

INEQUALITY AND DIFFERENCE: CURRENT SOCIOLOGICAL CHALLENGES TO THE FRENCH »REPUBLICAN MODEL OF INTEGRATION«*

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INTRODUCTION

Far from the heated polemics of the mass media, various researchers of different nationalities have undertaken to examine the »republican model of integration«, which is most often associated with France, a country known for its singularity in the defense of a unitary and »universalist« conception of the public sphere. In this essay I will examine two currents in contemporary French sociology that are contributing, with greater impact than others, to a redefinition of the terms of the debate on citizenship and its relationship to diversity. Both overtly challenge certain aspects of the republican credo that is supposed to provide the terms of reference for the state actors whose job it is to manage the relationship between citizenship and the diversity of origins.

Republican »model«? We will of course need to be clear about the content and the status of this notion. I would argue that although the republican model constitutes a nebulous of currents and ideas rather than a single, unified doctrine, it nonetheless contains a central core of coherent ideas and hence exercises an important influence – though certainly not all-powerful – in the formulation of public policy in France. In examining these two sociological currents, I want to show that the model is today confronted with important practical and theoretical challenges and that it can no longer avoid an open debate both about its practical, political implications and about certain of its central principles.

Sociological Analysis and Political Engagement

The first current we will examine is embodied by Michel Wieviorka, author of *La différence* (2000)¹ and of several other works over the past 20 years on questions of racism, urban violence, identity and citizenship. This author represents a broader current in French sociology, based at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales but influential well beyond the walls of that institution. The second is made up of a

* Review essay on the following two works: Michel Wieviorka, *La différence*, Balland, 2000, et Véronique de Rudder, Christian Poirer, François Vourc'h, *L'inégalité raciste. L'universalité républicaine à l'épreuve*, PUF, 2000. Slightly revised English translation of an article published in *Hommes et migrations*, Paris, July-August 2001.

¹ Paris, Editions Balland.

group of sociologists – Véronique de Rudder, Christian Poiret et François Vourc'h, all of the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) – who have made it their specialty over the past several years to study the forms of racism and discrimination in French society. An important synthesis of their work is found in *L'inégalité raciste, l'universalité républicaine à l'épreuve* (Racist inequality: republican universality put to the test, 2000).²

These two currents, although they converge on certain basic points, do not analyse the »republican model of integration« in the same way. While Michel Wieviorka is interested mostly in the theoretical and practical questions posed by the recognition (or non-recognition) of ethnic and ethno-cultural differences, Véronique de Rudder and her co-authors assign central importance to the problems posed, in theory and in practice, by what they call »ethnicist, racist and xenophobic« discriminations.

In the social sciences the choice of an object of analysis is never, of course, an innocent one; it represents, at the very outset of any investigation, a form of political engagement. The different objects they have chosen show that these two works center on two different types of democratic rights. While Wieviorka is preoccupied above all, in *La différence*, by the rights of cultural and ethnic recognition of communities of descent, de Rudder and her co-authors focus on the question of equality in the socio-economic sense of the term, which of course implies a right to socio-economic integration not affected by racism or xenophobia.

However, the choices of object made by researchers are not exclusively and immediately of a political order: the social sciences, after all, have their own (very diverse) criteria of theoretical rigor and scientific method. Undeniably, these two currents practice two very different *styles* of sociology. In *La différence*, Wieviorka makes his contribution to a broad international and interdisciplinary discussion of the theoretical and political paradigms of ethno-cultural difference, identity and citizenship as a specific form of belonging. This is no doubt what explains why he is content, in this work at least, with occasional and indirect *allusions* to the French republican model, among several other cases examined.

Véronique de Rudder et. al. are much closer than Wieviorka to the messy social and political terrain on which the French republican model plays itself out on a day-to-day basis. They seek above all to show the concrete circumstances in which discrimination takes place and how the republican »credo« influences the situation. Far from being content with empirical descriptions, they incorporate their field observations into a theoretical schema conceived to interpret racist and ethnicist practices as a particular type of social relation. Republican thought is grasped from the standpoint of the concrete public policies it generates, their practical consequences, their discourses of legitimation and, as we shall see, their possible lack of coherence.

² Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

I. A SOCIOLOGIST'S VIEW OF »DIFFERENCE«

Michel Wieviorka makes it a point, early in *La différence*, to distinguish clearly among three orders of social knowledge: *sociology*, *political philosophy* and *political analysis*, the latter of which can sometimes take the form of applied political expertise. The author is very conscious of how the confusion among these genres can lead to strange ideological mixtures, often steeped in hasty and schematic political judgments.

Without sacrificing his prerogative, as a citizen, to make philosophical and political choices, the author places himself resolutely on the terrain of sociology, for it is in this way that he claims to be able to examine, in their full variety and complexity, the practices and discourses of identity, ethnic, religious or cultural. According to Wieviorka, these practices have undergone a »boom« or »revival« in the Western world since the 1960s.

In its barest substance, Wieviorka's argument is twofold: first, the recognition by the state of ethnic or cultural differences can, under given circumstance, represent a »plus« for democracy; secondly, two extreme orientations need to be rejected: on the one hand, so-called »republicanist« orientations, which insist in a rigidly ideological way on the maintenance of the unitary character of the public sphere, and on the other, those variants of multiculturalism based on rigidly particularistic identity constructions, which can be openly or potentially aggressive. There is thus a happy medium to be defined, or forged in practice, which would allow for the expression of particular identities without abandoning the common ground of citizenship.

Could Wieviorka be called a »moderate multiculturalist«? The author is not particularly keen on assuming such a label, aware as he is of the degree to which the term has given rise to a remarkable cacophony in public debate. For the clarity of discussion, he prefers to reserve the term »multiculturalism«, used in a descriptive and non-normative way, to those states (such as Canada, Sweden or Australia) that have adopted concrete policies oriented to the »respect of particularisms«, usually with the object of combating inequalities defined both as »social injustices« and »cultural disqualifications« (p. 83). In a chapter dedicated to these national experiences, he notes that political leaders are always obliged to seek a difficult balance between »the reproduction of a culture and the universal values of law and reason« (p. 72).

Wieviorka argues that collective identities, when they become politicized, or ethnicized, or both at once, can nonetheless remain attached to a relatively unitary conception of citizenship. This is not always the case in practice, but, he would suggest, the dialogue with ethnic or cultural standard-bearers is a challenge to be accepted by democratic regimes.

However, it would be missing the essential point of Wieviorka's work to present it as a contribution to the study of citizenship. Between the republican »community of citizens« and the expressions of particular, ethno-cultural identities, his perspective tends to give greater visibility to the latter pole, hence the title of his latest work. He does not seek to make an uncritical apology of identities in general; his ambition is

rather to submit collective affirmations of identity of all sorts and all degrees of intensity to sociological examination, in order to understand how »differences« are made and unmade. The political management of difference, in its different forms, is certainly an important object in his field of vision, but Wieviorka is fascinated, above all, by the subjective processes of identity construction, both in their collective and individual dimensions.

In particular, he writes with great flair about the historically changing, »plastic« and »constructed« character of identities. Identities do not only evolve but mix with each other in many different ways, hence the importance of making clear distinctions among notions such as hybridization, *métissage*, and cosmopolitanism (pp. 75-76). In order to develop this vein of this thought, he relies on a number of important anglophone authors whose work is still little known (and untranslated) in France, such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Arjun Appadurai, Homi Bhabha, etc.³

Through these references and many others, Wieviorka stresses the ephemeral and malleable character of identity discourses. Far from obeying any set of iron laws, they may, according to the circumstances in which they are generated and received, crystallize into exclusivist practices or call themselves into question, decomposing and recombining with other discourses. Particular identities, thus revealed as »constructions« subject to constant change, become in Wieviorka's eyes a parameter that political leaders must handle with greater flexibility. Although he never makes an open plea for a given model of citizenship, Wieviorka suggests that any public policy seeking to uphold and enhance democratic values should be able to open itself up to dynamic processes of composition, decomposition and recombination of identities, rather than ignoring discourses of differences or, on the contrary, fetishizing them, which can be just as dangerous.

»Republicanist« rigidity et and republican flexibility

There is something imprecise about Wieviorka's manner of treating the republican model. The main source of my uneasiness on this score is the fact that Wieviorka grasps the model as an ideological construction rather than as a set of principles that conditions concrete political action. He presents the republican position as an ideal-type characterized by its attachment to »abstract universalism« and insistent, with greater or lesser violence, on cultural »assimilation«; it appears politically in the form of »nationalism, souverainism or republicanism« (pp. 95-96), keeping in mind that the suffix *-ism* in French denotes excess or exaggeration. The republican side of the debate is

³ Some of the more notable works by these authors : David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, New York/Londres, Routledge, 1996; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Cambridge (Mass.), USA, Harvard University Press, 1993; Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, 1994; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

always, as Wieviorka presents it, rigid, »old-fashioned« and dogmatic. However, he never informs his readers which precise political conceptions inspire the construction of this ideal-type.

Who are the »republicanists« that Wieviorka is so anxious to discredit? Anyone familiar with French political life can guess with little effort the names of certain political figures and intellectuals that he would be likely to classify under this heading: Jean-Pierre Chevènement, dissident socialist who has made the »Republic« the very emblem of his political action and Charles Pasqua, a right-wing rival of Chevènement who is often labeled as a »souverainiste« in the press, are likely to be included in any list. However, next to these reputedly dogmatic »republicanists« – for this is *par excellence* a matter of political opinion – there is apparently no place in Wieviorka's typology for more moderate republican positions, and in particular positions that take an interest in the question of difference and its political treatment. The disputes that have pitted Wieviorka against certain »rigid« republicans (and a few have indeed been so) during the 1990s have apparently provoked him to reject and disqualify the very term »republican« itself. This polemical procedure is not likely, in my view, to encourage constructive debate in the French political context. Yet it is quite possible to imagine a common political ground that encompasses both Wieviorka's positions and those of *certain* republicans.

The French »republican model of integration« exists above all as a set of references – certain central, others more secondary. A short list of central references would include 1) *laïcité*,⁴ 2) the principle of equality of citizens independently of their origins, and 3) the key role of the state in assuring policies of social integration. Each of these refers to complex theoretical and political debates; it is impossible to reduce the model to a single, monolithic doctrine. If certain political systems calling themselves multiculturalist succeed, as Wieviorka stresses, in practicing moderation in the valorization of particular identities, then why should it not be admitted that there is room, in the republican model in a broad sense, for the democratic expression of citizens in the full diversity of their origins, without violating the principle of a unitary ground of citizenship? Indeed, a careful examination of the French system as it actually functions today reveals that it is open to diversity in ways that Wieviorka's theorizations do not encourage us to notice.

The public sphere in France today, conditioned in part by the postulates of the republican model, includes broad spaces of expression for particular identities. Those who claim that the republican model by definition excludes from the public sphere, by definition, all manifestations of ethnic identities and cultural particularisms (aside from the dominant ones) appear to be working from a very restrictive definition of the public sphere.

⁴ The term *laïcité* admits of no simple translation: it is more than just the institutional separation of church and state, since it refers as well to the separation of identities, drawing a sharp distinction between particularistic identities (religious, ethnic or cultural) and universalistic ones, and above all that of »citizen«.

To take an important example, the continual efforts by successive French governments of the left and right since the 1990s to favor the insertion of Islam into French religious life and to facilitate its adaptation to the prevailing rules of *laïcité*, can in no way be interpreted as an attempt to »assimilate« Muslims or discourage them from freely assuming a religious identity. Nor has anyone in positions of state authority required Muslims to limit their religious engagement to a watertight »private sphere« that would prevent any form of public expression of the *meaning* they attribute to their engagement.

Another example: the promotion of regional languages in the French educational system, as decided in April 2001 by the government president by Prime Minister Lionel Jospin.⁵ It has often been assumed that the republican model is characterized by the dogmatic refusal of anything – including the publicly endorsed dissemination of regional or minority languages – that might be seen as contributing to the division of the nation along particularistic lines. However, the movements for the promotion of given regional languages (Breton, Occitanian, Alsatian, Basque, Corsican, etc.) did not have to wait for permission from French republican authorities to exist. What is at stake today is not the principle – which flows from basic democratic principles – of the right to disseminate these languages, but rather the question of how many pupils, on what scale, will be taught these languages in bilingual programs in the public schools. All the languages mentioned above are now in a position to broaden their public. Is this situation necessarily to be defined as a threat to republican unity? The only answer to this question is that there are regionalist movements of several different sorts, with differing aims, from the predominantly cultural to the openly nationalist and separatist. However, there is no republican orthodoxy that can determine with authority that the expansion of the publics of regional languages is by definition a threat. Although French is indeed designated as the »language of the Republic« by the Constitution, no one can claim it to be, *ipso facto*, the sole language of the public sphere and the sole vector of French national citizenship.⁶

The most elaborate philosophical formulations of the republican model do not in any way propose to ignore or suppress the diversity of citizens' origins; on the contrary, they postulate and encourage, on the basis of this very diversity, broad *intercultural*

⁵ See Bernard Poignant, *Langues et cultures régionales*, a report to the French Prime Minister, Paris, La Documentation Française, 1998 ; » Jack Lang installe les langues régionales dans le service public de l'éducation », *Le Monde*, 27 avril 2001. We shall leave aside here the complicated affair of the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages, signed by France in May 1999, approved by both President Chirac and Prime Minister Jospin, but then rejected by the Constitutional Council in June 1999. The measures announced by Minister of Education Jack Lang in April 2001 were decided upon in spite of the non-ratification of this charter by the French state.

⁶ One has no great difficulty envisioning a compatibility between French citizenship and a regional revival of the ancient Occitanian language; it is not farfetched, however, to see the growing dissemination of Basque as a possible vector for the growth of a militant separatist movement, already present on both sides of the French-Spanish border.

encounters.⁷ It is true enough that the notion of interculturality, at the current time, is more of a generous republican principle than a set of practices deeply rooted in public institutions. In an intercultural perspective, the point of republican citizenship is certainly not to hide avowed differences of origin or of culture, but rather to bring them to light in order to confront them with one another and thus promote mutual confidence among citizens, as a necessary basis for a sentiment of common belonging. It cannot be ruled out that Michel Wieviorka, who, as we have seen, is suspicious of any attempt to freeze or reify particular identities, and who places great emphasis on the theme of *métissage* (ch. 3), might find a broad area of common understanding with republican defenders of the idea of interculturality.

There are, indeed, broad grounds for potential agreement between »republicans« and others in France today. Does this mean that nothing further distinguishes republicans from their detractors, that everything is negotiable, and that we are heading toward a harmonious convergence of models? To say so would be an exaggeration. Let us take the example of the republican principle of equality above and beyond the differences of origin among citizens. In a republican logic, this principle implies, in one way or another, active and durable efforts by the state to promote the socio-economic integration of society, that is, a permanent strategy of struggle against inequalities. Republicans conceive of the state as a rampart to protect citizens from the hazards of the market, whereas numerous detractors of republican ideas call, on the contrary, for a minimal social function for the state, in the framework of a liberalism (in the French vocabulary) or neo-liberalism (to use a term with greater resonance in the Anglo-American world) that may involve greater or lesser doses of social policy to compensate for market-generated inequalities but premises social freedom on the autonomy of the market. In certain extreme versions of market liberalism, the nation-state has already been abandoned as an obsolete instance, whereas for republicans the defense of the state is the main defense against an anti-social and market-driven globalization.

However, there is no republican doctrine that defines with any exactitude the public policies or societal integration to be elaborated; this is a question that only practice can determine. In the past several years in France, republicans have shared the uncertainties and lack of resolve of market liberals in defining such policies, and as a result there is no long-term and effective strategy for the struggle against inequality.

Wieviorka remains remarkably discreet on these matters. Here, more than elsewhere, he respects a strict limit between sociology and political analysis, venturing only to enunciate certain very general philosophical principles, such as: »If it is admitted that equality constitutes an end or horizon and equity constitutes a means, then it becomes possible and desirable to associate the two in a common approach« (p. 92). The practical, political modalities of striving toward the end of equality remain unexplored.

⁷ The reference to interculturality is quite clear in *L'intégration à la française*, Report of the Haut Conseil à l'Intégration (ed. 10/18, 1993), a document often considered as a representative expression of the »republican model of integration«.

And yet it can be said that showing an interest in the problems of societal integration, in however oblique a manner, is already a step toward a republican approach. Beyond this point, the discussion remains largely open. Take, for example, the current French debate about the causes of social exclusion. Is it engendered directly by the logic of globalizing market liberalism, or is it also conditioned or mediated by »ethnic« variables, in the form of discrimination on the basis of origins or phenotype? On this point Wieviorka would clearly insist on taking into account the logic of difference, and here he converges, as we shall see, with Véronique de Rudder, Christian Poirer et François Vourc'h.

II. THE REPUBLICAN MODEL CONFRONTED WITH ITS OWN PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY

Although they share certain important theoretical premises with Wieviorka, the authors of *L'inégalité raciste* deploy a very different sociological methodology and manifest a completely different relationship to politics. For these authors, it is never a question of denying the importance of cultural and ethnic identities, but they attribute greater urgency to the problem of discrimination and how to fight its different forms.

This urgency is revealed by the gap these authors observe between rampant discriminatory practices and the republican model's principle of equality, central to the republican credo. How can this principle, fully accepted by many political leaders and by the authors themselves (they make no secret of it), be reconciled with the existence of dire inequalities, often with flagrant ethnic and racial connotations?

The political and ideological articulation of the principle of equality within the republican model has often given rise, in the authors' view, to public policies based on a puritanical denial of ethnic cleavages, as if they did not exist at all. Hesitancy in recognizing the various forms of »ethnicization of social relations« leads to a shocking blindness in the face of discrimination. This is not to say that ethnic and racial factors are never noticed by the actors of public policy; however, when they invoke the categories and the vocabulary habitually associated with the republican model, they have great trouble in *naming* these phenomena. Ethnically or racially conditioned inequalities are usually subsumed under the category of »socio-economic« or »territorial« inequalities, or again under the heading of »urban exclusion«.

The authors have a clear practical understanding of French republican reservations regarding ethnicity, having observed their operation in many different situations: in public housing administrations, in private enterprises and trade-unions, and among different categories of employees. While appreciating the proclaimed republican goal of promoting perfect impartiality in the distribution of resources among all citizens regardless of origin, they nonetheless feel compelled to denounce what they consider to be a terrible illusion of the republican credo, involving serious consequences: state actors, even as they proclaim their refusal of social divisions based on ethnicity, actu-

ally deny the existence of such divisions, even when they occur on a massive scale. This manner of abstracting away the factor of discrimination may have the positive effect, in a republican perspective, of »banalizing« or disguising the interethnic implications of policies of integration, in accordance with the notion that any ethno-racial connotation attached to public policy can be exploited by right-wing racist movements such as the Front National that are avid to legitimize their own differentialist and ethnically exclusive conception of the French nation. But this generous intention results in what amounts for Véronique de Rudder and her team, to hypocrisy.

Republican principle dictate a rejection of the notion of ethnic »minority«, on the grounds that no specific categories of citizens should be recognized, only citizens in general, that is, in the universal sense. The authors reject this reasoning, alleging that it prevents public actors from recognizing and fully understanding the processes by which given groups are relegated to a minority status, »ethnicized«, »racialized«, or otherwise assigned identities forcibly.⁸

»All indicators point to the development of a subterranean process of wholesale ethnicization of the portion of the proletariat excluded from employment and segregated« write the authors (p. 194). In order to fight this tendency, they see it as essential to provide actual or potential victims of discrimination with more rights, not just by making existing legislation more flexible, but also by allowing victims themselves to mobilize effectively in their own defense. Republicans conceive of the antiracist movement as a »universal« one, concerning not only victims but all citizens of good will who defend the principle of equality. Véronique de Rudder et. al. suggests that this high-minded principle may be a very »universalist« fashion of casting doubt on the capacity of individuals thrust into a »minority« status to mobilize democratically in defense of their own rights as citizens.

However, the authors do not go into detail about the precise forms such mobilizations could or should take, since they defend both their own autonomy as sociologists and that of the social actors concerned. However, they do call, more modestly, for a new *theorization* of social relations whose practical implications, if taken into account by political leaders, could encourage a loss of republican complexes regarding the question of ethnicity.

For V. de Rudder, C. Poirer and F. Vourc'h, it is essential to recognize the existence inter-ethnic relations as a constitutive dimension of social relationships in general. Ethnicity (and »race«) are certainly not, in their eyes, notions to be absolutized or reified. Their thesis is that there is ethnicity wherever social actors produce it, by drawing borders, however shifting, unstable and apparently irrational, between »us« and »them«. And when they do so, there is no alternative but to apprehend their discourse and their actions as the fruit of a subjectivity in which ethnic (or racial) categories *make sense*. Naturally, these categories can be, to varying degrees, frozen, hierarchical

⁸ On this subject, see also Fred Constant, *Le multiculturalisme*, Flammarion, 2000. This author speaks of processes of »*assignation à résidence identitaire*« (identity house arrest) that is, processes by which identities are forcibly ascribed.

and dehumanizing; sometimes they play on cultural distinctions (real or supposed), and sometimes on differences of phenotype, very often on both registers at once. Whatever the mechanisms of this differentializing subjectivity, it would be illusory to ignore its operative or performative character. The point is not to ask the state to adopt these subjective ethnic categories as their own, but simply to take them into account in devising its struggle against discrimination.

In the authors' vocabulary, there are two sorts of interethnic relations that need to be carefully distinguished. One is designated by the French term *rappports* (a very close synonym of »relations«) and the other by the word *relations* itself. Interethnic *rappports* are »social relations that take their place, at the structural and macrosocial level, within national and international relations, and that establish and organize the coexistence and contacts between majority and minority« (p. 154). These *rappports* provide the framework of interethnic *relations*, which constitute a somewhat freer space of interaction in which social relations reproduce themselves but can also be modified. This distinction is important because ethnicity »does not rest on an easily objectivizable substratum; it can only be grasped in interaction« (p. 155).

Véronique de Rudder et. al. adhere to theories of ethnicity – that of Fredrik Barth⁹ for example – that stress the socially constructed character of ethnic and ethno-cultural »borders«. Like Michel Wieviorka, they are interested in the processes by which these distinctions are produced and reproduced. However, they place little emphasis on the identity discourses produced by ethnicized groups themselves, considering it a greater priority to analyse the ethnic and racial stigma of which they are made the objects. In this framework, they take a close interest in the ways in which the state, caught in the mesh of a republican discourse that often chooses to interethnic relations (in both senses noted above), becomes partially responsible for the reproduction of such stigma.

The research summarized in *L'inégalité raciste*, carried out between 1994 and 2000, does not take systematically into account the efforts of the Jospin government since 1998 to dynamize the struggle against discrimination: the creation of territorial commissions (*Commissions départementales pour le développement de l'action citoyennes*, CODAC), a free telephone number to report instances of discrimination, modification of the conditions under which discrimination can be proven in court, etc. They recognize a significant evolution since 1998, insofar as the problem of discrimination is now designated as an important target of public policy, but they remain skeptical regarding the measures taken to date. The new governmental approach still »neglects the specific weight of institutions and the state apparatus itself in the production of 'racial' inequalities and does not fully appreciate the actual racist character of discrimination, that is, the production and reproduction of a social relation of domination that impregnates and structures society as a whole« (p. 185-186).

⁹ See P. Poutignat et J. Streiff, *Théories de l'ethnicité*, Paris, PUF, 1995, for the French translation of an important text by Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Boundaries*.

More generally, the authors criticize what they see as the »improvisation« (*bricolage*) in the area of social policy. While successive governments have attempted to impart a semblance of coherence to the policies adopted, analysis of the policies pursued reveals a tendency to fragment the areas of intervention. Social policies are often formulated on the basis of a »territorial« or »urban« approach that runs the risk of what one sociologist has called an »over-localization of the social« (A. Belbahri, quoted on p. 194). The basic difficulty being that »local social problems are defined without relation to the societal whole of which they are both the product and the expression«, to such an extent that »the social processes and relations that produce social marginalization are covered up in silence«.

There is no obvious remedy to this problem, the authors stress: no royal road, and no theoretical model ready at hand to suggest original solutions. Although it is not altogether inconceivable to introduce a dose of interethnic sociology into the social policies inspired by the republican model, the task is not an easy one, either politically or intellectually. The authors take a clear distance from the experience of affirmative action in the United States,¹⁰ with the following commentary: »the policies of struggle against ethnic and racial discrimination can, when they define disfavored groups on the basis of unilateral criteria (»race«, ethnicity, »underclass« status or »exclusion«), they miss their goals in part and contribute just as much to the reinforcement of ethnic or 'racial' borders as to social fragmentation« (p. 194). In an even more critical vein, they denounce »an approach to defining categories that is closed and exclusive, and hardly takes into account the pluridimensional character of social relations of domination, reducing interethnic relations solely to their juridical mode of regulation«.

Nonetheless, they judge certain polemics in France waged against U.S. affirmative action policy to be self-serving, making light of the fact that the republican perspective too, often tends to reduce questions of social policy to their »juridical-statist dimension« and thereby »ignores the multiple adjustments that are born in the process of interactive ethnic relations« (p. 196).

The republican model is thus faced with a dilemma, or something closely resembling one: »There is a narrow path between two obstacles: a path that would make it possible to fight the concrete effects of racism or ethnicism without redoubling their impact through the institutional designation of categories of the population that they take as their target« (p. 194).

The sometimes ironic or even exasperated tone of the authors regarding social policy inspired by the republican model does not prevent them from judging that, after all, the orientation chosen in France is not so bad, since it »seems to offer, at least in the historical and political context of this country, a reasonable way out« (p. 195).

¹⁰ In this book the authors refer little to the comparative dimension of their research, but they are, naturally, very interested in other national experiences. See, for example, Ida Simon-Barouh et Véronique de Rudder (éds.), *Migrations internationales et relations interethniques. Recherche, politique, société*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997, which contains some remarkable work on the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, South Africa, and other countries.

However, the approach remains in their view »too abstract« and too marked by an »ideal of liberating civilization« that masks and justifies a »racist social order« and thereby »prolongs the colonial era«.¹¹

How it is possible, then, to conserve the framework of the prevailing model of integration while inciting it to reinvent itself? The authors prefer to leave to others the task of defining in detail the policies to be invented, but they do not hesitate to make a few practical suggestions for those who read their work in a political perspective. For example, they call (along with many other sociologists interested in questions of racism and discrimination) for the French national apparatus of demographic statistics to take into account the »ethnicity« of individuals. Such data is, of course, sensitive and subject to abuse, as some defenders of republican thinking have stressed, can lead to abuses.¹² However, a change in statistical methods is inevitable in the authors' eyes, if the state is truly interested in struggling more effectively against discrimination, for only through such change can knowledge of the phenomenon become more precise.

The authors call as well for more extensive legislative reforms in order to make it easier for victims of discrimination to prove its existence: »L' the legal definition of discrimination must include practices that, without intending to harm, engender systematic, or even structural, 'racial' or ethnic inequalities« (p. 198). Finally, they recommend the creation of an »official authority, pluralist and independent« capable of »meeting the requirements of a necessary 'positive action' in favor of equality«. (Others, in a recent past, have called for the creation, in France, of a body equivalent to the British Commission on Racial Equality.)

Implicitly, de Rudder et. al. hope for a renewed social and political inventivity, knowing full well that creative solutions to the problem of discrimination are condemned to forge a difficult path in political life. For everyday politics is conditioned by the pitiless logic of struggle among apparatuses; policymakers hardly ever have the privilege of bringing perfect philosophical coherence to their decisions.

CONCLUSION

The two sociological currents examined here take clear distances from certain aspects of the republican credo, without calling into question all its assumptions. Each current in its own way shares with the republican outlook a concern for *socio-economic equality* and for *democratic cohesion*. In spite of significant differences between these

¹¹ The authors do not specify in what manner, in their view, colonial era is perpetuated in contemporary social relations. Others, however, have examined this question. See, for example, the journal *Hommes et migrations*, issue 1107, May-June 1997, dossier entitled »Imaginaire colonial, figures de l'immigré«; issue 1128, November-December 2000, dossier »L'héritage colonial«. See also Etienne Balibar, »Racisme et nationalisme« in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, *Race, nation, classe, les identités ambiguës*, Paris, La Découverte, 1988, 1997.

¹² In particular, see Hervé Le Bras, *Le démon des origines*, Editions de l'Aube, 1998.

two approaches both to social analysis and to politics, both currents forcefully raise a question that defenders of the republican outlook in the future will find hard to avoid: how can the principle of democratic national citizenship be reconciled with the recognition of a tangible logic of ethno-racial differentiation stubbornly lodged within social relations? In the coming years, republican thinking will have to forge its own »narrow path« toward the solution of this problem, and in so doing will have to reinvent itself.

POVZETEK

NEENAKOSTI IN RAZLIKE: TRENUTNI IZZIVI SOCIOLOGIJE

James Cohen

Avtor predstavlja razširjen in polemiziran francoski koncept socialne integracije priseljencev, ki ga imenuje »republikanski model integracije«. V modelu so vsebovane ideološke predpostavke družbene enakosti preko unitarnega pojmovanja univerzalističnega koncepta javne sfere življenja. Francija je ena od držav, ki ta model razvija in zagovarja, čeprav je polemika dokazovala njegove nekonzistentne značilnosti, predvsem v praksi. Avtor sledi dvema tokovoma sociološke diskusije v Franciji, ki težita spremeniti pojmovanja o državljanstvu in odnos do etnične raznolikosti. Cilj javnih in strokovnih diskusij na to temo je preseči nekatere republikanske vrednote, ki so ovira razvoju kulturnega pluralizma. Spremembe bi vladi omogočale, da bi lahko bolje stregla priznanju ali razlikovanju med državljanstvom ter etnično identifikacijo priseljencev glede na njihov izvor.

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