

Identity and Intolerance

NATIONALISM, RACISM, AND XENOPHOBIA
IN GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES

Edited by
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Washington, D.C.

and



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 1998
First paperback edition 2002

Typeface Bembo.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Identity and intolerance: nationalism, racism, and xenophobia in
Germany and the United States / edited by Norbert Finzsch and
Dietmar Schirmer.

p. cm. – (Publications of the German Historical Institute)
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 59158 9

1. Nationalism – Germany. 2. Nationalism – United States.
3. Racism – Germany. 4. Racism – United States. 5. Xenophobia –
Germany. 6. Xenophobia – United States. 7. Nativistic movements –
United States. I. Finzsch, Norbert. II. Schirmer, Dietmar.

III. Series.

DD74.I34 1998

305.8'00943–dc21 97-21386

ISBN 0 521 59158 9 hardback
ISBN 0 521 52599 3 paperback

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Introduction

DIETMAR SCHIRMER

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

In the 1990s a mob of extremists firebombs a shelter for asylum seekers in the German town of Rostock. A crowd of bystanders applauds. The police stand idly by. The police in the town of Mölln receive an anonymous call saying, “There’s a house burning in Mühlenstrasse. Heil Hitler!” The arson attack leaves nine Turkish immigrants injured and three women dead. A patron at a bar in Wuppertal gets involved in a political argument with neo-Nazi skinheads. They trample him to death, douse him with alcohol, and set him on fire. Several Jewish cemeteries are desecrated. Synagogues and Jewish community centers are under constant police protection. At a bar in Oberhof, Thuringia, Duncan Kennedy of the American bobsled team, which is using the local training facilities, is injured by skinheads when he attempts to defend his African-American teammate, Robert Pipkins, against a crowd of fifteen. The bar is known as a meeting place of the local neo-Nazi scene; a swastika serves as decoration.

An amateur videotapes the beating of Rodney King, an African American, by officers of the Los Angeles Police Department. Despite the video document, the subsequent trial leads to an acquittal – and to the Los Angeles riots of April 1992. In Austin, Texas, a white supremacist attempts to detonate a bomb in a cinema while the movie *Malcolm X* is being shown. Fortunately, the bomb does not go off. On Cable News Network’s *Larry King Live* with guest Senator Jesse Helms from North Carolina and with political commentator Robert Novak sitting in for Larry King, a caller suggests that Helms deserves the Nobel Peace Prize for “holding the niggers down all his life.” The honored guest thanks the caller for these words of appreciation; the host is helpless to respond. At the “Million Man March” in October 1995, members of the Nation of

Islam sell brochures and videotapes that denounce the Jewish religion as a “gutter religion” and demand “abolition of homosexuality.” The publication of *The Bell Curve* triggers heated disputes that demonstrate that the old hypothesis linking race and intelligence has been only in a state of remission.¹

Approximately one hundred years ago in Germany, prominent conservative historian and writer Heinrich von Treitschke coined the phrase “die Juden sind unser Unglück” (The Jews are our misfortune). Forty years later this phrase became the subtitle of the Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer*, infamous for its insufferably vulgar anti-Semitism. In the elections of 1893, anti-Semitic parties won sixteen seats in the Reichstag. The decade from 1890 to 1900 witnessed an unsurpassed wave of accusations of “ritual murder” – a virulent anti-Semitic notion of the Middle Ages that claimed that Jews regularly kill Christian children during religious rituals. In 1900, in the province of Posen, Prussian authorities had to prevent a pogrom following an alleged ritual murder.

In the wake of populist success in the late nineteenth century, Jim Crow laws were passed all over the American South. African Americans were systematically disenfranchised. Thus, between 1896 and 1904, the number of “colored people” registered as voters in the state of Louisiana declined from 130,334 to a meager 1,342.² “Jim Crow” established a tight system of racial segregation that survived into the 1960s. In 1892 alone, 155 African Americans fell victim to lynching, often witnessed by cheering crowds of onlookers.

Gathering such “signs of the times” is surprisingly easy, no matter what time period is chosen. This is not to say that racism and anti-Semitism are undifferentiated in time and space and unrelated to specific historic, social, and cultural contexts – that is, that they are ontological or anthropological facts. Of course they differ, and they differ tremendously according to phenomenology, the severity and frequency of incidents, the groups that propagate them, and the groups that are affected. In its rationalizations and consequences, the German anti-Semitism of the 1890s, for example, is different from the anti-Semitism of the Nazi era; today’s asylum seekers are not the Jews of the 1990s. Jim Crow was not the same as slavery; the multiple racisms African Americans encoun-

1 See Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York, 1994); Steven Fraser, ed., *The Bell Curve Wars: Race, Intelligence, and the Future of America* (New York, 1995).

2 According to Samuel E. Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People*, vol. 3: *1869 Through the Death of John F. Kennedy, 1963* (New York, 1994), 107.

ter today are different from those they had to suffer in the days of legal segregation.

Although chauvinism, hate, and phobias based on the categories of race, ethnicity, and national origin seem ubiquitous, they often provide only background noise. Sometimes the noise is unpleasant and disagreeable, but essentially ineffective and powerless. Sometimes it is loud and shrill, and it becomes the actual signature of the time. Sometimes it receives support only from a minority within the majority; sometimes it becomes presentable within broader strata of society. And still at other times group hatred and discrimination rise to the status of official state doctrine.

The concept of this book, which attempts longitudinal and horizontal cross sections through the history of intolerance in two largely different national contexts, is based on two major assumptions. We will elaborate on these later; for the moment, however, a brief sketch should suffice. First, we hold nationalist, racist, or ethnocentrist modes of exclusion to be an integral part of modernity, rather than an aberration or a dysfunction. The possibility of emancipation and the grounds for oppression both appear within its horizon. Second, and closely related, we maintain that racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia, as aggressive and exclusive practices of the ascription of group characteristics, are only adequately analyzed as a function of collective identity. Collective identity, whether it refers to nation, race, or culture, always depends on the distinction between in-groups and out-groups. The borders may be more or less permeable, but they nevertheless are borders. Collective identification with nation, culture, or race and the aggressive exclusion of people who do not fit the demands of sameness follow the same taxonomic systems.

The reader might notice with some surprise, even with disquiet, that the book does not systematically treat the Holocaust or the nearly total annihilation of the Native American population in the course of the conquest of the North American continent. For a variety of reasons, both events do not fit into the proposed comparative scheme, despite their respective importance in the histories of these two countries. The history of the near extermination of the people and cultures of North America is perhaps best handled in a comparative history of colonialism, one that focuses on the ruthless establishment of European hegemony over many regions of the globe. It might also be told as a parable of the dialectics of the Enlightenment, which, cut off from its roots in universal humanism, transformed the idea of humankind's domination over nature into the ideology of the legitimate domination of some human

beings by other human beings. Yet, it does not neatly fit into a German-American comparative design.

In the case of the Holocaust, the problem of comparability poses itself in an even more dramatic manner. The Holocaust is such a singular event, or series of events, that we do not think that comparative research is the adequate methodological tool to address the academic as well as ethical bewilderment and helplessness it produces. To compare the Holocaust to the war against Native Americans is a matter of politics rather than scholarly consideration. The history of postwar Germany is replete with allusions, attempts, and outright strategies to ban the horror of the Holocaust by placing it into a comparative framework with other megacrimes in human history. At least since the so-called *Historikerstreit* (historians' quarrel) of the late 1980s, any attempt to compare the Holocaust is inextricably linked to the politics of "normalization." Thus, drawing comparisons with the Holocaust, no matter how good the academic and ethical intentions, inevitably makes a political statement with which we must disagree. For better or worse, we chose to leave it out of the book as a topic in its own right. Nevertheless, as the ultimate consequence of the racist and nationalist furor, it is present on every single page of this book.

CURRENT CONTEXTS

The political implications of the German discourse on the comparability of the Holocaust vividly illustrate the fact that academic discourse is principally bound up with the public and political discourse taking place outside universities and research institutions. This also applies, as the *Historikerstreit* graphically demonstrated, to the discourse of historians – despite the German tradition of historicism, which for a long time had maintained historians' self-interpretation as members of a disinterested discipline. Historiographic debate structures and is structured by the social, political, and cultural environment in which it takes place. Thus, the book's agenda has been set by observations of current political discourses and practices.

Our starting point is the admittedly banal observation that nationalism, racism, xenophobia, and identity have again become particularly malignant since the end of the 1980s, in Europe as well as in North America. As it turns out, the formation of extreme right-wing parties in Western European countries in the preceding decades was only a prelude to something larger. The Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italy) and

Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National (France) were the first to establish themselves as nationalist and chauvinist parties in Western democracies during the 1970s and the 1980s; the success of the Republicans (*die Republikaner*) in Germany remained, fortunately, ephemeral, as did that of the British National Front.

What really pushed the subject into the foreground was the collapse of socialism in East-Central and Eastern Europe. As the grip of the pseudointernationalist doctrine weakened, nationalism, nationalist separatism, anti-Semitism, and ethnic chauvinism celebrated a triumphant rebirth. This spurred violent ethnic conflicts, ignited full-blown wars, tore states apart, and even showed long-distance effects, for example, in Canada and Belgium, both of which were, at times, only inches away from dissolution in the name of national purity.

Germany not only was affected but was itself a participant in these postsocialist upheavals. In the wake of reunification, the long-suspended topic of what constituted the German nation became unavoidable. The names of towns such as Mölln and Solingen, Hoyerswerda and Rostock became the violent, eventually murderous, metonymies for the disruptions of the reunification process, inevitably linking the reemergence of a united German nation-state with the specters of nationalism, racism, and xenophobia. Suddenly, the doubts about the reliability of Germany's democratic political culture, which had always existed latently and which became manifest during the discussion of the pros and cons of German unification, seemed validated.

Whereas the violent plebiscites against civility were disturbing enough, they became even more so by coinciding with certain shifts in the fields of politics and intellectual discourse. Political indicators included the abandonment of Germany's liberal asylum law and the German government's egocentric decision to recognize the sovereignty of Croatia and Slovenia, a decision that raised questions about the direction of Bonn's future foreign policy. Intellectually, the revisionist position, which for years had claimed the normalization of Germany's historical self-understanding and the overcoming of Hitler as the prime negative focus of its political ethos, was reinforced by the "course of history" and moved from an outsider position toward the mainstream.³

3 For a representative example of the huge number of publications, see Heino Schwilk and Ulrich Schacht, eds., *Die selbstbewusste Nation* [The self-confident nation] (Frankfurt/Main, 1994), which contains essays by the old nobility of German nationalism (e.g., Ernst Nolte, H. J. Syberberg, Alfred Mechttersheimer) and a New Right (Rainer Zitelmann, Roland Bubik, and others), as well as essays by the playwright Botho Strauss, Willy Brandt's widow Brigitte Seebacher-Brandt, and the German-Jewish historian Michael Wolffsohn.

During the *Historikerstreit*, an earlier and largely unsuccessful stage of the national-conservative project aimed at the normalization of Germany and its history, Jürgen Habermas had rightly claimed the “unconditional openness of the Federal Republic toward Western political culture” to be “the preeminent intellectual achievement of the postwar period.”⁴ The permanence of this achievement seemed to be at stake. The Germans had apparently rediscovered “the Nation” with a capital “N.”

In contrast to Germany, the United States was only marginally affected by the European disturbances in the aftermath of the collapse of state socialism in Europe. Nevertheless, in the early 1990s the ongoing discourse about race, ethnicity, and the relation between the majority and minorities was more energized than it had been in over a decade. High-visibility events, such as those referred to previously, were only symbolic representations of a process that could change the social, ethnic, and cultural texture of American society. Immigration from the south, stagnation and backlashes in the relations between blacks and whites, poverty and crime in the predominantly minority inner cities, and, perhaps most important, the persistent stagnation in middle-class incomes – often interpreted as the “end of the American dream” – conspired to spur the debate.

Despite the conservative presidencies of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush, measures of social redistribution have been the main tool of race politics. After roughly two decades of declining wages, affirmative action, which had never enjoyed a broad and stable social consensus, and social policies in general are under attack, primarily because two historic laws of American society seem to be losing their validity: The next generation will not be able to surpass or, at least, maintain the living standard of its parents; and, with the increase in white poverty, being white no longer guarantees a better standard of living. At the bottom of the social pyramid, immigration from Latin America drives a “blacks versus browns” competition for low-wage jobs.⁵ The volume of benefits and privileges to be distributed is shrinking. The effects are, on the one hand, the revitalization of an antistatist self-help

4 Author’s translation. The original is “Die vorbehaltlose Öffnung der Bundesrepublik gegenüber der politischen Kultur des Westens ist die grosse intellektuelle Leistung unserer Nachkriegszeit” (originally published under the title “Eine Art Schadensabwicklung” in *Die Zeit*, July 11, 1986; reprinted as “Apologetische Tendenzen,” in Jürgen Habermas, *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung* [Frankfurt/Main, 1987], 120–36, 135). See also the anthology *Historikerstreit: Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (Munich, 1987).

5 For a knowledgeable and thoughtful discussion, see Jack Miles, “Blacks vs. Browns: The Struggle for the Bottom Rung,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 270, no. 4 (Oct. 1992): 41–68.

philosophy that generally opposes governmental care for minorities and, on the other, outright pleas for state intervention on behalf of those parts of the majority that live in fear of deprivation. Both these trends have produced general confusion over the traditional political categories of left and right.⁶

Such developments only mark the most recent outbursts of the grand theme of *us versus them* in Germany and in the United States. Matters of homogeneity and heterogeneity, inclusion and exclusion, tolerance and intolerance, although they are topics of modern societies as such, play a preeminent role in the histories of the two countries examined here. It is safe to predict that they will continue do so in the future. Of course, the social structures as well as the institutional conditions in which these topics are debated stand in stark contrast: On the one hand, the American “nation of immigrants” claims the political homogeneity of an ethnically and culturally heterogeneous people, supports it with popular myths such as the “melting pot,” the “symphonic nation,” or the “color-blind society,”⁷ and yet apparently never succeeds in closing the gap between the theory of “freedom and equality” and the practice of repression and inequality. On the other hand, Germany, lacking a unified nation-state for most of its modern history, finds refuge in the romantic concept of the metaphysical homogeneity of the *Volk*, which continues to contradict the empirical evidence of heterogeneity – a contradiction that eventually Nazi Germany attempted to resolve through genocide. The overwhelming historical and current relevance of the topics of identity and intolerance in both countries accounts for the attractiveness of a comparative perspective.

NATIONALISM, RACISM, AND IDENTITY

The semantic fields of nation, race, and identity are polyvalent and over-determined; the literature on these subjects is vast. This introduction is not the place for an extensive discussion of even the most important or recent research. Rather, we would like to restrict ourselves to a brief

6 This is what recently made Pat Buchanan’s populist drive for state intervention in favor of a deprived segment of America’s white and male majority so confusing.

7 *The Melting Pot* is the title of Israel Zangwill’s 1909 play and refers, as Michael Lind correctly notes, to “the amalgamation of *European* ethnic groups in the United States” (Michael Lind, *The Next American Nation: The New Nationalism and the Fourth American Revolution* [New York, 1995], 57). “The Symphonic Nation” is a chapter title in Waldo Frank, *The Re-discovery of America* (New York, 1929). The “color-blind society” is the integrationist motto of the civil rights activists and reformers of the 1950s and 1960s.

outline of our understanding of these concepts and of the dynamic ways in which they are linked to one another.

Nationalism

The nation is indisputably the preeminent category of political integration in the modern age, and the nation-state is modernity's preeminent political institution. In the current context, we need not elaborate on how the nation-state is intertwined with other institutional dimensions of modernization. It should be sufficient to note that the rise of nations and nation-states is inseparably bound up with the development and evolution of capitalism, industrialization, and the secularization of processes of political legitimation.⁸

Thus, Ernest Gellner refers to nationalism as an ideological response to the structural demands of industrial society in his study *Nations and Nationalism* when he states: "It is not the case that nationalism imposes homogeneity out of a willful cultural *Machtbedürfnis* (desire for power); it is the objective need for homogeneity which is reflected in nationalism."⁹ Only a few pages later, however, Gellner argues: "It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round."¹⁰ Both statements are, at first glance, mutually exclusive: Nationalism appears to be, on the one hand, a mere reflection of social transformation, or the result of structural change; on the other hand, it can be an autonomous force, itself inducing a new social formation. The question therefore is how to resolve this apparent contradiction.

A nation-state is an abstract system just as its subject, the nation, is an abstract category. Unlike the local communities that generally defined the premodern *Lebenswelt* (life-world), the members of a nation are too numerous and dispersed to allow for face-to-face communication. Thus, social relations on the national level are disembedded, to use Anthony Giddens's fitting term.¹¹ The citizens of a nation-state are members of an organizational framework that transcends the *hic et nunc* of face-to-face communication and spans remarkable distances in time and space. Consequently, from an individual perspective, the category of the nation is

8 See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1983), 19–35 and passim.

9 *Ibid.*, 46.

10 *Ibid.*, 55.

11 Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, Calif., 1990), 21–9 and passim; see also Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, Calif., 1991).

empirically empty; the individual will never know, see, or even hear of most of his or her fellow members of the national community. This is what brings Benedict Anderson to describe nations as “imagined communities.”¹²

Anderson’s characterization is particularly useful because it alludes not only to the contingency of the nation but also to the sense of belonging and the implicit trust it provides for those who participate in it. Again, we are facing an apparent oxymoron, characterizing the nation as contingent and as a source of a sense of belonging at the same time. Hence, the problem is how the transformation of contingency into meaning and anonymity into community works. If we consider a nation a disembedded system in Giddens’s sense, this transformation requires reembedding mechanisms.¹³ These mechanisms can be found in the symbolic representations of the nation that render the abstract in concrete terms and thus convert anonymity into comradeship and contingency into fate. This symbolic transmutation depends on a system of national myths and legends (most important among them, the myths of origin); a pantheon of national heroes; institutions of remembrance such as museums, monuments, and memorials; the political institutions of the nation-state; the canonization of a national history and a national language; and the representations found in maps, statistics, graphics, and other records that help to consolidate the nation by asserting its existence over and over again.¹⁴

Thus, we can describe nation and nationalism as resulting contingently but not coincidentally from the dialectics of the demands of a specifically modern social formation and the willful production of a matrix of symbolic representations that, although not consciously designed for

12 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983). The consensus among scholars is that nations should be understood as cultural constructs or inventions, not as quasi-natural facts or historical destiny. Thus, Ernest Gellner expresses the same thought, although a bit more drastically, when he writes, “Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are myth. Nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates preexisting cultures: *that is a reality*” (Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 48–9). Similarly, Eisenstadt emphasizes the symbolic and institutional construction of the nation. See, e.g., Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, “Die Konstruktion nationaler Identitäten in vergleichender Perspektive,” in Bernhard Giesen, ed., *Nationale und kulturelle Identität: Studien zur Entwicklung des kollektiven Bewusstseins in der Neuzeit* (Frankfurt/Main, 1991), 21–38.

13 Giddens prefers to call these mechanisms disembedding mechanisms, thus emphasizing that they allow disembedding without disrupting social ties altogether. I prefer to call them reembedding mechanisms in order to emphasize their ability to reembed the disembedded.

14 Every census, every political map that represents national territories, every table or graphic representation of whatever kind of data collected on the national level, every bit of information that is presented as a statement on the nation as a whole or a respective average or median (be it the average income, the per capita GNP, or the percentage of households equipped with a personal computer) does, first of all, claim the very existence of the nation.

this purpose, fulfill these demands. This dialectic approach also permits the integration of Gellner's two statements mentioned previously. It frames nationalism as a doctrine, ideology, or belief system that is structured by the social conditions and the cultural resources of modern society and, at the same time, is structuring the nation as the subject of the preeminent form of modern political integration.

The national principle provides a certain taxonomic system for the grouping of people, or, in other words, a dispositive of homogeneity and distinction. The mode of grouping can, in the last instance, be based on culture, history, inheritance, blood, a political faith or mission, or, most likely, a mixture of some or all of them. In principle, the system of nations is universal and egalitarian: Everybody is supposed to be a member of precisely one nation; and every nation has the same claim to independence and to sovereignty.¹⁵ In any case, defining borderlines between in-group and out-groups, or members and nonmembers, is not a side effect but the very essence of the nationalist concept.¹⁶

Nationalism is not aggressive per se but only potentially. Symbolic re-embedding loads the abstract category of nationhood with often deeply felt affections; and notably a real or supposed violation of the integrity of the nation is, as a consequence of the logic of symbolic representation, equivalent to a violation of the personal integrity of its members. This accounts not only for the willingness to die for one's nation, which gives the ultimate proof of the power of the nationalist mode of integration, but also for foreign wars, which provide the paradigmatic example of nationalism resorting to aggressive means.¹⁷

Racism and Nationalism

In general terms, we can consider racism to be the hierarchical arranging of group relations on the grounds of a dispositive of bodily properties. Although racism expresses itself in terms of biology, it is not so much a discourse on natural qualities as a discourse on naturalized social relations that deems certain people to be degraded. The question is how the concept of race relates to that of the nation. This question is not easy

15 This egalitarian strain is represented in metaphors such as the "concert" or the "community" of nations or in the "one nation, one vote" principle of the United Nations.

16 As a matter of fact, the physical borders of a nation-state are an important element of its reem- bedding symbolic system.

17 The fact that wars are principally disguised as a defense against aggression – Hitler even masked Nazi Germany's war against Poland as a defensive measure – supports the theory that aggressive nationalism is closely related to a sense of violation of the nationalist code.

to answer because “race” and “nation” constitute two largely separate discourses within academia. When they are brought together, it is mostly in a pejorative manner that tends to eliminate the differences between them and likens one with the other based on their exclusionary character.¹⁸

Benedict Anderson proposes that we conceive of nationalism as the complete “Other” of racism. Whereas nationalist aggression, such as in a foreign war, manifests itself across national boundaries, he argues, racism is a tool of domestic oppression. Whereas nationalism equalizes individuals into a horizontal community, racism depends on an upper-class strategy to disguise perceived threats. And whereas nationalism, even nationalist hatred, reinforces and respects the nationality of the Other, racism denies the Other its very identity.¹⁹

We hold this juxtaposition of nationalism and racism to be a misconception that overemphasizes the differences and ignores the intersection of race and nation. Certainly, racism is neither the same as nor the superlative of nationalism. The foremost difference is that, whereas nationalism is only potentially linked to claims of superiority, racism without the notion of a hierarchy of races is unthinkable. Nevertheless, there are logical connections as well as empirical links between them. First, by providing symbolic systems of reembedding, both offer a cure for the coldness of the disembedded existence of modern human beings. Second, both draw on primordial factors, although racism does so more radically than nationalism. Whereas nationalism blends a whole number of unchosen traits – place of birth, ancestors, culture, language – with other, nonprimordial factors, racism depends on a radical reduction of blood or genetic ties. Third, both are modes of transcending time and space. The members of a nation as well as the members of a race know themselves to be united with their most distant predecessors by the thread of their common (natural) history as well as with their most distant co-members by virtue of their mutual affiliation with nation or race. Fourth, there is plenty of empirical evidence for the mutual compatibility of the two ideologies; a study of German citizenship and American immigration laws would prove how legal discourse functions as an interface between nation and race. The most virulently racist organization in world history called itself a “national socialist” political party.

18 See, e.g., J. Weinroth, who argues that thinking in terms of race is racism and thinking in terms of nation is nationalism and racism at the same time (J. Weinroth, “Nation and Race: Two Destructive Concepts,” *Philosophy Forum* 16 [1979]: 67–86). Tom Nairn has concluded that racism and anti-Semitism are just “derivatives” of nationalism (Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism* [London, 1980], 337).

19 See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 141–54.

The Aryan Nation, a decisively racist concept of nationhood, is a stock phrase of American neo-Nazis. Fifth, the exclusive association of nationalism with foreign wars versus that of racism with domestic oppression is empirically invalid. Historically, nationalism has proved all too aware of the “enemy within,” and foreign wars – wars between nations – often enough have racist undertones.

Our aim is neither to diminish the conceptual and practical differences between nationalism and racism nor to ignore their correlation on the grounds of the purity of definition. After all, both nation and race signify distinctly modern taxonomic systems for the grouping of people according to a homogeneity-heterogeneity rationale, with the former constituting an essentially cultural discourse and the latter deriving from the discourses of medicine and biology. At times, nationalism may even work as an anti-racist form of political mobilization. Nationalist liberation movements fighting against the racist or, at least, racialized system of colonization provide a graphic example. More often, however, nationalism turns toward racism to strengthen its own homogeneity-heterogeneity rationale and to legitimate claims of superiority. The racialization of nationalism works via the naturalization of culture and, thus, grounds the nationalist dispositive of inclusion and exclusion on the suggestive force of the supposed objectivity of biological knowledge.

To understand the transformability of race into nation and vice versa, and to avoid analytical blindness to the differences between them, it might be useful to remind ourselves of a basic rule of the discursive formation of social reality: Its logic depends on the orientation it provides rather than on its coherence. Concepts of the social world, once they have entered the discursive marketplace, are no longer determined by anything like their original or intended meaning but exclusively by the rules and dynamics of the respective discourse. Thus, Anderson’s insistence on the logical incompatibility of race and nation may be meaningful within the academic discourse and its codes of logical conclusion, but it tells us nothing about their mutual compatibility within a social discourse coded according to a rationale of power and domination.

Collective Identity

As described previously, not only nation and race but also culture, ethnicity, and other terms describing or asserting the existence of collective subjects are symbolic representations of otherwise anonymous social entities and provide a symbolic rationale of reembedding. Nationalism and

racism are these symbolic representations spelled out in a more or less coherent ideology, doctrine, or faith. Hence, nationalism and racism, as do other “isms,” refer to a consciously held cognitive and normative structure – however deficient and twisted it may be. In contrast, national, racial, or other collective identities have a different status. We may understand collective identity as a commonly shared sense of mutual communality that can exist and function without being fully present in the consciousness of those participating in it. Thus, collective identities are a certain aspect of what Pierre Bourdieu describes as the *habitus*, a common disposition to understand oneself as being part of a community, without necessarily being able to spell out its foundations, its reasons, its logic, or its goals. Collective identities are internalizations of common fates, experiences, and histories, both unmediated and acquired through socialization and acculturation, an indisputable and quasi-natural frame of experiencing and perceiving one’s social world. Put in terms of disembedding and reembedding, the existence of a collective identity indicates that the crisis of disembedding is banned and a state of reembedding is acquired.

To outline further the relation between collective identity, be it of the nation, race, ethnicity, gender, or class, and the respective “isms” of collectivity, that is, nationalism, racism, ethnocentrism and multiculturalism, feminism, or socialism, it might prove useful to refer to Bourdieu’s distinction between *doxa*, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy. This triadic distinction marks the realms of the natural and indisputable and that of discourse, struggle, and competition, respectively, with the orthodoxy occupying the dominant and the heterodoxy representing the oppositional position. In the absence of crisis, collective identities are part of the *doxa*. As long as national or ethnic affiliations, gender roles, or class hierarchies maintain their reembedding function and are not challenged by any political or social doctrine or movement, they are not subject to a discourse on their relevance or legitimacy; they exist and function discretely, and it is practically impossible to discuss them in terms of pros and cons. Conversely, the emergence of every political and social doctrine, ideology, and movement concerned with collectivity and identification signals a crisis in the reproduction of existing collectives, marks that collectivity and identification as becoming a problem, and moves that problem into the realm of discourse and the struggle between orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

The existence of a nationalist or racist ideology, or even nationalism or racism institutionalized in a particular political party, normally