny of the minority; it threatens Western civilization and culture, especially in the universities; and, needless to say, it leads to ghettoization and social segregation. The talk is of a crisis of American identity which should not be replicated in France.⁵²

This dimension of the debate can be illustrated by two examples, both taken from eminent scholars of international reputation. The first comes from Tzvetan Todorov, Bulgarian by birth but French by adoption. Multiculturalism is here identified with 'la sacralisation de la victime'. Public life in America, Todorov argues, is now based upon a demand for *less* rather than *more* individual autonomy. This takes three forms. The first is for the individual 'systematically' to deny responsibility for his or her own actions. The second form consists of seeing oneself 'above all as a member of a group'. The third is 'mixophobia', the fear of mixing with others. If this last produces a 'cultural apartheid', taken as a whole claims to 'identity' and the right to 'difference' not only betoken moral cowardice but also reduce the activity of politics to the conflict of 'particular interests' rather than the pursuit of the 'common good'. Dialogue – conceived as 'the will to understand the other and to communicate with him' – becomes impossible.⁵³

The second example comes from distinguished historian Mona Ozouf and her widely praised *Les Mots des femmes: essai sur la singularité française*. Centrally, Ozouf rejects the criticism directed against the French Revolution by 'American' historians such as Joan Scott and Carole Pateman, according to which the Revolution 'is the incarnation of the universal in the particularity of the white man'. As a woman, she has little difficulty embracing the 'singularity' of the French Republican experience. She writes:

If one grants to French women the strength of this first conviction – they see themselves above all as free and equal individuals – one can understand that, armed with such a belief, they can live out sexual difference without resentment, cultivate it with good humour and irony, and refuse to 'essentialize' it.⁵⁴

This, she recognizes, does not accord with the views of recent French theorists of female 'identity', nor with their American followers. 'In brief,' she writes, this discourse 'concludes with a vision of a female universe globally under siege.

⁵² See especially Denis Lacorne, *La Crise de l'identité américaine: du melting-pot au multiculturalisme* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), pp. 17–47, and the extended discussion of this book in 'L'avenir du multiculturalisme', *Le Débat*, 97 (1997), 132–67. Lacorne himself does not share these exaggerated fears.

⁵³ Todorov, 'Du culte de la différence à la sacralisation de la victime', pp. 90–102. These views are restated in Todorov's *L'Homme dépaycé* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), pp. 213–31.

⁵⁴ Mona Ozouf, *Les Mots des femmes: essai sur la singularité française* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), p. 383.

Nothing similar can be observed in France and it is sufficient to enumerate the articles of the new American feminist religion to measure the distance between the two countries.⁵⁵ This hostility in principle is absent from 'French feminism'. In France, it is 'not as women that they claim their rights but as individuals'. Thus, she concludes, the French spirit is 'decidedly unamenable to communitarianism'.⁵⁶

Multiculturalism is thus un-French. It sanctions unequal rights. It countenances communities closed in upon themselves. It places culture before politics, groups before individuals.

The extremes to which this whole line of argument can lead is disclosed in Christian Jelen's polemic *Les Casseurs de la République*. For Jelen, multiculturalism is the 'new opium of the Left', a form of 'reactionary' leftism that has replaced 'the Marxist vulgate'. Its proponents wish to see a '*France babélisée*' based upon a denial and a 'denigration' of the French nation. The advocacy of difference means the toleration of polygamy and of female circumcision. Why not, he mocks, be consistent 'towards the *intégristes* who would like to stone adulterous women and cut off the hands of thieves, or towards cannibals who could eat each other on out territory?'⁵⁷ Islamic law will replace the Civil Code. France's immigrants will be offered nothing more than a permanent 'guaranteed marginalization'. Worse still are the political consequences of multiculturalism. 'Individual liberty, political democracy, the rule of law, the equality of citizens, the protection of the individual, the right to education, to health, to security, the separation of political and religious powers ... all are threatened by multiculturalism.'⁵⁸ A France that is 'torn apart' and obsessed by 'racial, ethnic [and] religious origins' will not be 'a charming and attractive multiplicity of cultural exchanges' but 'a tribal mosaic ... a jungle'.

A more thoughtful and less instinctive response to these issues comes from Dominique Schnapper. Indeed, Schnapper's work represents the most sophisticated attempt to re-think the Republic as an 'ideal type', and thus to reformulate the republican model from within the republican paradigm. She can therefore be taken to represent the second position under discussion: modernizing republicanism.

Schnapper's central idea, as the title of one of her books indicates,⁵⁹ is that the Republic has to be conceived as a 'community of citizens'. Crucially, Schnapper distinguishes the nation from the ethnic group, seeing the former solely as a political entity, and she is thus able to argue not only that the nation is 'more open to others than all forms of ethnicity' but also that cultural

⁵⁵ Ozouf, *Les Mots*, pp. 387–8.

⁵⁶ Ozouf, *Les Mots*, p. 395.

⁵⁷ Christian Jelen, *Les Casseurs de la République* (Paris: Plon, 1997), p. 63.

⁵⁸ Jelen, *Les Casseurs*, p. 173.

⁵⁹ Dominique Schnapper, *La Communauté des citoyens: sur l'idée moderne de nation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994). Schnapper herself is unhappy about the way this work has been interpreted in France, preferring to see it as a work of sociological theory rather than a political or 'ideological' polemic. This argument is continued in her later work, *La Relation à l'autre: au coeur de la pensée sociologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998).

homogeneity is not necessary for the nation to exist. 'In return,' she tells us, 'it is a necessary condition for the existence of the nation that its citizens accept the idea that there exists a political domain independent of their particular interests and that they must respect the rules governing its operation.'⁶⁰ The nation, and therefore the Republic, defines itself as 'an attempt through citizenship to transcend particularist adherences' or membership, be they biological, historical, economic, social, religious or cultural, making the citizen 'an abstract individual, without identification and without particularist characteristics'.⁶¹ For this reason alone, Schnapper sees no reason for the nation-state to be superseded.

Yet, for all her faith in the Republic as a set of political institutions capable of facilitating the life of a 'community of citizens', Schnapper also recognizes that there exists a tension between 'the universalist unity of the public domain and the real ethnic and social diversities of national society'.⁶² To a 'humiliated people', she comments, 'transcendence through citizenship appears as purely formal, having only the function of consecrating the dominance of the other under the guise of universality'.⁶³ And so it is of vital importance that 'individuals have the sentiment that their collective dignity ... is recognized and respected'. Multiculturalism, defined as 'the right' of citizens and of foreigners 'to cultivate their particularisms in their personal as well as social life', can therefore be accepted.

Schnapper is thus prepared to raise a whole series of questions considered anathema by orthodox republicans. Why, she asks, if a language is used in the home, can it not have official status? But note, according to Schnapper, there can equally be no toleration of 'cultural traditions' that do not respect the rules of a modern democracy. 'Cultural pluralism' has its limits. Recognition of the equal dignity of persons, for example, rules out religions which treat women unfairly and endorse polygamy. Likewise, 'these particularities must not form a political identity recognized as such within the public space'.⁶⁴ If this were to occur, she comments, we would find ourselves in 'the Lebanese situation'.

These remarks indicate the qualifications that Schnapper imposes upon her re-assessment of the republican ideal. If the 'community of citizens' envisages pushing the Republic in a more pluralist direction, so too it carries with it the fear of social disintegration as the links which bind individual citizens together slacken and disappear, leaving only 'patterns of behaviour inspired by the sentiment of belonging or identification with specific ethnic or ethnic-religious communities'.⁶⁵ Hence the reference to the Lebanon, where

⁶⁰ Schnapper, *La Communauté*, p. 44.

⁶¹ Schnapper, *La Communauté*, p. 48.

⁶² Schnapper, *La Communauté*, p. 116.

⁶³ Schnapper, *La Communauté*, pp. 121–2.

⁶⁴ Schnapper, *La Communauté*, p. 100.

⁶⁵ Dominique Schnapper, 'Nation et démocratie: entretien avec Dominique Schnapper', *La Pensée Politique*, 3 (1995), 151–65, p. 153.

'individuals no longer exist as citizens but as representatives of a recognized community'. Here is proof of the damaging consequences of the intrusion of multiculturalism into the political sphere. Hence also the reference to the 'impasse of American multiculturalism': 'what accounts for the present weakening of the American political community', she writes, 'is the accentuation and the recognition at a social level of communitarian membership: what poses a problem is not in actual fact American ethnic diversity but the tendency to recognize and to inscribe this diversity in the public sphere'.⁶⁶ So too there is reference to the *foulard* affair as a challenge to the principles of integration embodied in the French 'civic community'.

For all her willingness to renovate the republican model, therefore, Schnapper nevertheless finds herself falling back upon the hallowed principles and practices of *laïcité* and integration. She is also reassured that these traditions continue to be relatively effective. An interesting article explores the reactions of 'French Muslims' to the Gulf war. Her judgement is that, whilst for 'the majority' it represented a considerable 'challenge', 'they did not for one moment draw the conclusion that they should organise themselves into a political "Muslim community" in order to participate in French life'.⁶⁷ Likewise, although she is one of the few seriously to address the issue, Schnapper does not think that Europe will provide a new model of citizenship capable of replacing her preferred nation-based community of citizens. Indeed, her view is that to abandon the 'tradition of integration' for such a far-off possibility would be to run the severe risk of social 'disintegration'.

How then can Schnapper's attempted renovation of republicanism be summarized? A major clue to the answer can be found in a special issue of *Raison Présente* devoted to the question: 'Avons-nous tort d'être universalistes?' 'The universal', Schnapper responds,⁶⁸ 'cannot be identified with any concrete historical reality; it is a principle, an horizon, a regulatory idea'. The 'error of the false universalism of the nineteenth century' was precisely that it did identify itself with a particular historical reality: 'Western society'. The universal (and therefore the Republic) becomes for Schnapper an aspiration, a form of *ouverture potentielle*, wherein the citizen breaks with the 'given', achieves distance from a 'historical destiny' but does not deny it. Faced, therefore, with the question of whether we need to choose between the universal and plurality, this is how she phrases her answer:

we must refuse the general, the unique, the global; we must choose the particular, and therefore plurality; but by inscribing it within a reference to the universal which is the very condition of its existence and of the possibility of dialogue with others,

⁶⁶ Schnapper, 'Nation et démocratie', p. 161.

⁶⁷ Dominique Schnapper, 'La citoyenneté à l'épreuve: les musulmans pendant la guerre du golfe', *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 43 (1995), 187–208, p. 207.

⁶⁸ Dominique Schnapper, 'La nation et l'universel', *Raison Présente*, 122 (1997), 9–19, p. 10.

as well as of the fundamental recognition that the dignity of others, of all others, is equal to my own.⁶⁹

The Republic, in short, can no longer be built upon the 'utopia' of an 'abstract humanity'.

On this reading, Schnapper shares much with some, although by no means all, of the proponents of the final position under discussion: multicultural republicanism.⁷⁰ A useful starting point is the review *Esprit* and the views of one of its editors, Joël Roman. It is this review that has probably done most at a philosophical level to sketch out the contours of a *multiculturalisme à la française*, a task it has undertaken by looking beyond the French republican tradition to Anglo-American philosophy. Over the last few years, for example, *Esprit*, along with its associated publishing houses, has done much to make available in translation the writings of Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor, Benjamin Barber and Michael Sandel.

The title of one of Roman's articles best summarizes this position: 'Pour un multiculturalisme temperé'.⁷¹ There is, accordingly, a recognition that multiculturalism carries with it the danger of the 'closing in upon themselves of ethnic and cultural communities', but such a *repli communautaire*, on this view, cannot best be countered by relying upon a republican ideology constructed to meet the demands of a nineteenth-century France that was predominantly rural and Catholic. The former strengths of this ideology are now, in changed conditions, its weaknesses and if, therefore, there is no question of abandoning 'republican emancipatory goals', it has to be accepted that 'the prospect of integration is no longer presented as a commitment but is rather brandished as a threat'. Moreover, on this view, the principal danger facing France is not that of 'community membership' but that 'of the suffocation by the state of civil society and of its diversity'. Roman's ambition is thus to 'invent a middle path' grounded upon 'a relative pluralism, a plural universalism'. How is this to be done? To begin,⁷² the French must cease to give an 'aura' of universality to all their national particularities (be it philosophy, politics, fashion or cooking) and start to 'recognize the diversity of society and of the groups which compose it'. The second stage is to endorse the mutual visibility of these differences, to 'dare to give them legal recognition (*droit de cité*)', to let people be what they are 'without hiding themselves or without discharging some right of entry'. Next comes the 'necessity' of organizing 'the dynamic of confrontation between these groups and these differences, in order precisely to prevent them from being differences closed in upon themselves'. This is then to be combined with an element, the 'best' element, of 'positive

⁶⁹ Schnapper, 'La nation et l'universel', p. 19.

⁷⁰ See Joël Roman, *La Démocratie des individus* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1998), p. 217, and Dominique Schnapper and Joël Roman, 'De l'idée républicaine', *Les Cahiers du Radicalisme*, 1 (1998), 13–28.

⁷¹ Joël Roman, 'Pour un multiculturalisme temperé', *Hommes et Migrations*, 1197 (1996), 18–22.

⁷² Joël Roman, 'Un multiculturalisme à la française', *Esprit*, 212 (1995), 145–60.

discrimination': 'the provision of unequal measures designed to correct inequalities of fact and to bring about dynamics of equality'. The argument is neatly summarized when Roman talks about the need 'to invent a plurality of ways of being French'. French society, he tells us, is not on the point of disintegration but it is diverse. What threatens it is 'the refusal to accord a place to these differences, its forced homogenization'.⁷³

What is being envisaged, as Roman makes clear in his latest work *La Démocratie des individus*, is a re-elaboration of the relationship between the citizen and the political. Citizenship is to be re-conceived as a series of lateral relationships between individuals and groups rather than as a vertical relationship between individual and the state. Roman's 'moderate multiculturalism' defines itself therefore as a move from a 'democracy of emancipation' to a 'democracy of recognition'.⁷⁴

The reference to Charles Taylor is clear and unmistakable and it is one that has been taken up elsewhere in calls for a multicultural republicanism.⁷⁵ What is of interest here is that this position as a whole has become associated above all with sociologists Alain Touraine, Michel Wieviorka, Farhad Khosrokhavar and those who work with them at the Centre d'Analyse et d'Intervention Sociologique (CADIS). As such in France (in contrast to the Anglo-American world) multiculturalism is a position sustained less by philosophy than by sociological theory and empirical investigation.

Again, our starting point can be the *foulard* affair and the analysis provided of it by Khosrokhavar and Françoise Gaspard.⁷⁶ No one, they point out, thought to ask the young girls concerned why they had chosen to wear the headscarves; it was simply assumed that it was meant to be an act of provocation. Their own conclusion, based upon a series of in-depth interviews, is that the reasons for wearing the *foulard* are various, but that often it is a way of mediating between life in two different cultures as well as a form of protection against the anomie associated with modern society. It is, then, more an expression of identity than a sign of Islamic fundamentalism. Thus, the wearing of the headscarf 'should not be interpreted as a rejection of French citizenship but as a desire for integration *without* assimilation, as an aspiration to be French *and* Muslim'.⁷⁷ The whole affair, they conclude, raises this fundamental question: 'Can one be properly French whilst at the same time wearing a Kippa, a turban or other religious insignia in the public domain? Can one be a good citizen if one clothes oneself in a headscarf?'⁷⁸

It is this theme of mediation, of what it means to be a *franco-musulman*, that

⁷³ Roman, 'Un multiculturalisme à la française', pp. 157–8.

⁷⁴ Roman, *La Démocratie des individus*, pp. 193–220.

⁷⁵ Michel Wieviorka, 'Le multiculturalisme', *Les Cahiers du CEVIPOF*, 20 (1998), 104–29, pp. 114–15.

⁷⁶ Françoise Gaspard and Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Le Foulard et la République* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995).

⁷⁷ Gaspard and Khosrokhavar, *Le Foulard*, p. 204.

⁷⁸ Gaspard and Khosrokhavar, *Le Foulard*, p. 206.

Khosrokhavar further explores in his *L'Islam des jeunes*, a study of second- and third-generation North African immigrants living for the most part in the suburbs of Paris and Strasbourg. Dismissing what he terms 'le fantôme de l'intégrisme', his judgement is that the Islam of young Muslims in France principally 'relates not to a sense of ethnic belonging within the society of origin of their parents but rather to the construction of a specific identity within French society'. It acts as a protection against racism and social ostracism but also gives sense and value to a life by facilitating differing forms of cultural expression and social engagement.

Khosrokhavar believes himself, therefore, to be describing what he terms an *islam néo-communautaire*⁷⁹ that is far removed from the 'integrism' of popular imagination. Islam, he acknowledges, needs to undergo the difficult process of 'modernization' – here he calls specifically for the emergence of a new *intelligentsia musulmane*⁸⁰ – but the main possibility of its radicalization comes less from 'Islamic extremism' than from the response of a republicanism that clings to the 'myth' of a 'golden age' and what he terms a *laïcité de combat*.⁸¹

It is at this point that the radical edge of Khosrokhavar's argument becomes visible. 'Abstract universalism', he announces, 'serves henceforth less to integrate than to dehumanize the excluded, the outcasts'. Above all, the criticism continues, 'republicanism becomes more and more intransigent and monolithic to the extent that its capacity to secure adherence weakens'.⁸² Republican 'monoculturalism', on this view, has to be abandoned, to be replaced by a 'new republican compromise', a *républicanisme élargi*.

What the latter would look like has as yet only been hinted at, but there is at least the acknowledgement that it might entail substantial recasting of some hallowed republican principles.⁸³ This is clearly expressed in an article by Danilo Martuccelli, where there is a recognition that a tension exists between the republican values of liberty and equality and the multicultural values of difference and equity.⁸⁴ But here also there is a concern to emphasize that facing France is not just a choice between 'republican universalism' and 'cultural integrism', and that multiculturalism is self-defeating if through segregation it leads to intolerance. There is no desire to imitate the 'radicality' of a multiculturalism 'imported' from America.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *L'Islam des jeunes* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), p. 113.

⁸⁰ Khosrokhavar, *L'Islam des jeunes*, pp. 35, 137–42.

⁸¹ Khosrokhavar, *L'Islam des jeunes*, p. 17.

⁸² Farhad Khosrokhavar, 'L'Universel abstrait, le politique et la construction de l'Islamisme comme forme d'altérité', in Michel Wieviorka, ed., *Une Société fragmentée: le multiculturalisme en débat* (Paris: La Découverte, 1996), pp. 113–51, at p. 148.

⁸³ Michel Wieviorka, 'Le multiculturalisme, est-il la réponse?', *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, 105 (1998), 233–60, pp. 251–2.

⁸⁴ Danilo Martuccelli, 'Les contradictions politiques du multiculturalisme', in Wieviorka, *Une Société fragmentée*, pp. 61–82.

⁸⁵ Michel Wieviorka, *Commenter la France* (Paris: Editions de l'aube, 1997), pp. 151–6.

This argument is clearly set out in Touraine's *Pourrons-nous vivre ensemble?*⁸⁶ The challenge, he writes, is to attain a 'unity of society' and 'a diversity of cultures' that will allow us to live together 'equal and different' rather than 'equal but separate'. 'Identity politics' is thus cast as a 'false' multiculturalism that seeks 'fragmentation' and 'multicommunitism' rather than a 'diversity of cultural experiences'. At the heart of a correctly-defined multiculturalism, therefore, must lie 'intercultural communication'. 'Cultural pluralism', Touraine writes elsewhere, 'rests not upon the difference but upon the *dialogue* of cultures which recognise that, beyond their differences, each contributes to human experience and that each culture is an attempt at the universalization of a particular experience.'⁸⁷ The merit of multiculturalism is precisely that it challenges the hegemony of the categories identified with the 'universal' and which impose their 'domination' upon those considered 'inferior' on the grounds of their 'particularities'. On this account, the crisis of the Republic will only be resolved when it comes to recognize the mutual claims and interdependence of the universal and the particular.

THE SUCCESS OF THE REPUBLICAN MODEL?

In the summer of 1998 France appeared not only to discover the game of football but also to re-discover itself. The talk was not only of a brilliant, and much-deserved, World Cup victory but of *les bleus* as a symbol of *une France plurielle, une France métissée*. France, apparently, looked at itself and saw something new. This might well have been the case for the delighted millions who took to the streets but it was certainly not so amongst journalists and commentators. Here, right across the political spectrum, the triumph of Aimé Jacquet's team denoted nothing less than the success of France's republican ideology and confirmation of its continued relevance. Rather than a new France, it was an old France which figured in their articles. For Alain Peyrefitte, editor of the right-wing *Le Figaro*, the 3–0 victory gave 'the lesson' that, 'amongst the nations, France is one of those that has pushed furthest the ideal of integration'. It showed that if France was 'multiracial', it was certainly not *pluriculturelle* or *polyethnique*.⁸⁸ The left-of-centre *Le Nouvel Observateur* pursued a similar line, arguing that the players had done more for integration than 'ten or fifteen years' of government policy: 'the team has given back meaning to the French melting-pot'.⁸⁹ Nowhere, however, was this argument pushed further than in the pages of *Libération*. If the brilliant, and modest, Zinedine Zidane was easily cast as 'the icon of integration', immigration specialist Michèle Tribalet could not resist re-working the old Franco-German

⁸⁶ Alain Touraine, *Pourrons-nous vivre ensemble? Égaux et différents* (Paris: Fayard, 1997).

⁸⁷ Alain Touraine, 'Faux et vrais problèmes', in Wieviorka, *Une Société fragmentée*, pp. 291–319, at p. 311.

⁸⁸ *Le Figaro*, 13 July 1998.

⁸⁹ *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 16 July 1998. *Le Nouvel Observateur* (24 December, 1998) subsequently acclaimed Zinedine Zidane as *homme de l'année*, describing him as 'algérien d'origine, kabyle de coeur et 100% français'.

comparison, speaking of ‘the German team, with their fair complexion and blond hair, which did not contain a single young player of Turkish origin’. Best of all was Laurent Joffrin’s editorial. Renan, he told his readers was right: the nation was truly ‘un référendum de tous les matchs’!⁹⁰

That this supposed setback for Jean-Marie Le Pen’s *Front National* had done nothing to change the prevailing contours of republican discourse was only confirmed some six weeks later when *Le Monde* published an article entitled ‘Républicains, n’ayons plus peur!’, signed by Régis Debray, Max Gallo, Jacques Julliard, Blandine Kriegel, Olivier Mongin, Mona Ozouf, Anicet Le Pors and Paul Thibaud.⁹¹ Here the cream of France’s left-intelligentsia deployed the republican credo in precisely the fashion most feared by its critics: as a threat, as a stick with which to beat those indecent enough not to adhere to the canons of republican citizenship. All the old republican shibboleths are reprocessed and recast in a forthright attack upon what is taken to be the ambient *incivisme* of daily life in France. The reactionary tone and latent anger is easily seen in such statements as the following: ‘“Violence at school” begins with the use of familiar speech [*tutoiement*] towards teachers, listening to Walkmen in the school yard and the wearing of deliberately provocative clothing in the classroom’. The demand, then, is for the re-establishment of ‘discipline’ and the reawakening of ‘responsibility’. Amongst whom? France’s politicians clearly; her public servants too; but principally, the young who engage in criminal activities; badly-behaved pupils who do not take their studies seriously; France’s international partners who do nothing to stem the flux of illegal immigration; and, of course, the immigrants themselves, who fail to ‘adhere to the minimum of republican values (in plain language: learning to speak and read French; respecting the secularity (*laïcité*) of public spaces)’. The Republic, as critics of the article immediately responded, now stands for a renewed call for ‘moral order’.

Not surprisingly, this article caused considerable debate; and the debate will doubtless continue.⁹² But where does this leave us? It has been argued that as a ‘regime of toleration’ the most pressing problem facing France today is that of responding to a multicultural reality that daily makes its presence more strongly felt. The question then becomes: what, if anything, can be saved of a republican ideal forged in the nineteenth century and now faced with the demands of a fragmented and diverse society. Is the republican model of integration, wedded as it is to the nation-state, still of relevance and still workable?⁹³ These questions, as we have seen, have raised a variety of different responses. Few are those who believe that the republican model, with its

⁹⁰ *Libération*, 10 July 1998.

⁹¹ *Le Monde*, 4 September 1998.

⁹² See, for example, ‘Vive la République!’, the special issue of *Les Cahiers du Radicalisme*, 1 (1998).

⁹³ Michel Winock, ‘L’intégration, fonctionne-t-elle encore?’ *L’Histoire*, 229 (1999), 58–61.

emphasis on the free and equal participation of all its citizens, must be totally abandoned but so too there are those – ‘les républicains purs et durs’ – who do not acknowledge that the Republic might need to free itself from its own myths and its own dogmas. This in turn establishes a whole research agenda.

At a time when political philosophy is confronted with the need to give more substance to ideals of citizenship, it is striking that the presuppositions of French republicanism have never been probed theoretically (not least in France itself). Is French republicanism essentially illiberal? Should it be seen as a perverse form of communitarianism, for which the national community is the supreme community, forcibly imposing a unitary common good over the plurality of sub-national groups? To what extent does the republican conception of citizenship embody a truly universalist commitment, as opposed to a particularist articulation of national values? Can republican universalism be reconciled with the defence of group rights? Is the secular commitment to freedom of thought in a neutral public space sufficient to support cultural diversity? Is it plausible to uphold a strong version of the duties of citizenship in a *de facto* multicultural society?

These questions, and other similar ones, merit detailed empirical and theoretical investigation: when answered, they will shed light on issues that are central to current Anglo-American debates in political philosophy. This article has hinted strongly at the direction in which the response to these questions might go. In brief, the political project of nation-building pursued by the French state led not only to a weak conception of civil society but also to the persistent fear of the dangers of ‘communities’ operating within the public sphere. Within this project, citizenship was grounded upon a set of democratic political institutions rather than upon a recognition of cultural and/or ethnic diversity. Republicanism itself thus became a vehicle of both inclusion *and* exclusion. If, as can be argued, the existence of diverse cultural communities can be seen as a valuable element of a flourishing liberal society, republicanism needs to give greater attention precisely to the claims of diversity, completing the move from a recognition of the multi-ethnic nature of French society to the formulation of a multicultural conception of citizenship. At a minimum, this will entail an acceptance that group cultures merit equal respect and that the public sphere should be so organized as to allow all groups to enjoy equal presence and dignity. By the same token, such a liberal multiculturalism would acknowledge that there are clear limits to the claims and rights of groups. For example, there can be no toleration of repression or physical harm inflicted upon group members (a principle recently exemplified in the criminal prosecution of those involved in the forced circumcision of Malian girls).

The difficulties involved in such a reformulation of republicanism in France should not be underestimated. What is certain, however, is that cultural diversity in France has to be properly analysed for what it is, that it should not be ignored or treated with the same old republican mantras and, most of all, that it should not be demonized as some fundamentalist threat to the integrity of France.