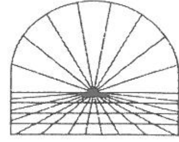

Cultural Identity in American History

Theory and Experience

Lawrence W. Levine

Edited with Notes
by

Koji Oi

EIHŌSHA

THE OPENING OF THE AMERICAN MIND:
Chapter 6, Chapter 7 and Chapter 8

From

The Opening of the American Mind:
Canons, Culture, and History

by

Lawrence W. Levine

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はしがき

アメリカ人とは何か，というのは，古くして新しい問いかけだが，多民族社会アメリカのメタファーが「人種のるつぼ」から「サラダボウル」へと変化する複雑な状況のなかで，アメリカン・アイデンティティはどのように形成されてきたか，という重要な問題を，歴史的コンテクストにおいて考察することを本書の著者は目指している．

まず第 1 章 “From the Melting Pot to the Pluralist Vision” で，著者は「るつぼ」理論から「多文化的ヴィジョン」にかけての重要な基本的文献を目配りよく紹介し，適切な引用をふんだんに交えながら，明快な解説を加えている．第 2 章 “The Troublesome Presence” は，アメリカ社会に大量に流入してきた移民たちが，主としてアングロサクソン系アメリカ人の目にどのように映っていたかという問題を，思想家や宗教家や小説家などの著名な知識人の発言を通して明らかにしている．第 3 章 “The Ethnic Dynamic” は，さまざまなエスニック集団の同化過程を，著者の両親や著者自身の個人的な経験と，「中心と周縁」や「クレオール化」といった理論の両面から分析している．アメリカが抱える移民問題や人種問題に取り組んだ本書の至るところに，“The United States has always been a multicultural, multiethnic, multiracial society.” という著者の主張を，読者は聞きつけることができるにちがいない．

著者ローレンス・W・レヴィーン教授は，本書の第 3 章で語られているように，リトアニア移民とロシア移民の子として，1933 年にニューヨーク市で生まれ，1962 年にコロンビア大学で学位を取得したあと，カリフォルニア大学バークレー校で長年教鞭を取る．現在は同大学名誉教授．教授はアメリカ文化史研究の第一人者で，1992 年にはアメリカ歴史学者協会 (OAH) の会長を務めている．著書に *Defender of the Faith: William Jennings Bryan, The Last Decade, 1915–1925* (1965), *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from*

Slavery to Freedom (1977), *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1988), *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (1993), *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture, and History* (1996) などがある．なお，*Highbrow/Lowbrow* は常山菜穂子氏による翻訳が『ハイブラウ／ロウブラウ―アメリカにおける文化ヒエラルキーの出現』(慶応義塾大学出版会，2005) と題して出版されたばかりであることを付け加えておこう．

本書の 3 つの章は上記 *The Opening of the American Mind* の第 3 部 "The Search for American Identity" から取ったが，この第 3 部は "Cultural Identity in American History: Theory and Experience" と題して，1993 年の秋学期にカリフォルニア大学で行なった講義に基づいている，と著者自身が説明しているので，その講義題目をそのまま本書の題名にさせていただいた．改めて書き立てるまでもなく，原書の *The Opening of the American Mind* という題名は，1987 年に出版されてベストセラーになった Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (邦訳『アメリカン・マインドの終焉』) を意識したものだが，この事実は，"cultural relativism" に対する不信と不安を露骨に表明していた保守派のブルームとは対照的に，"a fuller sense of the dynamic of change" を重視し，"all peoples and societies have cultures which we have to respect to the extent that we take the trouble to understand how they operate and what they believe" と主張する歴史家レヴィーンのリベラルな姿勢を浮き彫りにしている，と考えたい．

最後になったが，注釈作成のさまざまな段階で，英宝社編集部の宇治正夫氏から適切なご教示を頂くことができた．ここに記して，心からお礼申し上げたい．

2005 年 8 月下旬

大井　浩二

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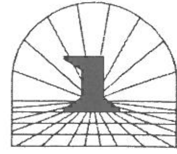


From the Melting Pot to the Pluralist Vision

From the beginning of our history, Americans have been alternately (and sometimes simultaneously) fascinated and frightened by a query that was articulated in its classic form by Alexis de Tocqueville in a letter to Ernest de Chabrol in the spring of 1831: "Imagine, my dear friend, if you can, a society formed of all the nations of the world . . . people having different languages, beliefs, opinions: in a word, a society without roots, without memories, without prejudices, without routines, without common ideas, without a national character, yet a hundred times happier than our own." This portrait led Tocqueville to ask the question that has so preoccupied Americans: "What serves as the link among such diverse elements? What makes all of this into one people?"

Almost fifty years before Tocqueville posed his question, another Frenchman, Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, who was not a visitor like Tocqueville but an immigrant, had described a similarly heterogeneous people, and to his own question, "What, then, is the American, this new man?" he responded: "*He* is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient

prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world." Like Frederick Jackson Turner a hundred years later, Crèvecoeur utilized metaphors of nature and the soil. "Men are like plants, the goodness and flavour of the fruit proceeds from the peculiar soil . . . in which they grow." In the free, unspoiled soil of America the immigrant underwent a "resurrection," and became "a new man, who acts upon new principles."

Here were the seeds of the idea of the melting pot, the most popular and long-lived explanation of what transforms a polyglot stream of immigrants into one people. The notion of the melting pot was a revolutionary theory of identity. American identity was not static but progressive and ever-changing depending on what went into the great crucible in which that identity was forged. In 1845 Ralph Waldo Emerson noted in his *Journal* that "man is the most composite of creatures," and used the analogy of the burning of the Temple of Corinth in which silver, gold, and other metals intermixed and created a new, stronger compound called Corinthian brass: "so in this Continent, —asylum of all nations, the energy of Irish, Germans, Swedes, Poles, & Cossacks, & all the European tribes, —of the Africans, & of the Polynesians, will construct a new race, a new religion, a new State, a new literature." Herman Melville was hardly less enthusiastic. "We are not a narrow tribe of men," he insisted in 1849, ". . . whose blood has been

debased in the attempt to ennoble it, by maintaining an exclusive succession among ourselves. No: our blood is as the flood of the Amazon, made up of a thousand noble currents all pouring into one. We are not a nation, so much as a world. . . . Our ancestry is lost in the universal paternity. . . . On this Western Hemisphere all tribes and people are forming into one federated whole."

Frederick Jackson Turner embodied the same confidence in the uniqueness of what was transpiring in the United States. In 1893 he insisted, as we have seen, that "in the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristics. The process has gone on from the early days to our own." The Middle West, he wrote in a later essay, was demonstrating "the possibility of a newer and richer civilization, not by preserving unmodified or isolated the old component elements, but by breaking down the line-fences, by merging the individual life in the common product—a new product, which held the promise of world brotherhood."

One hundred and twenty-six years after the French immigrant Crèvecoeur used the term "melting" to describe the process of identity formation in America, an English Jewish immigrant, Israel Zangwill, wrote a play called *The Melting Pot* (1908) which permanently fused that term to the process. The play's hero, David Quixano, a Russian Jewish immigrant composer, speaks of the United States as "God's Crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming!" The real American, David tells his uncle, had not yet arrived. "He is only in the Crucible, I tell you—he will be the

fusion of all races, perhaps the coming superman." Like Emerson's "smelting pot," Zangwill's melting pot was inclusive. While early in the play David speaks only of Europeans, by the finale he stares at New York's harbor through which the immigrants pour and exclaims: "Ah, what a stirring and seething! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian, —black and yellow . . . East and West, and North and South, the palm and the pine, the pole and the equator, the crescent and the cross—how the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God. . . . where all races and nations come to labour and look forward!"

Because the potential for a dynamic and continuing new cultural synthesis was always present in the various melting pot theories, they posited a dynamic and ever-changing view of national identity which many Americans found too complex, indefinite, and even threatening. No matter how close these theories might have come to describing reality, significant numbers of Americans regarded them with profound ambivalence.

In 1754, several decades before Crèvecoeur wrote, Benjamin Franklin asked why the United States should "darken its People? Why increase the Sons of Africa, by Planting them in America, where we have so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys [Asians], of increasing the lovely white and Red?" Although he spoke positively of the "Red" race here, he began his original question by speaking ominously of "*Scouring* our Planet" and "clearing America of Woods" thus "making this Side of our Globe reflect a brighter Light to the Eyes of

Inhabitants in Mars or Venus." Indeed, Franklin's definition of "White" was quite narrow. "The Number of purely white People in the World is proportionately very small," he wrote. Most Europeans, "the *Spaniards*, *Italians*, *French*, *Russians*, and *Swedes* are generally what we call a swarthy complexion; as are the *Germans* also, the *Saxons* only excepted." It was these Saxons, along with the English, who comprised "the principal Body of white People on the Face of the Earth," and it was to them that Franklin was convinced America should belong. But he tended to express these thoughts with some diffidence: "Perhaps I am partial to the complexion of my Country, for such Kind of Partiality is natural to Mankind."

Franklin's "partiality" is an indication that it would be a mistake to discuss the melting pot by itself; from the beginning there was another, and often quite contrary, set of ideas concerning how American identity was formed which the sociologists Stewart and Mildred Cole have called "Anglo-conformity." This notion insisted that England *was* the Mother Country whose culture and institutions would prevail. When Abraham Reincke, a Swedish Moravian minister, visited settlements of his countrymen along the Delaware River in New Jersey in 1745, he reported: "I found in this country scarcely one genuine Swede left. . . . The English are evidently swallowing up the people and the Swedish language is so corrupted, that if I did not know the English, it would be impossible to understand the language of my dear Sweden." Similarly, David Ramsay in his *History of South Carolina* (1809) wrote that the sources from which South Carolina's population derived were so various that considerable time would pass before Carolin-

ians possessed "an uniform national character." Still, he had no doubt that this day was inevitably drawing nearer: "The different languages and dialects, introduced by the settlers from different countries, are gradually giving place to the English. So much similarity prevails among the descendants of the early emigrants from the old world, that strangers cannot ascertain the original country of the ancestors of the present race."

While one could assert Anglo-conformity as a *fact*—the natural product of climate, form of government, and language—one could also assert it as a *principle*. Those who did so were not content to depend upon natural processes to ensure that immigrants would become Americans through the inexorable workings of time; they *insisted* that immigrants convert willingly and rapidly. The most familiar early example of this attitude is found in a letter Secretary of State John Quincy Adams wrote in 1818 in response to a query concerning immigration by a German nobleman. If immigrants to the United States could not adjust to "the character, moral, political and physical, of this country," Adams exclaimed, "the Atlantic is always open to them to return to the land of their nativity and their fathers." If they wanted to find happiness in their new land, they had to make up their minds to one thing: "They must cast off the European skin never to resume it. They must look forward to their posterity rather than backward to their ancestors; —they must be sure that whatever their own feelings may be, those of their children will cling to the prejudices of this country."

Thomas Jefferson worried about the effects that the mass of European immigrants would have upon the nature of Ameri-

can government and society. In Jefferson's terms it was imperative that there be a conversion to *American* values, principles, and mores lest the European immigrants "warp or bias" the direction of American society and "render it a heterogeneous, distracted mass." His contemporary Dr. Benjamin Rush spoke of the need to convert immigrants into "republican machines" if we expected them to function properly "in the great machine of the government of the state." It was thinking like this, of course, that was in no small part responsible for the continuous emphasis upon education in American thought and action in order to ensure that the feelings of the immigrants' progeny, in Adams's words, "will cling to the prejudices of this country." If American schools produced "one general, and uniform system of education," Rush argued, it would "render the mass of the people more homogenous, and thereby fit them more easily for uniform and peaceable government."

The insistence on conversion links the ideas of the melting pot and Anglo-conformity and makes complete separation of the two concepts difficult; they were easily and frequently consolidated into one. Lewis Gannett recognized this in 1923 when he asserted that "Anglo-Saxon Americans have small interest in the 'melting-pot' except as a phrase. They do not want to be fused with other races, traditions, and cultures. If they talk of the melting-pot they mean by it a process in which the differences of the immigrant races will be carried away like scum, leaving only pure ore of their own traits." Here, then, was a second and very different melting pot than the one posited by Emerson, Melville, Turner, and Zangwill. In my own experiences in the polyglot schools of New York City in the 1930s

and 1940s, the melting pot became the instrument by which Anglo-conformity was achieved. Into the pot went the diverse groups and out came Anglo girls and boys, men and women.

That process was graphically illustrated by the Ford Motor Company. Immigrant workers who wanted to join the profit-sharing plan which Ford inaugurated in January, 1914, were compelled to enroll in the Ford English School from which some 16,000 workers graduated before the school was disbanded in 1921. The purpose of the school according to a company spokesman was "to impress these men that they are, or should be, Americans, and that former racial, national, and linguistic differences are to be forgotten." Commencement exercises were held in a large hall. On the stage in front of a model of an immigrant ship stood a huge pot, seven and a half feet high and fifteen feet in diameter. The graduating members of the class, dressed in clothes representative of the nations from which they had come and carrying the types of luggage they had brought with them when they first arrived in the United States, marched down the gangplank from the ship and disappeared into the pot. Six of their teachers then stirred the pot with ten-foot-long ladles. When the pot began to "boil over," the workers emerged, according to an eyewitness, "dressed in their best American clothes and waving American flags."

It was a thoroughly comforting and thoroughly antiseptic notion of acculturation: the outsiders, the strangers, passed through without leaving any trace of themselves, of their cultures, of their identities. They were *processed* as surely and as completely as any other raw materials in the factories of the United States. S. S. Marquis, the head of the Ford Sociological

Department, used this very analogy: "This is the human product we seek to turn out, and as we adapt the machinery in the shop to turning out the kind of automobile we have in mind, so we have constructed our educational system with a view to producing the human product in mind." Henry Ford himself once remarked: "I am more a manufacturer of men than of automobiles." *This* was the essence of the modern melting pot as interpreted by Henry Ford in the early twentieth century and, if I recall it correctly, by the New York City schools in the 1930s and 1940s.

In whatever form it took, Anglo-conformity insisted that the immigrants and their progeny had to shed their cultural skins, lose their distinctiveness, and conform to the "standard" American mold which, of course, turned out to be an Anglo American mold. In 1909 the educator Ellwood P. Cubberly expressed his disquiet at the tendency of Southern and Eastern European immigrants to "settle in groups or settlements, and to set up here their national manners, customs, and observances." The task of educators, he asserted, was to "break up these groups or settlements, to assimilate and amalgamate these people as a part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as it can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government." In 1918 the superintendent of schools in New York City defined Americanization as entailing not only "an appreciation of the institutions of this country," but also "absolute forgetfulness of all obligations or connections with other countries because of descent or birth." In 1925 Gino Speranza called upon those who like himself were members of Southern or Eastern European

ethnic groups to repress their traditional cultures: "the test of service and devotion for the New Stock may be, after all, not how much we give of ourselves, but how much of ourselves we deny. The task and the call for us all—Old Stock and New—as I vision it is to strive to keep America as it was, and, as I pray with all my mind and heart, it may ever be." Americanization entailed, then, not only embracing the new but wiping out all memories and vestiges of the old. As the figure of Uncle Sam on a 1902 poster cautioned immigrants: "Don't say YA—say YES!"

One crucial effect of this doctrine was the difficulty it posed for such racial minorities as Native Americans, Asian Americans, and African Americans who could never conform to the physical dimensions of Anglo-conformity, and for those groups like Catholics, Jews, and Muslims who could conform only by divesting themselves of a set of beliefs at the center of their culture, which, of course, was frequently a problem for racial minorities as well. There were also other important effects. The insistence upon envisioning the United States as a modified English culture blinded generations of Americans to the dynamics and complexities of cultural syncretism whereby American identity and culture were the result not of the *imposition* of English culture on all other groups but of the *interaction* of the various ethnic and racial groups with one another. It especially ruled out any consideration of the influence of African culture in the creation of American culture. Thus in his 1809 history, David Ramsay spoke of the contributions to South Carolina by Scots, Swiss, Irish, Germans, Dutch, and New Englanders without ever alluding to Africans who were then almost half of the

population. Crèvecoeur himself shared this myopia when he described "the American, this new man" as "either an European, or the descendant of an European."

It was not until the twentieth century that the stage was set for fundamental departures from prevailing ideas of national identity by the new anthropological definitions of culture which were promulgated around the turn of the century, and which tried to understand diverse cultures from *within* rather than from the imagined heights of European cultural and genetic superiority.

In 1915, Horace Kallen, a Jewish American professor at Columbia University, published two articles in the *Nation* in which he introduced a concept he ultimately called "cultural pluralism" and raised questions which are still very much with us. Kallen pronounced the melting pot a failure. While the immigrant undeniably underwent external changes, he remained an ethnic internally. "Whatever else he changes," Kallen insisted, "he cannot change his grandfather." The immigrant "comes rarely alone; he comes companioned with his fellow nationals; and he comes to no strangers, but to kin and friends who have gone before." In the United States the immigrant "is merely a Dutchman, a Mick, a frog, a wop, a dago, a hunky, or a sheeny and no more; and he encounters these others who are unlike him, dealing with him as a lower and outlandish creature. Then, be he even the rudest and most primeval peasant, heretofore totally unconscious of his nationality, of his categorical difference . . . he must inevitably become conscious of it. "

This was an important perception: the process of immigration could strengthen and not merely weaken the ties of

ethnicity. In spite of generational changes, acculturation, and intermarriage, Kallen argued that the ethnic "remains still the Slav, the Jew, the German or the Irish citizen of the American state. . . . Neither he nor his children nor his children's children lose their ethnic individuality." Jews or Poles or Anglo-Saxons, "in order to cease being Jews or Poles or Anglo-Saxons would have to cease to be." Americans were confused about this because "the non-British elements of the population have been practically voiceless." Nevertheless, the truth was that the United States was a cacophony and the question was: "What must, what can, what *shall* this cacophony become—a unison or a harmony?" Kallen did not posit this choice as a metaphor, but as an actual choice: unity or harmony. "To achieve unison . . . would require the complete nationalization of education, the abolition of every form of parochial and private school, the abolition of instruction in other tongues than English, and the concentration of the teaching of history and literature upon the English tradition." He made it clear that this was something akin to European imperialism. It was possible but only at the cost of violating America's own traditions and fundamental principles. The other choice, a "democratic commonwealth" of peoples, a "democracy of nationalities," a "multiplicity in a unity, an orchestration of mankind," was in the American spirit.

The concept of cultural pluralism was an important break with the past tendency of seeing America's constituent groups as undergoing some sort of inexorable processing—either through melting into something else or through conversion to something else. Kallen's writings embodied the notion that

continuing cultural and ethnic distinctiveness was not pathological, did not spell the demise of the Republic, but was in fact something to be prized and nurtured.

A year after Kallen, in 1916, Randolph Bourne also spoke of the failure of the melting pot. The advent of war in Europe, Bourne declared, revealed the extent to which immigrants in the United States continued to have deep feelings about their former homelands and made it clear that such immigrant groups as Germans, Scandinavians, Bohemians, and Poles had not melted but still were in the grip of "vigorous nationalistic and cultural movements." The ubiquitous presence among immigrants of foreign-language schools, newspapers, and organizations was a sign that assimilation "was proceeding on lines very different from those we had marked out for it." The fact that even as immigrant groups became assimilated they tended to retain many of the cultural traditions of their homelands, was "not, however, to admit the failure of Americanization. . . . It is rather to urge us to an investigation of what Americanism may rightly mean." We act, Bourne charged, "as if we wanted Americanization to take place only on our own terms, and not by the consent of the governed." Bourne sympathized with the immigrants' paradoxical situation: on the one hand, they were urged by "hard-hearted old Brahmins" to melt even while those same Brahmins jeered at the pretensions of such newcomers as the Jewish immigrant Mary Antin when she tried to identify with the American past by writing of "our forefathers."

The greatest paradox, Bourne pointed out, was that the would-be processors of immigrants were themselves the prod-

ucts of immigrant cultures. "We are all foreign-born or the descendants of foreign-born, and if distinctions are to be made between us they should rightly be on some other ground than indigenousness." He understood also the importance of the cultural contributions made by the non-English immigrants. "We have needed the new peoples . . . to save us from our own stagnation." He denied the common image which saw the English as assimilated Americans while newer immigrant groups maintained unhealthy and destructive allegiances to their mother lands. "The truth is that no more tenacious cultural allegiance to the mother country has been shown by any alien nation than by the ruling class of Anglo-Saxon descendants in these American states." Indeed, he charged that the cult of "English snobberies, . . . English literary styles, English literary reverences and canons, English ethics, English superiorities" had blinded Americans to the "indigenous genius" of their own traditions and culture which were the product of the variegated groups that composed America. He urged his fellow Americans to understand the "incalculable potentialities" their novel union of diverse peoples gave them and not to settle for the "weary old nationalism, —belligerent, exclusive, inbreeding, the poison of which we are witnessing now in Europe."

Bourne criticized the melting pot paradigm because it cast the American cultural tradition in the past as something to which immigrant groups had to conform. "Our American cultural tradition," he affirmed, "lies in the future. It will be what we all together make out of this incomparable opportunity of attacking the future with a new key." That key was the chance to build a "trans-national" state of many races and peoples, a

"world federation in miniature" where for the only time in history the various national groups would both preserve their cultures and identities and join together to create the first truly cosmopolitan international nation which would eschew the "tasteless, colorless fluid of uniformity" and retain the "savor" and strength of ethnic diversity. Immigrants, Bourne insisted repeatedly, were not alien masses "waiting to be melted down into the indistinguishable dough of Anglo-Saxonism. They are rather threads of living and potent cultures," which were endeavoring "to weave themselves into a novel international nation, the first the world has seen." The truest integration, he concluded, would emanate not from "narrow 'Americanism' or forced chauvinism," but from fostering the feeling that "all who are here may have a hand in the destiny of America."

If Kallen and Bourne continued the lamentable practice of basically ignoring non-European racial groups, and especially African Americans, a young Black graduate of Fisk and Harvard universities did not. As early as 1897, W. E. B. Du Bois, with his characteristic originality, explored many of the issues later to interest Kallen and Bourne. He began by asking: "What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American? If I strive as a Negro, am I not perpetuating the very cleft that threatens and separates Black and White America?" His answer was unequivocal: the destiny of American Blacks "is *not* absorption by the white Americans. . . . Their destiny is not a servile imitation of Anglo-Saxon culture, but a stalwart originality which shall unswervingly follow Negro ideals." Du Bois insisted that "there is no reason

why, in the same country and on the same street, two or three great national ideals might not thrive and develop, that men of different races might not strive together for their race ideals as well, perhaps even better, than in isolation." He called upon "Americans of Negro descent" to maintain their race identity because only as a group could they fulfill themselves as well as continue their essential contributions to the nation in which they lived: "We are that people whose subtle sense of song has given America its only American music, its only American fairy tales, its only touch of pathos and humor amid its mad money-getting plutocracy. As such, it is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideals."

Six years later, in passages that still resonate today, Du Bois wrote of his double-consciousness: "One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body." The African American, Du Bois proclaimed, "would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportuniry closed roughly in his face." Du Bois spoke not of "melting" but of being "a co-worker in the kingdom of culture" where the American Black could utilize "his best powers and his latent genius," which in the past had been "strangely wasted, dispersed, or forgotten," but which the United States desperately needed if it was to fulfill its destiny: "There are to-

day no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes; . . . we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness."

At the heart of Kallen's, Bourne's, and Du Bois's arguments was an intriguing perception about the nature and composition of the American people, one which we might imagine historians would have pounced upon and tested. Instead, for more than half a century they almost unanimously ignored it and kept writing as if immigrant groups simply disappeared progressively in the great crucible of American society. There were of course exceptions, such as the sociologist Robert E. Park and a number of his students and colleagues and the historian Marcus Lee Hansen. In 1938 Hansen argued that while the second generation (the children of the immigrant or first generation) "wanted to forget everything"—the language, religion, customs—that had characterized their parents' culture, "wanted to lose as many of the evidences of foreign origin as they could shuffle off," *their* children (the third generation) turned back to the world of their immigrant forebears: "what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember." Through this mechanism of generational reconstitution, the culture of the immigrants was saved from fading into oblivion and accorded the opportunity for a reinvigorated existence.

For the most part, however, pluralist ideas were overwhelmed by the certainty that ethnic distinctions were in the process of inevitable extinction. In 1964 Milton Gordon concluded that cultural pluralist analyses had not yet "made their way into the thinking of professional intergroup relations work-

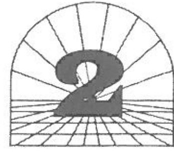
ers or the American public—even that segment of the public which is highly literate and keeps abreast of significant current events." As late as 1966 the influential sociologist Talcott Parsons wrote that "emancipation" from such "particularist solidarities" as ethnicity, religion, regionalism, and class was accelerating as society adopted "universalistic norms."

In the past several decades it has become increasingly clear to a growing number of scholars in several disciplines that our society is far more intricate than this, that "universalistic norms" and "particularistic solidarities" might well live side by side, and perhaps had *always* lived side by side throughout American history. Opponents of contemporary scholarship like to portray a wholistic past in which immigrants came to the United States, acculturated promptly and without fuss, and posed no problems for a nation which was inexorably becoming one: one people, one language, one state. In fact, of course, the United States harbored the kernels of division from the beginning and contained a multifarious population distinguished by race, religion, country of origin, philosophy, accent, language, class, and region. Even as the United States was becoming one nation, beckoning to the peoples of the world, expanding its territory, developing its resources, and building its economy, it also remained a divided nation and only 130 years ago barely escaped dissolution in the bloodiest war in our history.

We must not deny this characteristic and historic American flux; we need to recognize it and attempt to understand how it functions, how we have managed to be strong in spite of, indeed, perhaps *because* of the deep divisions and divergences—

not all of them ethnic or racial—that define us. Anything less than this sort of honest recognition and comprehension will prevent us from ever answering that query of Tocqueville's: "What serves as the link among such diverse elements? What makes all of this into one people?" The very strength of the United States—its size and diversity—inhibits if it does not make impossible the kind of conventional wholeness and stability that some of us seem to long for and even to invent historically so that the present is made to appear aberrant, and even culpable, for harboring the seeds of separatism and alienation when in fact those seeds have been present and have born fruit throughout our history.

Diversity, pluralism, multiculturalism have been present throughout our history and have acted not merely as the germs of friction and division but as the lines of continuity, the sources for the creation of an indigenous culture, and the roots of a distinctive American identity. We have too often been prevented from understanding this by the diversion of obsolete models and the clamor of archaic debates.



The Troublesome Presence

It is currently popular to write as if those now immigrating to the United States are qualitatively different from any immigrants we have had previously and pose problems of a magnitude we have never before experienced. Thus Arthur Schle-
5 singer, Jr., describes the contemporary United States as "a nation marked by an even stranger mixture of blood than Crèvecoeur had known," laments that "the 'ancient prejudices and manners' disowned by Crèvecoeur have made a surprising comeback," and warns that "the historic idea of a unifying
10 American identity is now in peril." Lawrence Auster assails the belief "that over the next century scores of millions of Hispanics, Asians, Moslems, and Africans can melt into the American character as easily as did the European immigrant groups in the early 20th century," and warns that this new immigra-
15 tion is not just another "wave" of immigrants but an "invasion," which will lead to "the expectation that America must give up its very identity to form a whole new society. " Peter Brimelow observes that "there is a sense in which current immigration policy is Adolf Hitler's posthumous revenge on

America" because immigration to the United States is "so systematically different from anything that had gone before as to transform—and ultimately, perhaps, even to destroy—the one unquestioned victor of World War II."

Even that venerable elder statesman, George F. Kennan, who in 1947 as "X" alerted us to the Soviet peril, now, in his own name, warns us against ourselves. There are, he has determined, "far too many of us" in the United States. Certainly it is important to consider the strains which population growth exerts upon both the environment and the governmental system. But Mr. Kennan clearly has more than this on his mind: his worry is not simply that there are too many of us but more specifically that there are too many of *some* of us. It is time, he writes, to rethink the assumptions that "there could be no immigrant, of whatever culture or race or national tradition, who could not be readily absorbed into our social and political life, could not become infused with understanding for, and confidence in, our political institutions, and could not, consequently, become a useful bearer of the American political tradition." We have not understood that "where the disparity between what these people were leaving behind and what they were coming into was too great, the new arrivals, even in the process of adjusting to our political tradition, might actually change it." Conditions "in our major urban ghettos would suggest that there might even be limits to our capacity for assimilation." To underline his point that a culture can be overcome by what it tries to absorb, he relates a parable:

> The inhabitants of the onetime Italian cities along the

> eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea (the scenes of some of Shakespeare's plays) made it a habit, over several centuries, to take their menial servants and their ditchdiggers from the Slavs of the poorer villages in the adjacent mountains. Today, finally, the last of the Italians have left; and the beautiful cities in question are inhabited entirely by Slavs, who have little relationship to the sort of city and the cultural monuments they have inherited. They have simply displaced the original inhabitants.

"Surely," he concludes, "there is a lesson in this." And he hammers the lesson home with a second historical analogy featuring the ancient Romans who allowed themselves "to become dependent on the barbarians to fill the ranks of their own armies," which became for them, as it could for us if we continued our dependence on labor imported from the outside, "the beginning of the end." As if to fulfill his own worst fears, Kennan contemplates the possibility of breaking the United States up into twelve "constituent republics" each having control over its own immigration. In such a case, he speculates, "it is not inconceivable that certain of the major southern regions where things have already gone too far would themselves become, in effect, linguistically and culturally, Latin-American countries . . . (which might for them, incidentally, not be the worst of solutions)."

Kennan's vision of the future is not peculiar to him. In 1985 Governor Richard D. Lamm of Colorado called immigration a "time bomb" and spoke of "fears—legitimate fears—that the country is being rejected, or culturally annexed, by its newest