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456

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The legacy of South African colonialism: The messianic and the national subject

Ivor Chipkin

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A National and a Democratic Logic

Etienne Balibar has suggested that every national political project presupposes an ethnicity, that is, a certain substance that inheres in its subjects and renders them commensurate. At the moment, therefore, when even a democratic project becomes a national project it is driven to imagine an essential quality that binds *these* individuals in *this* place at *such and such* a time in relations of equivalence. What will be explored in this paper is exactly the substance, the national ether, presupposed by the democratic project in South Africa. At stake is the ethnic quality of the South African *citizen*. Now, this may seem an unusual formulation; if not a thoroughly dubious assertion. The 'rainbow' nation is so blatantly not an ethnic nation, one could respond. The constitution, for example, recognises 11 official languages and is formally premised on non-racialism. It grants, moreover, equality to women and even lesbians and homosexuals. Indeed, its only standard is that of the universal subject, the bearer of fundamental human rights. The boundary of the nation, furthermore, is not deemed to enclose a peculiar racial, ethnic or linguistic group but is merely that historical artifact inherited from colonialism that has become sedimented for whatever contingent reason.

But let us dwell a little on the figure of the citizen. Despite its historical designation as simply a member of a political community (be it a monarchy, aristocracy, a despotic regime or a democracy), the term citizen today has a preeminent signification as the subject of the democratic community. It is the democratic subject *par excellence*. Modern political theory understands by this term a political subject bearing civic rights (equality before the law, personal liberty, the freedom of speech, of belief, of opinion, the right to property and the rights to contract with another), political rights (right to elect and to be elected and the right to participate in government) and even socio-economic rights (equal access to health care and the regulation of work), where these rights are deemed to announce themselves from human nature.[1] At first glance, therefore, a project appealing to citizenship is driven merely to give expression to a nature always already given. But we are confronted with our first difficulty when we ask who is a citizen? Or rather, who is not? Whose fundamental human rights, that is, are recognised in the national community? The moment the *Citizen* (the universal bearer of rights) becomes a *citizen* (the bearer of rights in a national community) she is necessarily marked with a distinctive quality that distinguishes her from other citizens; a something, in other words, that makes her rights admissible in this or that community . Our second difficulty arises when we ask if these rights apply to the mad and the mentally handicapped. Living apart and judged incapable of autonomously expressing their opinions they are said only to have partial political rights. Marie Gaille concludes, therefore:

> "This makes one suspect that citizenship is not granted to this or that individual on the basis of the rights of man, but, rather, as a status conferred according to relative criteria [...]."

"Cela fait naître le soupçon que la citoyenneté n'est pas attribuée à tel ou tel individu en vertu de droits de l'homme, mais plutôt comme un statut conféré en fonction de critères relatifs [...][2]"

Now, if citizenship is a status and not a right, then it implies duties and obligations issued not from nature, but from the political community itself. Even when judged a feature of birth it only reveals itself in relations between people and the State. Rights only appear, that is, in the light of the sovereign law. Hence the disassociation possible between the 'natural rights of Man' and the civic and especially political rights of the citizen. To the extent, therefore, that rights are conferred by the law they can be granted in degrees and they are susceptible to political claims by those who do not enjoy them. Citizenship is thus produced in the relations between individuals or collectivities and the State.

We can ask, therefore, without being absurd who is not a citizen? Let me give precision to this question to avoid any misunderstanding; for the misrecognition of its object will lead us away from the problem that I want to declare. I am not so much interested in the criteria governing admission to the community, than I am with the quality governing the production of the national citizen in the first place. But I do not mean by this phrase who is entitled to what rights. In asking who is not a citizen it does *not* follow that one refers to a bill of human rights and then studies how class or gender or culture or sickness impedes their exercise. Nor does it follow that one further interrogates social relations to determine which is and which is not a fundamental right. Such an approach would take as given the very thing I want to problematise. In asking who is a citizen, I intend, who lives *within* the social; or better, who lives *within* the nation?

The citizen is not simply an individual admitted to the political community, but a figure *produced* through the sovereignty of the law. She appears, that is, at the moment she is granted certain rights by the State and exercises or makes claims against it. We can say, therefore, that the citizen appears when the State establishes itself as the embodiment of the law in a particular territory. But conceived as a production or an appearance we can see that the citizen has conditions of being that are not the conditions of nature. Its conditions are the conditions of state sovereignty.

Now, sovereignty is not established by an act, is not a declaration of independence, it is not even the capture of state power; it is a system of material practices that establish the hegemony in a national territory of state apparatuses. It is that process of hailing and instituting individuals into relations that are comprehensible to these institutions. If we ask, then, who is a citizen, we can say schematically, that it is an individual rendered comprehensible to the state.

We can thus distinguish between two essential features of a *national citizen*. On the one hand she is similar to *these* citizens and unlike *those*. On the other hand, she has rights granted according to a standard that is properly-speaking social. I will describe these qualities separately as a *fictive ethnicity* and a *fictive sociability*. Despite their apparent similarity (is the community of citizens not simply the community of nationals?) they govern distinct boundaries; or more precisely, they govern distinct axes. A fictive ethnicity designates a *horizontal* relationship that is both segmented and serial. It refers to some or other property, essential and durable ("you can take the Frenchman out of France but you cannot take France out of the Frenchman"), that inheres in certain individuals and distinguishes them from others. It also refers to a substance both contingent (the French-ness of a Frenchman) and universal (while Frenchman x is different from a German y, xy are both simultaneously *national* beings). We can discuss, therefore, a ubiquitous national attribute. I will call it a national *Ethnicity*. In contrast, sociability refers to *vertical* relations between members of the community; its hierarchies, orders, grades and ranks. In the case of citizenship this social architecture is deemed, or is seen to be produced, not by God, nor a

divine-like force, but by the relationship between social groups themselves; that is, *within* the social. Now the articulation of a national logic and a citizen logic (as a peculiar fictive sociability) implies a very curious production of the political community indeed. We can say, very schematically for the moment, that it is a 'people' that produces itself! The essential and identical property deemed inherent in national subjects (their fictive ethnicity) is itself produced by them[1]. Theirs is properly-speaking an historical society; propelled by its original tautology: the imperative to continually produce the very thing (national citizens) that it is produced by (national citizens). This is how I suggest we should understand Thabo Mbeki's call for a national debate about Transformation. It is a move to define a South African fictive ethnicity for and by South African citizens.

Now, from outside this tautology; outside the 'national question' that is, the limits of the democratic project in South Africa are discernible; and in particular its necessary blind-spots. It is incapable of coming to terms with customary practices. I do not simply mean by this that customary authorities cannot be 'thought' *in* the nation; that their powers and functions, their relationship to the state cannot be formulated *etc*. With some difficulty they can be. This is the object of legal attempts to producing a working relationship between customary law and civil law. Or current attempts to define a limited role for traditional authorities in rural local governments[3]. These approaches are firmly grasped by the tautology discussed above; they are driven to conceive customary subjects in the very terms that are inadmissible in their context: as national citizens produced in the sovereign light of the national state. Now, at stake is not simply customary institutions, but the subjects hailed by them. They are produced not in the light of the national state, but in the sometimes bright, sometimes flickering glow of customary institutions.

The current debate about customary authorities, as manifest in the handful of policy documents concerning them, treats these institutions as essentially uniform, uniformly robust and resilient, that is. What this conceals is their highly varied nature in terms both of their *de facto* competencies and the reach of their authority. New legislation, as previewed in the white papers on rural local government and municipal infrastructure, runs the risk, therefore, of overestimating their importance in some places and according to some a role that may serve merely to sediment a weak or withering institution. Now, by reducing the 'problem' that 'traditional' authorities represent, as do the white papers on rural local government and municipal infrastructure, to one of institutional cooperation, cohabitation, powers and functions between them and state structures, what is overlooked are their *effects*. These institutions produce subjects, not according to the figure of the national subject, not invested with a national Ethnicity, but according to what I will discuss as a messianic figure; a subject hailed according to another mode-of-being in the world. The extent to which traditional institutions are compatible with elected government depends merely on the degree to which they are patriarchal or democratic. This is not a new observation, and in this respect Mamdani, for example, merely serves to remind us of something Marx had long known. But this changes not the fact that whether their internal organisation is more or less patriarchal they in no way hail *national subjects*! Now, once we lower our gaze from the level of the institution to the subjects produced by them we can notice that the question is much larger than mere institutional compatibility (or not). What South African and other historical scholarship has stressed over the last two decades and, moreover, what informed the politics of the tri-partite alliance (the ANC, the SACP and COSATU) is that the customary system in South Africa is, by nature, deterritorialised. We need not re-invent the wheel to state that the system of migrant labour functioned to displace customary subjects beyond the

[1] We are in the presence of a truly mysterious community, a fantomythic assembly, haunted by a pantheon of spirits and ghosts, archetypes and specimens – a community that must imagine its own consistance, must produce its distinctive something : the fantasmic blood of the German,

jurisdictions of their chiefs and kings. Treating, therefore, the central question of 'traditional' authorities as one concerning the institutional relationship between them and state apparatuses conceals the presence, sometimes scattered, but sometimes organised, of *subjects* being-in-the-world-differently within the jurisdiction of state apparatus. Now, let me be precise about what I mean here by a customary subject. I do not necessarily refer to those subjects still obedient to a certain chiefly hierarchy, but rather those persons that represent and live their relationship to others and to the state according to messianic time. A customary subject is one that has been interpellated into a certain mode of being that is incomprehensible to the national state. We will find that the force of the contradiction between the customary 'system' and the national state is not essentially produced *in* the political *about* the political (about, that is, the respective roles and powers and function of traditional bodies and local governments) but in the interstices of the political and the social. In other words, the force of the contradiction is manifest in the capacity of the state to govern. At stake is the establishment of state sovereignty. Or, rather, of producing all South Africans in the light of the national state. Hence, a more urgent question for the national state than the role of authorities next to or within state structures, is their capacity to hold and interpellate their subjects in non-messianic relations.

We will see that the Ethnicity of a national subject, is not simply an identity, a certain representation of their things-in-common with others 'like' them, but is that quality permitting such a representation in the first place. The nation is a society, par excellence, of *individuals*. But I have something very precise here in mind. I do not refer here to a biological category, or even a *homo oeconomicus*, or a *homo rationalis*, but to a subject that automates herself according to that spatial and temporal matrix that Walter Benjamin called 'homogenous time'. The condition of state sovereignty, or more accurately of the sovereignty of the nation state, is the insertion of people into a host of relations (spatial, familial and bureaucratic) that capture them in homogenous time; that make of them, in other words, individuals.

The substance that I will propose is lacking in customary subjects, therefore, is exactly this spatio-temporal matter, this certain mode-of-being-individuals that makes them governable by the national state. Or put differently, what is lacking in customary subjects is their insertion into a host of material structures that would make of them individuals; beings in homogenous time.. The customary subject is hailed into a space-time matrix that manifests as a different relationship to power, to space and to time. The contradiction between the customary subject and the national state manifests most acutely at precisely the moment when the latter tries to govern. For what is at stake in these operations, what we can call 'development', is precisely the capture of people to homogenous time; is the insertion of subjects in relations that transform or reproduce them as individuals.

The customary subject, moreover, is not simply another national subject – that would make the conflicts in South Africa equivalent to those in Northern Island (an Irish subject vs a British subject), Spain (a Catalan or a Basque subject vs a Spanish subject) or Turkey (a Kurdish subject vs a Turkish subject). In only one case, and only during a short while during the early 1990's, was a customary subject nearly appropriated to nationalism[1]. It is precisely their *formal* willingness to be South African national subjects that has enabled the state to avoid a secessionist war (only just!) and, moreover, permitted traditional institutions to find partial recognition in the

[1] We should note the speech of King Goodwill Zwelithini, King of the Zulus, dated 14 of February 1994 : «If the Zulu nation cannot co-exist with the other societies in a united South Africa, it will become necessary and unavoidable that the Zulu nation lives independantly in its own land and with its own government [...] » (cited in Polunic, J (1998) 'KwaZulu, Natal, KwaZulu-Natal : Identités ou identité d'une nouvelle province Sud-Africaine ?' in *Geographie et Cultutres : l'Afrique du Sud recoposée*. No. 28, hiver. L'Harmattan : Paris.

South African constitution[4]. They rarely demand political sovereignty in their own national territory; or more precisely, from a climax in 1994 such claims have progressively diminished. In other words, and despite appearances, the contradiction between customary and national subjects is not about competing versions of fictive ethnicity. If we consider quickly the competing images of the South African 'people', competing notions of South African fictive ethnicity, we will see that even when customary subjects are apparently accommodated in this image is not enough to make of them authentic national subjects.

1. Building the South African Nation

1.1 The limit of Incarnation

I find useful the suggestion of Pierre Rosanvallon that the democratic imperative implies simultaneously "the definition of a regime of authority and a subject exercising it" ["la définition d'un regime d'autorité et d'un sujet l'exerçant"], where the principle of popular rule – power to the "people" - is subject to a double indetermination concerning the incarnation of the "people" as a sociological entity and the political-institutional means to give expression to its voice[5].

> "In making the will sacred against the natural order or against history, modern politics grants power to the people at the moment the emancipatory project driven by it leads in a parallel way to render the social abstract[6]" [imc].[i]

The illegibility of the social, for a democratic project, arises from the egalitarian principle that reduces each individual to a rights-bearing subject and a citizen outside her historical and sociological existence.

> All their differences and their distinctions [of individuals]must be placed at a distance only to consider them in their common and essential quality: that of the autonomous subject[7]" (imc)[ii].

The republican enterprise thus empties the "people" of its concrete social content (class/gender/cultural differences), of its sociological consistence, to render it a purely abstract quantity of individuals. Rosanvallon discusses the history of representation in France as fluctuating between moves to give sociological content to the French "people", on the one hand, to represent them, that is, in their concrete social conditions, or, on the other, to incarnate this purely abstract body of autonomous subjects . He reminds us, moreover, that this produced a "cacophony" of typologies claiming to describe the essential (and hence representable) categories of the French social and/or an array of descriptions (and hence practices) of this individual shorn from her historical and sociological specificity: a universal republican figure. We can say, alternatively, that the republican project vacillates between competing (ethnic) figures of the citizen; competing conceptions of the peculiar social consistency of the social or images of the national subject. These are the terms in which the "nation-building" project in South Africa is cast: to capture and represent the 'nation' in its concrete sociology and/or to institute a South African individual. In this regard, a major shift has occurred and is occurring in the state conception of the South African "nation".

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[i] "En sacralisant la volonté contre l'ordre de la nature ou de l'histoire, la politique moderne confie au peuple le pouvoir au moment où le projet d'émancipation qu'elle véhicule conduit parallèlement à abstractiser le social"

[ii] "Toutes leurs différences [des individus] et leurs distinctions doivent être mises à distance pour ne plus les considérer que dans leur commune et essentielle qualité: celle de sujet autonome".

If during the 1980's the answer to who were the South African "people" was given, in the preeminent political discourse of the ANC alliance, by the theory of National Democratic Revolution, the decline of a politics informed by Marxism-Leninism during the 1990's has seen the "people" defined more and more abstractly via the notion of the individual, coupled ambiguously and uneasily with ideas inherited from African Nationalism. Although NDR stressed the primarily working-class character of the "nationally oppressed", following Lenin in *Imperialism: the highest stage of capitalism*, it did not reduce the one to the other. Here it was argued that South African workers were not simply exploited as a proletariat, but were simultaneously dominated as a people. It was precisely the national character of colonial power that made possible a (ultimately temporary[1]) class alliance between workers and other colonised classes – this that gave the anti-apartheid struggle the form of a national struggle. Indeed, it was this reading of the South African political-economy that formed the basis of the alliance between the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and, in the 1980's, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). The "people" thus seeking political freedom in a democratic state form where those national-democratic subjects oppressed and exploited by a racial-capitalism.

When the ANC won power in the historic election of 1994, the theory of NDR found expression in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Premised on a profound suspicion of South African capitalism (as the author of oppression and exploitation) the RDP envisaged a programme of state-driven social investment to remedy the massive inequalities (what were called euphemistically "backlogs") in housing, infrastructure, services, education, health and so on between "white" and "black" South Africans. The programme foresaw, as one of its key principles, a national process of popular governance where development priorities for each tier of government (chiefly regional and local) were to be determined in local assemblies (Community Development Forums and Local Development Forums) that would give expression to the "people's" will. Not wanting to preempt an argument that will develop in the course of this paper, I will not discuss here the reasons for the eclipse of the RDP. We can note merely that in 1996 it was replaced by the Growth, Equity and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy as the cornerstone of government policy. What is important to observe is the remarkable and fundamental shift that GEAR represents, and the consequences it implies for who today is considered the South African "people". First and foremost the GEAR policy effectively acquits South African capitalism of charges of reproducing racial inequality in its structure, by premising social redress on a vigorous and energetic expansion of the private sector and the market. Contemporary government policy thus stresses economic growth, and the growth of the capitalist sector in particular, as the condition of meeting former RDP social targets.

If political freedom and popular sovereignty, as envisaged by the politics of national democratic revolution, translated not simply into "one man (sic) one vote", but into the "nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy" so that the "wealth of the country be shared by all", GEAR, while sometimes retaining the metaphors and language of NDR, reinvests the popular will with a distinctly liberal and noticeably Africanist sociology (if I may be permitted such an expression): today it speaks of "black" people winning control of an economy owned and

[1] The theory of National Democratic Revolution required a two-staged struggle for socialism : the first would be a national struggle in which the working class allied itself with other nationally oppressed classes to establish a « national-democratic state » - neither capitalist, nor socialist but rather socialist in orientation, according to the famous formulation of Jeremy Cronin and Raymond Suttner ((1986). *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press) – followed by a proletarian revolutionary struggle.

controlled by "whites" so that all South Africans may equally become consumers and owners of propertyi.

We can define the rupture that has occurred in South African alliance politics since the mid-1990's as follows: the politics of national-democratic revolution spoke of the "people" as "national-democratic" subjects, represented directly through "organs of people's power", in search of a class-less, non-racial society. The politics attached to GEAR today speaks, rather, of a "black" people seeking a political and economic universe of free and equal individuals. It is important, nonetheless, to notice the (apparent) convergence of terms between a project informed by NDR and a liberal-nationalist politics. NDR easily spoke of "blacks" as a synonym for the "nationally oppressed" – where the term here automatically embraced "Coloureds" and "Indians" – while the proponents of GEAR are able to claim that "black" ownership and control of the economy is consistent with the promise that the wealth of the land be shared by all![ii] This slippage of terms is made possible precisely because both the NDR and GEAR are firmly enclosed on the same side of the dichotomy of which Rosanvallon speaks. In other words, neither the politics of NDR nor of GEAR seek better to represent the "people" in their lived categories of existence. The struggle against apartheid did not simply demand that the voice of "blacks" be equally represented amongst those of "whites", "Coloureds" and "Indians". Indeed this was the (eventual) promise of the Tri-cameral parliament introduced by the apartheid government in its reformist stage. "National-democratic" subjects and "blacks" do not refer to sociological categories. They do not express the interest of a particular fraction of the South African "people" conceived as a multi-racial collective. Rather, they designate historical figures bearing a national task of dissolution and revolutionary incarnation. They describe respectively the universal agents charged with realising a new and unified South African "people": composed of non-racial subjects in the case of NDR and ("free and equal") individuals in the case of GEAR. The slippage of terms between them is made possible, therefore, exactly because the "national-democratic" subject and the "black" person are only substantial, physical beings during a certain political moment. "Blacks" are not a group defined by race or pigment or class or gender or geography or profession or employment and so. They are merely those subjects conjured in and through "black" liberation. When NDR and GEAR thus refer to the South African "people" they refer to a potential, not a concrete social mass. In this regard the identity of the "people" is given by the political projects that seek to incarnate it. We can say, therefore, that the South African democratic project is less interested in the lived, concrete sociology of the "people" than it is in consecrating a new political subject. It seeks less to represent South Africans in their lived differences – a project too reminiscent of apartheid – than to realise a new "people", liberated from their apartheid-given identities.

What is important to notice is that neither NDR, nor GEAR accommodates a "customary" subject as a legitimate political actor. Customary practices are judged survivals of an apartheid-colonial past that should be overcome in a new unified South African "people". We should note, therefore, that within the limits of such a project the impossibility of thinking "customary" subjects arises not from the fact that customary practices are in themselves contrary to every

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[i] The GEAR policy is expressed as a vigorous stress on « affirmative action » - promoting the employment of « black » persons in government and business, raising « black » capital – often trade-union funds – for investment in the market and for acquiring « white » companies, the desire to encourage the emergence of a « black » middle class, and so on.

[ii] Which has not stopped the charge from many quarters in South Africa that it is not self-evident how the enrichment of a « black » middle-class or how « black » corporate ownership and control improves the material circumstances of South Africa's poor, unemployed (placed at between 25 and 40%) and homeless.

democratic practice[i], but rather that they are incompatible with the image of the national figure *to be produced*. The difficulty of accommodating customary subjects in the South African "people", therefore, does not arise from the distance between them and democratic principles, but rather from the objectives of the national project itself.

This is what I have suggested elsewhere[8] was at the heart of the Katorus violence. Zulu-speaking hostel dwellers and others were disinclined to the anti-apartheid politics that animated the 1980's and early 1990's precisely because they did not easily recognise themselves as either African National Subjects or National Democratic Subjects. Their disengagement from political campaigns during this period was judged by organisations sympathetic to the ANC as evidence of their disinterest in the anti-apartheid struggle, if not, and even worse, as proof of their collaboration with the apartheid state[ii]. In other words, the moment they were seen not to attach to the national democratic project they ceased to belong to the (agent of the) South African "people". There was no space in this practice for social difference expressed as political difference. Certainly, the "people" as a sociological entity, according to NDR, was complex and structured in difference, but as a political unity they were commonly gathered behind a single flag: national liberation. Customary subjects in Katorus were not deemed adversaries because their actual behaviour *really* threatened the democratic project, but more importantly, because it simply could not understand them when did not act like national-democratic subjects. We can say, in other words, that customary subjects were deemed lacking this national-democratic quality, this political fictive ethnicity, that would have rendered them comprehensible to the protagonists of a national-democratic struggle. In this version of the South African project, therefore, the figure of the national subject *to be* was given by the figure of the individual in pursuit of National-Liberation. In its GEAR rendition it is supplied by the figure of the (black) economically independent individual. In both cases, however, the native is unthinkable within the limits of the national project precisely because it is deemed to lack either of these (fictive) ethnic properties. But we shall see in a moment that the national project also appeals to another political logic; one that seeks, not to incarnate something new, but to accommodate the existing social heterogeneity in a single political authority. Here the national subject is not invested with any particular identity (political, cultural, linguistic, racial or economic) apart from a legal status. But we shall see that this makes it no more easy to think the native in the limits of the national project. For what they lack here is not a fictive ethnicity but, more importantly, a national Ethnicity; this quality that would make of them national individuals in the first place.

1.2. The limit of a representative project

If customary subjectivities are unthinkable as legitimate political identities in South Africa because of the nature of the democratic project, we will find it no easier to think them in a practice seeking to represent the "people" in their concrete differences. This is true not simply because the essential (and hence representable) contours of the "people" are not given by science – but are constructed and contested through political and intellectual struggle – but because the problem is not simply one of typology. If we return quickly to the formulation of Rosanvallon cited earlier we see the slippage between the republican project in the context that concerns us.

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[i] This is the approach of Mahmood Mamdani who advocates integrating customary institutions into the post-colonial state by strengthening their inherent democratic potential.

[ii] The alienation of customary subjects from trade-union activities marks one of the great tragedies of the democratic transition. During the early 1980's migrant workers in Johannesburg and Durban were at the forefront of a militant trade-unionism, who became gradually disenchanted with a union politics that progressively articulated itself to struggles not solely concerned with wages and working conditions. Many hostel dwellers had until then been content to express their interests as workers through the trade-unions and their political aspirations through the customary system.

The democratic imperative, he suggests, requires "la définition d'un regime d'autorité et d'un sujet l'exercant" where the political subject(s) in question is deemed uniform and essentially identical. But we shall see that in South Africa the citizen, '*le* sujet exercant', is, at best, simply a legal-constitutional figure, for in practice there are several competing political subjects active in the social whole. If a project of incarnation equates the national spirit or character with a certain unique figure, and grants to a specific political agent the historical task of realising the "people" anew or at all, a representative project, while apparently admitting social difference, nonetheless assumes that 'we' are always, already identical individuals.

This hypothesis will become clearer through a reading of a paradigmatic example. I have selected to consider here briefly the content of what Alain Touraine calls a democratic multicultural politics precisely because it seemingly concerns the reconciliation of multiple subjectivities in a democratic space. Or rather, it apparently concerns a national politics not premised on a fictive ethnicity. I will restrict my comments to what he defines as the limit of Western democracy[9]. In its usage here the latter term refers to those practices (theoretical and political) premised on an opposition between a public sphere governed by reason and laws conforming to rational organisation and a private domain dominated by tradition and by passions. In this political universe, Touraine suggests, the social order is considered the province of rationality where its laws approach or should approach those of nature, whereas the individual and the communities to which it belongs (the family, the village, the parish, the region and the nation as an ethnic totality) reproduce demands antithetical to rational exchanges. Such a conception subordinates the civil, economic and cultural society to the political so that social commerce is organised by rational laws obeying reason.

We should note several elements of this political practice according to Touraine. It is necessarily harnessed to what he and others have called a politics of 'ends', what I have earlier termed a politics of incarnation: it seeks to construct the single and unique authority of the (universal) law above the plurality of cultures[10] by constituting a new subject embodying the general. It is in this spirit that the French state hoped work, education and obedience to the law would make of immigrants and others rooted in their social particularisms national citizens that behaved according to universalist principles. That is, such a practice treats as inferior those social behaviours or identities deemed obstacles to the march of reason because chained to their singularity. It is precisely against the "hegemony" of categories deemed to express the general spirit or personality (the ethnicity?) of the national subject that a multiculturalism protests[11]. It seeks to admit as legitimate and equal those social identities not deemed by a republican democratic project compatible with its universal mission. Its target, therefore, is a certain conception of democracy itself: it claims to be a democratic practice cognisant of sociological realities against a project premised on formal philosophical abstractions. In this regard, Touraine and others have spoken of a politics of 'means' as opposed to one of 'ends' which distinguish themselves by how they conceive the political subject and, therefore, how they understand the democratic ambition.

> "The Subject is no longer, therefore, the presence of the universal, or reason or of God in the individual, as it was in classical philosophy. It is nearly the opposite; the will to combine that which is transmitted and that which is acquired, instrumental rationality and cultural memory. From the utopian image of the ideal society, is substituted the pragmatic image of the individual [...] who tries to be free and manage its life as a personal experience[12]" (imc).[i]

[i] "Le Sujet n'est donc plus la présence de l'universel, de la raison ou de Dieu dans l'individu, comme il l'était dans la philosophie classique. Il est, presque au contraire, la volonté de combiner ce qui est transmis et ce qui est acquis, la rationalité instrumentale et la mémoire culturelle. A l'image utopique de la société idéale, rationnelle,

If a republican project thus associates reason with a certain social destination – a "people" sharing a common identity – and seeks, therefore, to incarnate a new subject released from its historical idiosyncracies, a multicultural practice, according to Touraine, finds the law of reason expressed in the legal and political practices that permit the pursuit of a universal individual ambition. A politics of 'means', that is, charges the democratic authority with the task of enabling each individual best to realise their own self-defined 'ends'. Universal values are thus reconciled with the exercise of particularist ambitions when the institutional and legal 'means' that permit the realisation of personal and heterogenous 'ends' express the law of reason. But we shall see that such a project empties the social whole of difference at the very moment when it claims to affirm it. Or rather, it performs a strict separation between cultural and political subjectivities that grants complexity to the former while conceiving of the latter as identical and universal. Subjects may seek diverse personal and familial destinations provided they all, without exception, conduct themselves in exactly the same way as political subjects. Touraine is thus satisfied to view individual identities as products of their contingent historical and sociological conditions, and political identities as general and *a priori*.

To his question: "comment combiner ce qui est séparé, comment faire vivre ensemble des individus et des groupes qui ont des cultures différentes,"[13] Touraine replies:

> "I see only one response to this question. The combination of public activity and the meaning of the private experience cannot only be realised in the experience of the life of the individual[14] [...] After civic rights, purely universal, and already diverse social rights, appear cultural rights that are both rights to difference and the recognition of the universal interest of every culture [...][15]" (imc)[1].

A multicultural project thus asserts the "droit de chaque individu à agir comme Sujet et, par consequent, du droit au pluralisme dont la contrepartie est le devoir de chacun de reconnaître le droit de l'autre à être accepté comme Sujet"[16] precisely because it is the effort to give universal sense to a particular experience that defines the essential human ambition. In a world context where the state is no longer able to mediate between the individual and a global economy to fix or give meaning to social referents, Touraine displaces this task away from political institutions to the private and familial domain of the individual. It is exactly the so-called universality of this existential drive that makes of otherwise incommensurate cultural subjectivities equivalent and equal political subjects. But I want to show how his arguments rests on a tautology that invests concrete individuals with a so-called natural quality that is nothing more than the personality of the political subject. We have already noted that the question inspiring his analysis/manifesto is the following: how to combine that which is separate, how to make individuals and groups that are culturally different live together. To achieve such a reconciliation Touraine wants to establish the commonality of otherwise heterogeneous elements. This he does by invoking the existential individual – the subject seeking meaning -at the kernel of every culture and society.

> "All human beings are born and live free and equal in rights. This judgement must apply to all societies. The aim of the [universal and real] social actor, Touraine explains, is to construct himself as an actor, as an something that

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se substitue l'image pragmatique de l'individu [...] qui tente de constituer sa liberté et de gérer sa vie comme une expérience personnelle."

[1] "Je n'aperçois qu'une réponse à cette question centrale. La combinaison de l'activité publique et du sens de l'experience privée ne peut se réaliser que dans l'experience de vie de l'individu [...]Après les droits civiques, purement universalistes, et les droits sociaux déjà diversifiés, apparaissent les droits culturels qui sont à la fois droits à la différence et reconnaissance de l'intérêt universel de chaque culture [...]"

manages themself [autogérer], to be free, independant and responsable as much as particular. [...] it is this desire to be Subject, that makes possible and necessary the combination of instrumentality and identity[17]." (imc).[i]

But the extent to which the desire to be a Subject is a given feature of our humanity depends on the conditions under which such a humanity is constituted! What is so easily dismissed as apparently irrelevant in the above formulation is the entire psychoanalytic tradition since Freud. Or even the structural anthropology since Levi-Strauss. A brief example will suffice. Andreas Bertoldi and Susan Van Zyl recount Octave Mannoni's study of the pathologies produced by colonialism in Madagascar. It is worth including an extract of their text.

"Expressed in Freudian terms, [...] Westerners, unlike the Malagasy are called upon to resolve Oedipus but seldom do. The Malagasy, is not expected to survive an orphaned state. He is never enjoined to grow up in the same way in which someone in the West is expected to. Whereas most Europeans solve their dependency by repressing or sublimating it, most Malagasy avoid the consequences of inferiority by accepting dependence. So long as [...] the satisfying dependent relation is preserved the Malagasy are not subject to the inferiority complex. When there is a stable relation to superiors, the question of inferiority does not rise. Dependence thus emerges as a complex when something vital to the Malagasy's well being is missing. When bonds of dependence are threatened the Malagasy wishes to preserve them, even if it means relying upon the powerful and potentially threatening white man or seeking security in the white man's institutions. In the course of colonisation the Malagasy transfers to the coloniser the affects of dependence which, in his own society, he is never called to liquidate. The first dependent relation to the father is replaced by dependent relations to others – superiors or ancestors. Symptoms in the colonised malagasy are often expressed in the wavering between dependence upon his ancestors on the one hand and the white man and his institutions on the other"[18].

In this account of the Malagasy, therefore, the aim of the social actor is not to be free, to manage him or herself as Subject, to be independent. As colonial subjects the Malagasy 'chose' subjection. Does the schizophrenic behave like a human being? Certainly we can say that the rays of sunshine in president Schreber's arse[19] are products of his "personal life experience" (!), but the meaning he makes of such rays defy, absolutely, their capture to the terms discussed by Touraine above. Even in his locution we can wonder if the human being is only a phenomenon of a particular conjuncture. It arises when, as Touraine himself admits, meaning is deemed absent, when social unity is apparently threatened by a lack of norms giving sense to the relations between the individual and the society. For such meaning is nothing more than the recognition by each subject that despite their differences they belong to the same social unity[20]; that, in other words, they are already national subjects. Touraine merely reads the ambition of the multicultural project back into the universal nature of the human being. But we should note that he is not driven to such circularity by any *ad hominem* inconsistency. Rather, it is a tautology inscribed in the logic of every national political project. In order to posit the commensurability of its subjects it is driven to distill from them a common and essential quality: a spirit or an interest or a right. It is this logic that requires from the national intention the supposition of a unique political subject, or what Rosanvallon has called "*un* sujet exerçant". It is this logic, moreover, that exhausts the South African debate about customary subjects and the constitutional clauses concerning them. We can quickly summarise these attitudes and provisions by way of a metaphor made popular by the Bishop of the Anglican Church, Desmond Tutu, after the first democratic election in 1994. Following the remarkable passage of April 27, Tutu enthusiastically declared "we are the rainbow nation". The image depicts a heterogeneous social totality – represented as the

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[i] "Tous les êtres humains naissent et vivent libres et égaux en droits et ce jugement doit s'appliquer à toutes les sociétés[i]."[...] le but de l'acteur [social réel et universel], Touraine explains, est de se construire lui-même comme acteur, d'autogérer, d'être libre, indépendant, responsable en tant qu'être particulier. Cette volonté d'individuation définit la subjectivation et c'est celle-ci, le désir d'être Sujet, qui rend possible et nécessaire la combinaison de l'instrumentalité et de l'identité"

differently coloured strands of the rainbow – unified by their common belonging to the South African nation. It is not difficult to see how such an image is captured by the terms of the "democratic multiculturalism" discussed above.

What is lacking in Touraine's analysis is a distinction between the nature of the human being in general, and the nature of the human being as a national subject. His individuals are not simply human, they are members of a specific political community. Their rights are conferred according to criteria, to certain standards that are the standards of the state. The schizophrenic is incomprehensible to Touraine's model not because he or she is not a (biological) human being, but because his or her humanity produces other effects. His symptoms, that is, are incomprehensible to a (would be multicultural) state practice. The Malagasy escape Touraine's terms because as a political subject they are disinclined to act as individuals. But to a colonial state, for sure, they are oh so delightfully normal. Human nature is a state nature. It is the quality that renders individuals intelligible to political apparatuses; or more precisely it is the quality that makes biological individuals, individuals of a State. Touraine misrecognises the 'hegemony of categories' as symptoms merely of a particular republican project – one that associates reason with certain behaviours rather than the means that allow the expression of multiple demeanors. What he fails to appreciate is that such a hierarchy is a necessary condition of every state practice. For it is nothing less than the standard according to which the state defines its limit. It is the measure of normalcy that permits the distinction between legitimate national subjects (those granted rights) and the foreigner (those not, or those given only partial rights). The nature of the political subject, therefore, is not given by their psychology or even their biology, it is not the historical conditions under which they have been called (or not) to resolve Oedipus, but it is this quality that renders them reasonable in the political community.

Once we admit this distinction we will find that the political subject is invested with a nature depending on the form of the state in its concrete conditions. Or rather, the 'strangeness' of the foreigner is given by her distance from the image of the national subject. The substance of difference and likeness, of human nature, has a history. It is the history of the political subject. Touraine is justified, therefore, to suggest that the impossibility of thinking the cultural subject in the limits of the republican model arises from its distance from the figure of so-called reason. Measured against this standard of nature they are found to be alien. But he is wrong to believe to have escaped this logic by appealing to a universal human temperament. A national project admits only those who evidence a nature defined in and by the state – the condition, surely, for political struggle - and not a nature given by their psychic history or even biology. The normalcy of a citizen, therefore, is not, as he wants us to believe, their conduct vis-a-vis human rights but, rather, that quality that permits their recognition by the state (an ethnic criterion) and their practice (their *sociability*) as rights-bearing subjects. If we displace the discussion away from political and legal provisions, we will see, that this quality is a certain bearing in time and space. And it is exactly this orientation that is lacking in customary subjects; and for this reason that they are incomprehensible to the democratic project.

The contradiction between customary as opposed to civic subjects arises, therefore, from the presence in the same territory of multiple state apparatuses that hail non-equivalent political subjects. What gives to colonial societies their specificity, that is, is not simply their cultural diversity, or even the multiplicity of subjects attached to diverse political aesthetics, but rather the presence of incommensurate political subjects hailed in and through diverse *state practices*. The challenge that arises in the context under consideration is not simply one of cultural reconciliation or communication to produce a unified "people", but rather one of political integration; either to produce a single and commensurate political subject – that is, the hegemony

of a certain political authority (a national project)- or the means to accommodate multiple political subjects in the same authority – a radically different type of project.

2. Messianic and Homogenous Time

My remarks so far serve to raise the following question: what is the quality that is assumed always already present in national subjects? Or rather who is an individual in the nation?

Benedict Anderson proposes that we think of the nation or of nationalism or of nation-ness, not as ideologies akin to fascism or liberalism, but as *cultural artifacts* that have *come into being*[21]. Their modernity – as objectively recent to the historian's eye – follows from their mode of emanation as imagined communities that are simultaneously limited and sovereign; that is, encompassing finite, if not elastic, boundaries beyond which lie other nations and in which the gage and emblem of their freedom is the sovereign state[22]. Here he distinguishes between two forms of national imagining: what he terms *official* and *populist*, that despite their service to different ends (the preservation of dynastic power and anti-metropolitan resistance in the Western hemisphere respectively) share a common philology and lexicon. The nation as an imagined community was a radical epistemological event. What made it possible to "think" was a "fundamental change" in modes of apprehending the world at the end of the eighteenth century[23]. What is important is to notice the promise of Anderson's argument. The determinate structure of a cultural artifact is deduced from the *style*[24] in which it was originally thought. In this respect we are invited to conceive of the nation in the same way as we might think of the 'French Revolution' for example.

> "The overwhelming and bewildering concatenation of events experienced by its makers and its victims became a 'thing' – and with its own name: The French Revolution. Like a vast shapeless rock worn to a rounded boulder by countless drops of water, the experience was shaped by millions of printed words into a 'concept' on the printed page, and, in due course, into a model. Why 'it' broke out, what 'it' aimed for, why "it" succeeded or failed, became subjects for endless polemics on the part of friends and foes [...]"[25].

Anderson's analysis thus proceeds according to two steps. He considers (1) the premises and conventions[26], that is the mode of apprehension, informing (2) those that imagined political communities; where their form is given by the style in which they were thought, and where their merely contingent features are the products of the who, where and when they were conceived. Like the *French Revolution* a certain quantity of events are unified according to a certain mode of conjunction (the *style*), which is in turn named and inscribed in history as an object. This is the novelty of Anderson's approach: his is not a history of nations in and through time, but rather a history of a certain "idea" of time; a history of the concrete imaginings permitted by such an idea. "Communities are to be distinguished", he suggests, "by the style in which they are imagined"[27]. In contrast to dynastic and religious communities that conceived unities not in terms of causality or dependence but in terms, rather, of prefiguring and fulfillment – in what Walter Benjamin described as 'messianic time' – the nation was imagined in homogenous time. The ontological ground of the nation-artifact was prepared we are told when certain cultural conceptions lost their axiomatic grip[i]. "The first of these was the idea that a particular script-language offered privileged access to ontological truth". Second was "the belief that society was naturally organised around and under high centres – monarchs who were persons apart from other human beings and who ruled by some form of cosmological (divine) dispensation. Human loyalties were necessarily hierarchical and centripetal because the ruler, like the sacred script,

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[i] His argument is reminiscent of the Althusserian reading of Marx; where the epistemological rupture between the young and mature works is characterised by a break with Hegels concept of time. In this regard the Marxist social *whole* is distinguished from the Hegelian social *totality* by the temporal order in which they are conceived

was a node of access to being and inherent in it". Third was a "conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable, the origins of the world and of men essentially identical[28]". Human time was the time of God since the social totality, being merely an epi-phenomenon of the divine that was its unique author, developed according to His plan. Dynastic and religious communities had no history, other than the scheme of God; their causalities and events were never determined by processes internal to themselves but rather announced as such through divine revelation to chosen figures[i]. We should notice the radical distance of these communities from modern ones: the nature of things is not given by properties they might acquire in social relations (indeed, the *stage* of the social is not produced) but uniquely by their place in the scheme of God – revealed through certain privileged texts or revealing itself through certain miraculous appearances. Without a *social* referent distinctions and similarities are only available from marks bearing divine properties, or rather, only when material characteristic testify to divine intentions do they achieve the status of a distinguishing criterion. The limits of representing properties-in-common between individuals, of imagining the community, is fixed by the divine, symbolic referents that are either announced or revealed. Hence the empirical boundaries of the Christian, Islamic and Buddhist communities were given by the limits of their sacred languages (Latin, Arabic, Chinese) – solely capable of expressing Divine intentions[ii], so that their literate priesthoods were the privileged savants of Godly purpose. Dynastic communities, on the other hand, produced and reproduced their unities through marriage and inter-marriage – the community, given corporality in the body of the sovereign, expanded or was integrated according to his progenital liaisons. In both cases, however, we should note that the community is not that body bearing common *social* traits, that is, represented as producing it's unity in and of itself. How could it when 'social' relations are mere phenomena without consistency of their own. Hence the form of dynastic and religious communities: they encompassed diverse linguistic and cultural groups – precisely because these were not the measures of commonality, precisely because their criteria of membership were variously heretic/ believer, obedience/ disobedience, chosen/ damned and so on. They were not territorially fixed because these properties were not indices of a horizontal connection between people, but a vertical relation between individuals, their intermediaries and the divine (a Christian, for example, could be Christian anywhere). Even the boundary of a dynastic state was porous and indistinct (as opposed to the modern which is "fully, flatly and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a large demarcated territory[29]"), it enclosed not citizens from which it derived its legitimacy but subjects over whom it exercised power. The community did not receive it's coherence or its consistency from the subjects that belonged to it but merely from the

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[i] David Landes suggests that such a conception would help us understand the function of hydraulic time pieces as used by the Chinese, for example. He finds invalid to derive the later European mechanisms from the latter precisely because they were generically different. The European mechanical clock was designed accurately to calibrate time into hours and minutes and eventually seconds. This was not the case with the Chines hydraulic system. It was less interested in the precise repartition of units of time than it was in predicting movement. In short, the Chinese hydraulic clock was an astrological instrument. Imperial power derived from its monopoly of astrological knowledge that permitted it to synchronise and calibrate social and political events according to the movement of cosmic forces. Forecasts of the position of the stars (verifiable by sight in the night skies) enabled the emperor and his functionaries to plan and legitimate events according to the omens and cosmology associated with each particular stellar constellation. The time of the imperial community flowed according to the rhythms of celestial bodies that announced the time for war and the time for peace, the time for faithfulness and for infidelity, the time for tributes and the time for successions. (Landes, David (1987) *L'heure qu'il est: Les horloges, la mesure du temps et la formation du monde moderne* (traduit de l'anglais par Pierre-Emmanuel Dauzat et Emmanuel Evrard).Editions Gallimard: Paris.

[ii] As Anderson remarks, the priviliged status of these languages followed from a belief in the non-arbitrary nature of the sign, that enabled them solely to express the intention of the divine. Hence the non-translability, until

monarchical figure that embodied it; such that its reproduction coincided exactly with *his* fortune: expanding or contracting through war (displacement of or by another king) or through marriage (the joining of communities).

What replaced this *mode of apprehension,* we are told, was an 'idea' of homogenous time that was the time of the *social.* We need not be concerned, for the moment, with what generated this change – I will sketch a possibility later – though we can say now that it was not an effect of the expansion of the forces of production. Anderson approaches a description of this idea through the example of the modern novel. Characters that never meet and whose existence is unknown to each other are nonetheless connected in the story through a double movement:

- they are both "embedded" in particular 'societies' (Wessex, Lübeck, Los Angeles are the examples Anderson selects, but we could equally say Johannesburg, Kinshasa and Kisumu); such that they could pass each other in the street without knowing one another and still be connected, and

- they are "embedded" in the reader's mind, so that despite their simultaneous and parallel actions (A quarrels with B *while* C and D make love; A telephones C *while* B shops *while* D plays pool; D gets drunk *while* A dines at home with B *while* C has an ominous dream) they nonetheless constitute a community of characters in the book.

We can add, to give to Anderson's analysis the full force of homogenous time as intended by Walter Benjamin, that:

- the parallel and simultaneous lives of each character are embedded in a single movement that is evolving towards a climax. Past, present and future are merely stages in an evolving and progressive history.

This, Anderson tells us, is analogous to the idea of the nation: of a community of individuals mostly anonymous to each other (we do not have personal relations with our fellow 38 million South Africans, 240 million Americans and so on) who steadily and simultaneously go about their affairs in a common space, content in the belief that they share with each other something or other in common and who, together, evolve progressively towards a telos. The nation is that community in time who passes from the past through the present to the future in a steady, even stride; stubbornly believing in its own progress[30].

Already we have here a potential sketch of the contradiction between customary and national subjects: they represent different 'styles' of community that invoke criteria of belonging according to incompatible 'modes of apprehension'. In other words, the national subject is an individual that lives according to homogenous time whereas the customary subject does not. This approach is certainly helpful; but we should not believe that in itself it concludes our discussion. Certainly the customary imagination cannot simply be read from religious or dynastic representations; although they illuminate certain of its contours. But more importantly, merely describing certain of their epistemological features obscures contradictions and antagonism produced *in the real.* It is exactly this process that concerns me here: what are the *effects* of this contradiction. In other words, what is the nature of the contradiction produced between individuals *in* homogenous time and subjects *in* messianic time? And where does it manifest? May we leave indeterminate the conditions of this 'idea' of time that permit the nation, and

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recently, of the Qu'aran from Arabic and the debates in the Catholic Church over the appropriate language (Latin or vernacular) in which to pray and conduct services.

concentrate merely on its agents (the method of Benedict Anderson). In other words, are the effects simply produced *in* the political *about* the political. This is trend in South Africa: as we have seen, reducing the 'problem' of 'traditional' authorities to one of their institutional role *à propos* local governments, for example. It is manifest too in South African political and academic responses to violence in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and in the Reef townships. When conflict is not reduced either to an inflamed ethnic struggle, to the work of the apartheid state or to an *expression* of contradictions produced by the apartheid political-economy, it is treated as a conflict between different images of political community (national and central *vs.* national and federal or democratic (and central) *vs* customary (and federal)). What all these studies share is a common neglect of why these conflicts received expression in the terms they did. Why are some people amenable to a certain 'mode of apprehension' and others not? Why, that is, do so-called 'interests' receive expression in the way they do? Are the effects of the contradiction produced at the level of its conditions? Is the contradiction between customary and national subjects present, not in the way they express this contradiction to themselves, but at the level of its *pre-conditions*?

The stakes are not negligeable. An example will suffice. Is the problem of customary subjects a problem for national unity such that it is accomplished (or not) to the extent that the agents of the customary imagination (Kings, Chiefs, and their parliamentary defenders) represent themselves and their subjects as national citizens? This seems to me to be the current strategy of the South African government – where the contradiction is deemed to be resolved when these agents are integrated into the national state and its apparatuses. Or is 'national unity' itself merely an ideological effect that 'dissimulates' the real contradiction: that customary practices are incomprehensible to state apparatuses (even when their representatives formally submit to them) so that the effects of the contradiction are, in the first place, felt at the level of governance and in the second at the level of the forces of production? This is the approach that will be taken here, for, in the case of the other, when it moves from description to explanation it slides into tautology[1].

We can approach our problem via what Claude Lefort describes as an ambiguity in Marx's vision of history. It is most apparent when we ask the following: what produced the transformation of the pre-capitalist mode of production to one that was properly speaking capitalist? The question is relevant for our purposes. We could restate it as what is the rupture that summons homogenous time? Let us note the passages in Marx that according to Lefort proceed according to a specious continuity. Analysing the way handicrafts are transformed by manufacturing, Marx writes:

> "On the one hand it arises from the combination of various independent trades, which lose that independence and become specialized to such an extent that they are reduced to merely supplementary and partial operations in the production of one particular commodity. On the other hand, it arises from the co-operation of craftsmen in one particular handicraft; it splits up that handicraft into its various detailed operations, isolating these operations and developing their mutual independence to the point where each becomes the exclusive function of a particular worker"[31].

Later he suggests:

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[1] In a dissertation for the Political Studies department of the University of the Witwatersrand I proposed that South African historiography was informed by a theoretical prejudice that rendered its methodology circular. Despite its pretentiousness I believe that its central argument was correct. See *Thinking in « new ways » : some thoughts on South African historiography*, a dissertation for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours. Johannesburg : February, 1993.

> The history of manufacture proper shows how the division of labour which is peculiar to it acquires the most appropriate form at first by experience, as it were behind the backs of the actors, and then, like the guild handicrafts, strives to hold fast that form when once it has been found, and here and there succeeds in keeping it for centuries"[32].

At first simple co-operation is followed by manufacturing based on the division of labour. "[T]his phenomenon", remarks Lefort, "designates much more than a separation of the labourer and his means of production; it is the separation of the labourer from himself, or his dissolution within the *collective labourer*"(emphasis in the original)[33]. At stake is the genesis of capitalism. Let us recall that what characterises pre-capitalist (Asiatic, Ancient and Feudal) social relations is not merely that labour is united with its material presuppositions but that labour as such has not yet acquired its meaning. Independent private-owners or co-owners (either individual or familial) are only the "personifications of communal property"; they are only 'labourers' to the extent that they participate in the community, in the communal property. It is not they who own their labour-power or their means of production but the clan (whatever its form). To find, therefore, that the 'labourer' is separated from his means of production is to find, not simply, that he is separated from his own body, that production no longer accomodates itself to the expertise of craftsmen, that he is organised in a "total process" that assigns to each worker a partial process, that he is "divided up, and transformed into the automatic motor of a detail operation[34]", that he is only a "mere fragment of his body". The burden of proof is much greater. It is to find that "the process of socialization of labour breaks with the *communal reality and representation* which survived in the collective labourer" (my emphasis)[35]; that, in other words, "[t]he rootedness in a particular mode of existence and the private appropriation of techniques gives way to the growing mobility of labourers and the *growing transparency of their activities and their relations*" (my emphasis)[36]. What is at stake is the appearance of social, of the freedom of individuals from the hold of the past and of the demystification of the relationship to reality. Now what Marx presents to us as a single movement punctuated merely by stages (manufacturing *follows* from handicrafts) Lefort wants us to admit is utterly strange; is a most surprising rupture. From conditions under which 'labourers' live and imagine themselves as instances of clan communities to those under which such representations dissolve and social relations appear as they really are. It is not necessary to accompany Lefort further; other than to note Marx's contradictions: he is forced to concede the durability of communal representations in the face of the development of the forces of production (when he deals with the Asiatic mode of production) and he himself suggests that the labourer represents social relations not transparent to themselves but mediated by phantoms, superstition, prejudice and the past (in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*). We can certainly agree with Lefort that Marx failed to draw the consequences of his analyses in the *Grundrisse*, of the resistance of past imaginations, and hence did not consider the real conditions of their dissolution. But he was nonetheless correct to *relate* the dissolution of communal representations to the expansion of the forces of production; not as the occasion of this process itself but as *latent* under certain conditions; as latent when capitalism is obliged to exploit national citizens.

We need not repeat a tired debate in South Africa to notice the durability of 'labourers' (that is, clan or communal subjects) in capitalist manufacture. The argument between so-called 'liberal' and 'radical' scholars hinged precisely on the importance accorded to migrant labour for the expansion of the forces of production; whether, that is, they were necessary (requiring state interventions to reproduce the migrant labour system and to manage its effects, that is Apartheid) or were merely contingent (absolving capitalism itself for Apartheid). What was analysed in South Africa was the (unstable) *articulation* of messianic time to capitalist production. If the division of labour itself lacked the status of a 'normal' hierarchy – although it was granted a semblance of customary order by assimilating to it 'traditional' bearers of authority - it was

nonetheless lived as an unpleasant but necessary evil: wage-labour was the basis of maintaining natural bonds elsewhere. Compliance to the division of tasks, that is, was not sanctioned by the order of things as they were in the division of labour (worker/foreman/manager/boss) but by the order of things as they were in the commune. Indeed, what South African historians have stressed is the role played by the apartheid state *and* 'traditional' authorities in the 'proleterianisation' of customary workers; that, in other words, *the reproduction of the communal labourer in the heart of capitalist production was mediated by certain state forms.* That is, the bond between the customary-worker (the migrant labourer) and his community was sustained through *state* practices that held and reproduced individuals in a certain temporal order – what, for the moment, we can describe as messianic. We need not be concerned here with the mechanics of this relation or even the nature of operations (premised on cheap-labour and a low skills base) that lend themselves to such an articulation, merely to notice that when either customary authorities or the colonial state are no longer able to play this role or when capitalist production requires a different kind of worker (specialised or skilled) another form of state mediation is required.

If we return to the capitalist division of labour, what is at stake in the transformation of the 'labourer' (merely a moment of the commune) into a labourer is her insertion into a process of production that is segmented, serial, cumulative and irreversible (because oriented towards the product): the present being merely a transition from before to after[37]. It is a process that is strictly subordinated to the measure of time, that is controlled by watches and clocks, diaries and calendars. The time of capitalism is the time of the hour, the minute and the second, even the micro-second (time is money!); it is the time of homogenous time, of multiple and parallel operations inscribed into a single movement that stubbornly progresses towards the future. Now, when for whatever contingent reason, including democratic victories won against the state, the division of labour cannot be reproduced according to a colonial and/or repressive state mediation, when all workers, that is, are formally national subjects, even national citizens (endowed, that is, with certain rights) they must *present themselves* for work already auto-animated in homogenous time; that is, already as individuals. In other words, labourers, including employees, managers and so on must live (not just represent) their lives according to this mode of being-in-the-world: as individuals whose present is merely a transition to the future, whose childhood, education, work and so on are progressive steps in an evolving movement towards a climax - the American dream, for example, or its South African equivalents. Note, living in homogenous time does not mean simply desiring certain material goods (it is not being-a-criminal-in-the world, for example) but is living according to what Max Weber called a certain spirit, or an ethic: the valorisation of this working towards something in itself.

We can say finally that the capitalist labourer is the national subject endowed with what I have called a national Ethnicity. It is a being that appears in the sovereign light of the national state. Or put differently, the national state is the capitalist state *par excellence*; provided we do not mean that state controlled by the capitalist class (which is not, strictly speaking, a class) but simply that state that produces individuals. We can say too, therefore, that the condition of the individual is the hegemony of the national state in its territory and the insertion of people into relations that hail them as such. Now, if this is true then we need ask what institutions, what state practices invest people with this national Ethnicity, this being-in-homogenous-time ? How, in other words, are people produced as individuals?

3. The Production of Homogenous Time

Foucault analysed this process of individualisation through what he called the "disciplines", the sciences and the practices of power inherent in the prison, the clinic and so on; an approach he designated under the term "normalisation"[38]. We need not dwell here on these studies, merely to note the process of individualisation that they observe. What for our purposes is more instructive is a study conducted by Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad in Algeria. It concerns the social effects of French colonial policy during the 1950's; and in particular, the effects of *regroupement,* of forcing Algerian peasant farmers from their lands and assembling them in military-run camps. Now, the example is useful not because I want to establish a relation between French colonialism and South African nationalism, but because the spatial structure of these camps will not be found unfamiliar by South African politicians, bureaucrats and development workers. What their study permits us to understand is how a certain layout structure, a certain town planning, is informed by and is intended to produce a certain being-in-the-world, a certain being-individual-in-the-world.

The policy of *Regroupement* proceeded according to two imperatives: a military concern to combat the FLN by controlling a civilian population that hid, fed and generally aided guerilla fighters opposed to colonial rule and a social-political imperative to radically remake Algerian society. The authors comment:

> "The action of those responsable was inspired by the intention, implicit or explicit, to "evolve" the Algerian populations towards western social structures and attitudes; from clan unities or genealogically based families they intended to substitute villages, from extended families, composed of several generations living together, they intended to substitute the household in the western sense" (imc)[39i].

Which begs the question: what was the colonial interest in "evolving" the Algerian extended household towards something that resembled the European nuclear family? The answer in it's most clear and most brutal form is given to us by a French colonel at the time:

> "Essentially, in effect, it is to group these people who are everywhere and who are nowhere, the essential is that we control them"[40.ii]

In short, cultural transformation was intended to make Algerians *governable*. Extracting them from their extended genealogies and inserting them into familial relations resembling those of the European rendered them comprehensible to state apparatuses. This imperative was principal. Making available to capitalist agricultural production lands occupied and cultivated by subsistent farmers and propelling into wage labour populations living outside the cash-nexus depended on colonial mastery of the Algerian family. This was not the case in British colonies because, exercising their authority indirectly, that is, through indigenous social-political structures, local populations needed only be immediately comprehensible to apparatuses already overdetermined by native society. It was for this reason that it was not essential that, for the most part, colonised subjects spoke English nor conducted themselves as English-men. But in Algeria, the colonial state, especially during the war, exercised power directly through *its* apparatuses, requiring, therefore, that Algerians be arranged and held in relations intelligible to them. It required, in other words, that they be marked and organised according to the categories of the state's social taxonomy. Or rather, that the state *try* to insert them into such roles and functions. For our

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[i] "L'action des responsables s'inspirait de l'intention, implicite ou explicite, de "faire évoluer les populations algériennes vers des structures sociales et des attitudes de type occidental; à l'unité clanique ou familiale à base généalogique, on entendait substituer l'unité villageoise, à base spatiale; à la famille étendue, composée de plusieurs générations vivant en indivision, le ménage au sens occidental"

[ii] "L'essentiel est, en effet, de grouper ce peuple qui est partout et qui n'est nulle part, l'essentiel est de nous le rendre saisissable.

purposes what is important to note is that the making of Algerians into Europeans was sought through the organisation of space and time.

In their interviews with Algerien respondents forcibly removed from their lands and resettled in army-controlled compounds during the 1950's, Bordieu and Sayad note the following. Despite the fact that all *regroupement* camps recorded similar levels of general unemployment (72% in Barbacha, 69,3% in Aïn-Aghbel, 66,3% in Kerkera, 77,1% in Matmata and 77,3% in Djebabra) interviewees described this state of inactivity in one of two ways.

> "One can notice that two subjects having identical occupations (in their nature and in their duration) defined differently what they took to be authentic work. Do we not observe, for example, that despite similar levels of employment, the rural inhabitants of the strates of Kabyles voluntarily declared themselves unemployed if they judged their activity insufficient, whilst the farmers and shepherds of the South of Algeria said, rather, that they were busy[41]"(imc)[1].

This terminological distinction (between unemployed and busy) corresponded, moreover, to a certain attitude and behaviour *vis-a-vis* their lands. Amongst some a dogged perseverance to cultivate their fields despite the odds, and in others, the abandon of farming. Why, they ask, did similar objective constraints – the distance of camps from agricultural fields, the reduction of the working day by curfews, the constant harassment of Algerians by French officers monitoring exit and entrance to compounds, the dangers of attack and arrest and blackmail from soldiers – produce such radically different responses. If the dangers to which Algerian peasants were exposed do not begin to explain their respective reactions to forced removal, neither can one notice corresponding social changes prior to *regroupement*, in the one group as opposed to the other. The authors observe that amongst the people of Beni-Bellit, those resettled at Aïn-Aghbel ceased the cultivation of their fields whereas those interned at Cheraïa persevered, despite the greatest adversity[42]. What accounts for the difference, they explain, was the structure of the camps into which these peasants were respectively interned; or to be more precise the degree to which these camps conformed to the following model: Officers started by "disciplining the space" according to (1) geometric principles. Everything was uniformly aligned according to a grid that arranged houses along roads that, in turn, sketched the plan of a Roman Castrum.[43]. Small, extended families, strongly integrated and dispersed relative to their neighb hours found themselves (2) densely congregated in areas that (3) accommodated groups from different areas and (4) separated into nuclear-family units. In addition, Bourdeau and Sayad describe how daily life was strictly organised according to the clock: families had to rise at a certain hour, workers had to assemble at another, work for so long *etc.*

It is not necessary to follow their analysis any further other than to note their conclusion: the organisation of Algerian peasants in a spatial matrix disciplined according to geometric principles and a temporal order measured by the clock, the break-up of extended families into nuclear units and the assembly of people of different origins in the same place worked, essentially, to weaken and even break traditional family solidarities and to produce, in varying degrees, individuals that conducted themselves as labourers, what Bourdeau and Sayad call "sous-prolétaires" or lumpen proletarians[44]. It served, in other words, to disorganise and eventually dissolve the communal relation that mediated between the peasant 'labourer' and the

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[1] "On peut en effet concevoir que deux sujets ayant des occupations identiques (dans leur nature et dans leur durée) fassent des déclarations différentes, selon qu'ils les tiennent ou non pour travail authentique. N'observe-t-on pas, par exemple que, pour des taux d'occupation réelle très voisins, les ruraux des strates kabyles se déclarent volontiers chômeurs, s'ils estiment leur activité insuffisante, tandis que les agriculteurs et pasteurs du Sud-Algérien se disent plutôt occupés

colonial state; that is, it broke the hold of the clan over the peasant to render him immediately graspable by the colonial state and available for proleterianisation.

Conclusion

We can say, finally, that individuals are produced in the light of the sovereign national state; where this light is a host of institutional practices that hail beings-in-homogenous time, beings that are released from the hold of any other state form. The national subject, the individual, is a being hailed and inserted into relations (including spatial and familial) that sever their ties with *other* institutional apparatuses other than the national state; it is a being whose relations with the national state are unmediated, uninterrupted; who is, in other words, immediately governable. Now, this is precisely what is lacking in customary or messianic subjects: an unmediated relationship to the national state. They are held in relations that are organised by *other* state practices, they are produced, in other words, not in the light of a sovereign national state, but in the gaze of other institutions. What makes customary subjects ungovernable, therefore, is not the difficulty of formulating the terms of a relationship between national state apparatuses and 'traditional' authorities, but that these subjects are produced and reproduced in relations, wherever they may be, that are mediated by other apparatuses; that hail them according to another political logic (spatial, familial, bureaucratic).

The 'problem' of informal settlements, for example, of 'development' in general is that messianic subjects are organised and organise themselves in spatial relations that are mediated by durable and resilient local institutions; they are situated in relations that defy state control (that do not allocate people an address in a home on a street; that prevent the provision of services according to municipal mechanisms, that are difficult to police, that are not amenable to legal-juridical processes and so on).

Most importantly, the mediation of subjects by other state practices, is an obstacle to individualisation; is an obstacle to the production of individuals that present themselves to capitalist production as beings-in-homogenous time; as individuals that valorise work as an evolution to an American way of life!

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[1] Gaille, Marie (1998) *Le Citoyen*, Flammarion: Paris., pp.21-22.

[2] Ibid., p.23.

[3] see, for example, the MUNICIPAL STRUCTURES ACT, Published in Government Gazette No. 19614 on 18 December 1998 and the LOCAL GOVERNMENT: MUNICIPAL SYSTEMS BILL, 1999, **draft version.**

[4] see, for example, Chapter 12 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, as adopted by the Constitutional Assembly (8 May 1996). Government Press :

Chapter 12 : Traditional Leaders

211. *(1) The institution, status and role of traditional leadership, according to customary law, are recognised, subject to the Constitution.*

(2) A traditional authority that observes a system of customary law may function subject to any applicable legislation and customs, which includes amendments to, or repeal of, that legislation or those customs.

(3) The courts must apply customary law when that law is applicable, subject to the Constitution and any legislation that specifically deals with customary law.

Role of traditional leaders

212. *(1) National legislation may provide for a role for traditional leadership as an institution at local level on matters affecting local communities.*

(2) To deal with matters relating to traditional leadership, the role of traditional leaders, customary law and the customs of communities observing a system of customary law -

national or provincial legislation may provide for the establishment of houses of traditional leaders; and national legislation may establish a council of traditional leaders.

[5] Rosanvallon, Pierre (1998) *Le peuple introuvable : Histoire de la représentation démocratique en France*. Editions Gallimard : Paris. p.10.
[6] Ibid., p.12.
[7] Ibid., p.13.
[8] Chipkin, Ivor., (1998) 'Un processus d'identification territoriale : le conflit de l'East Rand, 1990-1994' in *Géographie et Cultures : l'Afrique du Sud Recomposée*. Hiver. 28 : L'Harmattan.
[9] Touraine, Alain (1997) 'Faux et vrais problèmes' in *Une société fragmentée ? Le multiculturalisme en débat* (sous la direction de Michel Wieviorka). La Découverte. P. 295
[10] Ibid., p.296.
[11] Ibid., p.297.
[12] Ibid., p.303.
[13] Ibid., p.302.
[14] Ibid., p.302.
[15] Ibid., p.310.
[16] Ibid., p.303.
[17] Ibid., pp.302-303.
[18] Bertoldi, A and van Zyl, S (1998) *Psychoanalysis and the study of culture : the case of South Africa*. Paper presented to an international conference, Change : Psychoanalytic Perspectives, hosted by The South African Psychoanalysis Trust. Cape Town 2nd- 5th of April.
[19] Deleuze, G and Guattari, F (1972) *L'Anti-Œdipe : Capitalisme et Schizophrénie*. Les Editions de Minuit : Paris.
[20] Ibid., p.300.
[21] Anderson, Benedict (1998*) Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso : London and New York., p.4.
[22] Ibid.,p.7.
[23] Ibid., p.22.
[24] Ibid.,p.6.
[25] Ibid., p.80.
[26] Ibid., p.*xiv*.
[27] Ibid., p.6.
[28] Ibid., p.36.
[29] Ibid., p.19.
[30] Benjamin, Walter (1999) 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations*, Pimlico, pp. 245-255.
[31] Karl Marx, cited in Lefort, Claude, (1986) 'Marx : From one vision of history to another' in *Ibid.*, p.157.
[32] Ibid., p.158.
[33] Lefort, Claude (1986*) op cit.*, p.157.
[34] Karl Marx, cited in Lefort, Claude (1986) *op cit.*, p.157.
[35] Ibid., p.159.
[36] Ibid., p. 160.
[37] Poulantza, Nicos (1978) *L'Etat, le Pouvoir, le Socialisme*. Presses Universitaires de France., p.121.
[38]Foucault, M (1977) Interview in Révoltes logiques, No.4, hiver. Cited in Poulantzas, Nicos *op cit.*, p.72.
[39] Ibid., p.118.
[40] Ibid., p.27.
[41] Bordieu, P and Sayad, A (1964) *Le Déracinement : La crise de l'agriculture traditionelle en Algerie*. Les Editions de Minuit : Paris. p.64.
[42] Ibid., p 66.
[43] Ibid., p.26.
[44] Ibid., p.147.