

Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups

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have done so would have been to fly in the face of the strong emphasis in American life upon the principle that we are all individuals, responsible for re-creating ourselves anew. This principle conveys a great and important truth: each of us is responsible for creating his or her own identity. But a companion principle also conveys an important truth: each of us is a social creature, in part shaped by the others of whom we are a part; our destiny is familial as well as individual.

Discussions about values and meaning often go astray in America because the concrete contexts that give flesh and blood to our individual experience of life are left out of account. The eight symbolic clusters mentioned above focus the attention of specific cultures in diverse ways, lead each to interpret the same data within a different horizon of meaning and value, and inculcate in each different sources of attraction and repulsion. Different traditions instruct individuals differently in what power they possess to change things. In some, the tragic sense is strong, or cultural pessimism, or patience; in others, idealism and hope are very bright. The differences among us as individuals are often accounted for by phrases such as "to each his own," as though our ethical visions and choices came strictly through individual choice. Actually, it appears, there is in each individual a considerably larger range of cultural principles at work than we seem to notice. Patterns emerge. Traditions come into focus. We are not so independent or so idiosyncratic as we have been led to imagine. There is a general descriptive geography to our moral visions and choices. A kind of general "field theory" of moral symbols powerful among Americans might be developed. Anglo-American, Jewish, black, Italian, and other ethnic cultures have established significant magnetic lodges in this field, which exert contrasting forces upon large numbers of individuals.

The full cultural history of American religion has yet to be written. Accurate and detailed attention to its component historical cultures is still in its infancy. The multicultural materials of American literary history have yet to be fully explored. Particularly interesting are the ways in which a writer in one cultural tradition—a Jewish novelist, say—perceives in his work the secret springs of those who are of a different tradition. In these matters, the way people perceive each other is a valid and important subject of study.

The many divergent ways in which central cultural symbols actually function in the daily lives of Americans have not yet been mapped. The ways in which ethnicity has affected, and still does affect, the inner lives of Americans have not yet been fully explored. One hopes that in religion, philosophy, and literature, as well as in psychology and the social sciences, the materials for such a study will be assembled, and that by the time another generation passes the state of our knowledge will be considerably more concrete and exact than it is at present.

MICHAEL NOVAK

PLURALISM: A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

DEMOCRACY AND NATIONALISM

Most political theorists, from the time of the Greeks onward, have assumed the national or ethnic homogeneity

of the communities about which they wrote. Prior to the work of Rousseau, theory was never explicitly nationalist, but the assumption of a common language, history, or religion underlay most of what was said about political practices and institutions. Hence, the only empire systematically defended in the great tradition of political theory was the Christian empire of the Middle Ages: one religious communion, it was argued, made one political community. The religiously mixed empires of ancient and modern times, by contrast, had no theoretical defenders, only publicists and apologists. Political thinking has been dominated by the Greece of Pericles, not of Alexander; by republican Rome, not the Roman empire; by Venice and Holland, not the Europe of the Hapsburgs. Even liberal writers, ready enough to acknowledge a plurality of interests, were strikingly unready for a plurality of cultures. One people made one state. The argument of the authors of *The Federalist Papers* (1787–1788) may be taken here to sum up a long tradition of thought. The Americans, John Jay wrote, were a people "descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs." Surely a "band of brethren" so united "should never be split into a number of unsocial, jealous, and alien sovereignties."

Jay's description was only very roughly true of America in 1787, and clearly the maxim *One people, one state* has, throughout human history, been honored most often in the breach. Most often, brethren have been divided among alien sovereignties and forced to coexist with strangers under an alien sovereign. National and ethnic pluralism has been the rule, not the exception. The theoretical preference for cultural unity existed for centuries alongside dynastic and imperial institutions that made for disunity. Only in the late 18th and 19th centuries was the old assumption of homogeneity, reinforced by new democratic commitments, transformed into a practical demand for separation and independence. Underlying that demand were two powerful ideas: first, that free government was only possible under conditions of cultural unity; second, that free individuals would choose if they could to live with their own kind, that is, to join political sovereignty to national or ethnic community. No doubt these ideas could be challenged. Marx and his followers emphatically denied that they were true, arguing that conceptions of "kind" were ultimately based on class rather than ethnic distinctions. But the two ideas had the support of a long intellectual tradition, and they happily supported one another. They suggested that democracy and self-determination led to the same political arrangements that their effective exercise required: the replacement of empires by national states.

In practice, this replacement took two very different forms. The new nationalist politics was first of all expressed in the demand for the unification of peoples divided—as were the Germans, Italians, and Slavs—among the old empires and a variety of petty principalities. Nationalist leaders aimed initially at large states and at a broad (pan-German or pan-Slavic) definition of cultural homogeneity. Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia are products of this first nationalism which, though it entailed the breakup of empires, was still a politics of composition, not of division. The Zionist "ingathering"

of Jews from Europe and the Orient has the same character. Roughly similar groups were to be welded together, on the model of the prenationalist unifications of France and Britain.

This early nation-building was hardly a failure, but the clear tendency of nationalism more recently has been to challenge not only the old empires, especially the colonial empires, but also the composite nation-states. Neither the oldest states (France, Britain) nor the newest (Pakistan, Nigeria) have been safe from such challenges. Secession rather than unification is the current theme. International society today is marked by the proliferation of states, so that "the majority of the members of the U.N.," as Eric Hobsbawm has written, "is soon likely to consist of the late-twentieth-century (republican) equivalents of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and Schwarzburg-Sonderhausen." Important transformations of the world economy have opened the way for this process: the rules of viability have radically changed since the 19th century. But the process also represents an extraordinary triumph for the principle of self-determination—with the collective self increasingly defined in ways that reflect the actual diversity of mankind.

Confronted with this diversity, every putative nation-state is revealed as an ancient or modern composition. Self-determination looks to be a principle of endless applicability, and the appearance of new states a process of indefinite duration. If the process is to be cut short, it is unlikely to be by denying the principle—for it appears today politically undeniable—but rather by administering it in moderate doses. Thus autonomy may be an alternative to independence, loosening the bonds of the composite state, a way to avoid their fracture. Instead of sovereignty, national and ethnic groups may opt for decentralization, devolution, and federalism; these are not incompatible with self-determination, and they may be especially appropriate for groups of people who share some but not all of the characteristics of a distinct historical community and who retain a strong territorial base. Whether composite states can survive as federations is by no means certain, but it is unlikely that they can survive in any other way—not, at least, if they remain committed (even if only formally) to democratic government or to some sort of social egalitarianism.

Democracy and equality have proven to be the great solvents. In the old empires, the elites of conquered nations tended to assimilate to the dominant culture. They sent their children to be educated by their conquerors; they learned an alien language; they came to see their own culture as parochial and inferior. But ordinary men and women did not assimilate, and when they were mobilized, first for economic and then for political activity, they turned out to have deep national and ethnic loyalties. Mobilization made for conflict, not only with the dominant groups, but also with other submerged peoples. For centuries, perhaps, different nations had lived in peace, side by side, under imperial rule. Now that they had to rule themselves, they found that they could do so (peacefully) only among themselves, adjusting political lines to cultural boundaries.

So the assumptions of the theoretical tradition have proven true. Self-government has tended to produce relatively homogeneous communities and has been fully

successful only within such communities. The great exception to this rule is the United States. At the same time, the Marxist argument, the most significant challenge to traditional wisdom, has proven wrong. Nowhere have class loyalties overridden the commitment to national and ethnic groups. Today, the Soviet Union resembles nothing so much as the empire of the Romanovs: a multinational state held together chiefly by force. Conceivably, if the "national question" were ever solved, if the existence and continued development of historical communities were guaranteed (as Lenin argued they should be), new patterns of alliance and cooperation might emerge. But for the moment, it must be said that politics follows nationality, wherever politics is free. Pluralism in the strong sense—*One state, many peoples*—is possible only under tyrannical regimes.

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Except in the United States. Here too, of course, there are conquered and incorporated peoples—Indian tribes, Mexicans—who stood in the path of American expansion, and there are forcibly transported peoples—the blacks—brought to this country as slaves and subjected to a harsh and continuous repression. But the pluralist system within which these groups have only recently begun to organize and act is not primarily the product of their experience. Today, the United States can only be understood as a multiracial society. But the minority races were politically impotent and socially invisible during much of the time when American pluralism was taking shape—and the shape it took was not determined by their presence or by their repression.

In contrast to the Old World, where pluralism had its origins in conquest and dynastic alliance, pluralism in the New World originated in individual and familial migration. The largest part of the U.S. population was formed by the addition of individuals, one by one, filtered through the great port cities. Though the boundaries of the new country, like those of every other country, were determined by war and diplomacy, it was immigration that determined the character of its inhabitants—and falsified John Jay's account of their unity. The United States was not an empire; its pluralism was that of an immigrant society, and that means that nationality and ethnicity never acquired a stable territorial base. Different peoples gathered in different parts of the country, but they did so by individual choice, clustering for company, with no special tie to the land on which they lived. The Old World call for self-determination had no resonance here: the immigrants (except for the black slaves) had come voluntarily and did not have to be forced to stay (indeed, many of them returned home each year), nor did groups of immigrants have any basis for or any reason for secession. The only significant secessionist movement in U.S. history, though it involved a region with a distinctive culture, did not draw upon nationalist passions of the sort that have figured in European wars.

But if the immigrants became Americans one by one as they arrived and settled, they did so only in a political sense: they became U.S. citizens. In other respects, culturally, religiously, even for a time linguistically, they remained Germans and Swedes, Poles, Jews, and Italians. With regard to the first immigrants, the Anglo-Americans, politics still followed nationality: because

they were one people, they made one state. But with the newer immigrants, the process was reversed. Because they were citizens of one state—so it was commonly thought—they would become one people. Nationality would follow politics, as it presumably had in earlier times, when the peoples of the modern world were first formed. For a while, however, perhaps for a long while, the United States would be a country composed of many peoples, sharing residence and citizenship only, without a common history or culture.

In such circumstances, the only emotion that made for unity was patriotism. Hence the efforts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to intensify patriotic feeling, to make a religion out of citizenship. "The voting booth is the temple of American institutions," Supreme Court Justice David Brewer wrote in 1900. "No single tribe or family is chosen to watch the sacred fires burning on its altars . . . Each of us is a priest." The rise of ethnic political machines and bloc voting, however, must have made the temple seem disturbingly like a sectarian conventicle. Few people believed politics to be a sufficient ground for national unity. Patriotism was essentially a holding action, while the country waited for the stronger solidarity of nationalism. Whether the process of Americanization was described as a gradual assimilation to Anglo-American culture or as the creation of an essentially new culture in the crucible of citizenship, its outcome was thought to be both necessary and inevitable: the immigrants would one day constitute a single people. This was the deeper meaning that the slogan *From many, one* (*E pluribus unum*) took on in the context of mass immigration. The only alternatives, as the history of the Old World taught, were divisiveness, turmoil, and repression.

The fear of divisiveness, or simply of difference, periodically generated outbursts of anti-immigrant feeling among the first immigrants and their descendants. Restraint of all further immigration was one goal of these "nativist" campaigns; the second goal was a more rapid Americanization of the "foreigners" already here. But what did Americanization entail? Many of the foreigners were already naturalized citizens. Now they were to be naturalized again, not politically but culturally. It is worth distinguishing this second naturalization from superficially similar campaigns in the old European empires. Russification, for example, was also a cultural program, but it was aimed at intact and rooted communities, at nations that, with the exception of the Jews, were established on lands they had occupied for many centuries. None of the peoples who were to be Russified could have been trusted with citizenship in a free Russia. Given the chance, they would have opted for secession and independence. That was why Russification was so critical: political means were required to overcome national differences. And the use of those means produced the predictable democratic response that politics should follow nationality, not oppose it. In the United States, by contrast, Americanization was aimed at peoples far more susceptible to cultural change, for they were not only uprooted; they had uprooted themselves. Whatever the pressures that had driven them to the New World, they had chosen to come, while others like themselves, in their own families, had chosen to remain. And as a reward for their choice, the immigrants had been offered citizenship, a

gift that many eagerly accepted. Though nativists feared or pretended to fear the politics of the newcomers, the fact is that the men and women who were to be Americanized were already, many of them, patriotic Americans.

Because of these differences, the response of the immigrants to cultural naturalization was very different from that of their counterparts in the Old World. They were in many cases acquiescent, ready to make themselves over, even as the nativists asked. This was especially true in the area of language: there has been no longterm or successful effort to maintain the original language of the newcomers as anything more than a second language in the United States. The vitality of Spanish in the Southwest today, though it probably results from the continued large-scale influx of Mexican immigrants, suggests a possible exception to this rule. If these immigrants do not distribute themselves around the country, as other groups have done, a state like New Mexico might provide the first arena for sustained linguistic conflict in the United States. Until now, however, in a country where many languages are spoken, there has been remarkably little conflict. English is and has always been acknowledged as the public language of the American republic, and no one has tried to make any other language the basis for regional autonomy or secession. When the immigrants did resist Americanization, struggling to hold on to old identities and old customs, their resistance took a new form. It was not a demand that politics follow nationality, but rather that politics be separated from nationality—as it was already separated from religion. It was not a demand for national liberation, but for ethnic pluralism.

THE PRACTICE OF PLURALISM

As a general intellectual tendency, pluralism in the early 20th century was above all a reaction against the doctrine of sovereignty. In its different forms—syndicalist, guild socialist, regionalist, autonomist—it was directed against the growing power and the far-reaching claims of the modern state. But ethnic pluralism as it developed in the United States cannot plausibly be characterized as an antistate ideology. Its advocates did not challenge the authority of the federal government; they did not defend states' rights; they were not drawn to any of the forms of European corporatism. Their central assertion was that U.S. politics, as it was, did not require cultural homogeneity; it rested securely enough on democratic citizenship. What had previously been understood as a temporary condition was now described as if it might be permanent. The United States was, and could safely remain, a country composed of many peoples, a "nation of nationalities," as Horace Kallen called it. Indeed, this was the destiny of America: to maintain the diversity of the Old World in a single state, without persecution or repression. Not only *From many, one*, but also *Within one, many*.

Marxism was the first major challenge to the traditional argument for national homogeneity; ethnic pluralism is the second. Although the early pluralists were by no means radicals, and never advocated social transformation, there is a certain sense in which their denial of conventional wisdom goes deeper than that of the Marxists. For the Marxist argument suggests that the

future socialist state (before it withers away) will rest upon the firm base of proletarian unity. And like each previous ruling class, the proletariat is expected to produce a hegemonic culture, of which political life would be merely one expression. Pluralists, on the other hand, imagined a state unsupported by either unity or hegemony. No doubt, they were naïve not to recognize the existence of a single economic system and then of a culture reflecting dominant economic values. But their argument is far-reaching and important even if it is taken to hold only that in addition to this common culture, overlaying it, radically diversifying its impact, there is a world of ethnic multiplicity. The effect on the theory of the state is roughly the same with or without the economic understanding: politics must still create the (national) unity it was once thought merely to mirror. And it must create unity without denying or repressing multiplicity.

The early pluralist writers—theorists like Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne, popularizers like Louis Adamic—did not produce a fully satisfying account of this creative process or of the ultimately desirable relation between the political one and the cultural many. Their arguments rarely advanced much beyond glowing description and polemical assertion. Drawing heavily upon 19th-century romanticism, they insisted upon the intrinsic value of human difference and, more plausibly and importantly, upon the deep need of human beings for historically and communally structured forms of life. Every kind of regimentation, every kind of uniformity was alien to them. They were the self-appointed guardians of a society of groups, a society resting upon stable families (despite the disruptions of the immigrant experience), tied into, bearing, and transmitting powerful cultural traditions. At the same time, their politics was little more than an unexamined liberalism. Freedom for individuals, they were certain, was all that was necessary to uphold group identification and ethnic flourishing. They had surprisingly little to say about how the different groups were to be held together in a single political order, what citizenship might mean in a pluralist society, whether state power should ever be used on behalf of groups, or what social activities should be assigned to or left to groups. The practical meaning of ethnic pluralism has been hammered out, is still being hammered out, in the various arenas of political and social life. Little theoretical justification exists for any particular outcome.

The best way to understand pluralism, then, is to look at what its protagonists have done or tried to do. Ethnic self-assertion in the United States has been the functional equivalent of national liberation in other parts of the world. What are the actual functions that it serves? There are three that seem critically important. First of all, the defense of ethnicity against cultural naturalization: Kallen's pluralism, worked out in a period of heightened nativist agitation and political persecution (see his *Culture and Democracy in the United States*, 1924), is primarily concerned with upholding the right of the new immigrants, as individuals, to form themselves into cultural communities and maintain their foreign ways. Kallen joins the early-20th-century American *kulturkampf* as the advocate of cultural permissiveness. Train citizens, but leave nationality alone! The argument, so far as it is developed, is largely negative in character, and so it fits easily into the liberal

paradigm. But Kallen is convinced that the chief product of a liberal society will not be individual selfhood but collective identity. Here surely he was right, or at least partly right. How many private wars, parallel to his intellectual campaign, have been fought on behalf of such identities—in schools, bureaucracies, corporations—against the pressures of Americanization! Most often, when individual men and women insist on "being themselves," they are in fact defending a self they share with others. Sometimes, of course, they succumb and learn to conform to standardized versions of New World behavior. Or they wait, frightened and passive, for organizational support: a league against defamation, a committee for advancement, and so on. When such organizations go to work, the pluralist form of the struggle is plain to see, even if legal and moral arguments continue to focus on individual rights.

The second function of ethnic assertiveness is more positive in character: the celebration of this or that identity. Celebration is critical to every national and ethnic movement because both foreign conquest and immigration to foreign lands work, though in different ways, to undermine communal confidence. Immigration involves a conscious rejection of the old country and then, often, of oneself as a product of the old country. A new land requires a new life, new ways of life. But in learning the new ways, the immigrant is slow, awkward, a greenhorn, quickly outpaced by his own children. He is likely to feel inferior, and his children are likely to confirm the feeling. But this sense of inferiority, so painful to him, is also a disaster for them. It cuts them adrift in a world where they are never likely to feel entirely at home. At some point, among themselves, or among their children (the second American generation), a process of recovery begins. Ethnic celebration is a feature of that process. It has a general and a particular form: the celebration of diversity itself and then of the history and culture of a particular group. The first of these, it should be stressed, would be meaningless without the second, for the first is abstract and the second concrete. Pluralism has in itself no powers of survival; it depends upon energy, enthusiasm, commitment within the component groups; it cannot outlast the particularity of cultures and creeds. From the standpoint of the liberal state, particularity is a matter of individual choice, and pluralism nothing more than toleration. From the standpoint of the individual, it is probably something else, for men and women mostly "choose" the culture and creed to which they were born—even if, after conquest and immigration, they have to be born again.

The third function of ethnic assertiveness is to build and sustain the reborn community—to create institutions, gain control of resources, and provide educational and welfare services. As with nation-building, this is hard work, but there is a difficulty peculiar to ethnic groups in a pluralist society: such groups do not have coercive authority over their members. Indeed, they do not have members in the same way that the state has citizens; they have no guaranteed population. Though they are historical communities, they must function as if they were voluntary associations. They must make ethnicity a cause, like prohibition or universal suffrage; they must persuade people to "ethnicize" rather than Americanize themselves. The advocates of religious ethnicity—German Lutherans, Irish Catholics, Jews,

and so on—have probably been most successful in doing this. But any group that hopes to survive must commit itself to the same pattern of activity—winning support, raising money, building schools, community centers, and old-age homes.

On the basis of some decades of experience, one can reasonably argue that ethnic pluralism is entirely compatible with the existence of a unified republic. Kallen would have said that it is simply the expression of democracy in the sphere of culture. It is, however, an unexpected expression: the American republic is very different from that described, for example, by Montesquieu and Rousseau. It lacks the intense political fellowship, the commitment to public affairs, that they thought necessary. "The better the constitution of a state is," wrote Rousseau, "the more do public affairs encroach on private in the minds of the citizens. Private affairs are even of much less importance, because the aggregate of the common happiness furnishes a greater proportion of that of each individual, so that there is less for him to seek in particular cares." This is an unlikely description unless ethnic culture and religious belief are closely interwoven with political activity (as Rousseau insisted they should be). It certainly misses the reality of the American republic, where both have been firmly relegated to the private sphere. The emotional life of U.S. citizens is lived mostly in private—which is not to say in solitude, but in groups considerably smaller than the community of all citizens. Americans are communal in their private affairs, individualist in their politics. Society is a collection of groups; the state is an organization of individual citizens. And society and state, though they constantly interact, are formally distinct. For support and comfort and a sense of belonging, men and women look to their groups; for freedom and mobility, they look to the state.

Still, democratic participation does bring group members into the political arena where they are likely to discover common interests. Why has this not caused radical divisiveness, as in the European empires? It certainly has made for conflict, sometimes of a frightening sort, but always within limits set by the nonterritorial and socially indeterminate character of the immigrant communities and by the sharp divorce of state and ethnicity. No single group can hope to capture the state and turn it into a nation-state. Members of the group are citizens only as Americans, not as Germans, Italians, Irishmen, or Jews. Politics forces them into alliances and coalitions; and democratic politics, because it recognizes each citizen as the equal of every other, without regard to ethnicity, fosters a unity of individuals alongside the diversity of groups. American Indians and blacks have mostly been excluded from this unity, and it is not yet clear on what terms they will be brought in. But political life is in principle open, and this openness has served to diffuse the most radical forms of ethnic competition. The result has not been a weak political order: quite the contrary. Though it has not inspired heated commitment, though politics has not become a mass religion, the republic has been remarkably stable, and state power has grown steadily over time.

TOWARD CORPORATISM?

The growth of state power sets the stage for a new kind of pluralist politics. With increasing effect, the

state does for all its citizens what the various groups do or try to do for their own adherents. It defends their rights, not only against foreign invasion and domestic violence, but also against persecution, harassment, libel, and discrimination. It celebrates their collective (American) history, establishing national holidays; building monuments, memorials, and museums; supplying educational materials. It acts to sustain their communal life, collecting taxes and providing a host of welfare services. The modern state nationalizes communal activity, and the more energetically it does this, the more taxes it collects, the more services it provides, the harder it becomes for groups to act on their own. State welfare undercuts private philanthropy, much of which was organized within ethnic communities; it makes it harder to sustain private and parochial schools; it erodes the strength of cultural institutions.

All this is justified, and more than justified, by the fact that the various groups were radically unequal in strength and in their ability to provide services for their adherents. Moreover, the social coverage of the ethnic communities was uneven and incomplete. Many Americans never looked for services from any particular group, but turned instead to the state. It is not the case that state officials invaded the spheres of welfare and culture; they were invited in by disadvantaged or hard-pressed or assimilated citizens. But now, it is said, pluralism cannot survive unless ethnic groups, as well as individuals, share directly in the benefits of state power. Once again, politics must follow ethnicity, recognizing and supporting communal structures.

What does this mean? First, that the state should defend collective as well as individual rights; second, that the state should expand its official celebrations, to include not only its own history but the history of all the peoples that make up the American people; third, that tax money should be fed into the ethnic communities to help in the financing of bilingual and bicultural education, and of group-oriented welfare services. And if all this is to be done, and fairly done, then it is necessary also that ethnic groups be given, as a matter of right, some sort of representation within the state agencies that do it.

These are far-reaching claims. They have not received, any more than the earlier pluralism did, a clear theoretical statement. They are the stuff of public pronouncements and political agitation. Their full significance is unclear, but the world they point to is a corporatist world, where ethnic groups no longer organize themselves like voluntary associations but have instead some political standing and some legal rights. There is, however, a major difficulty here: groups cannot be assigned rights unless they are first assigned members. There has to be a fixed population with procedures for choosing representatives before there can be representatives acting officially on behalf of that population. But ethnic groups in the United States do not have, and never have had, fixed populations (American Indian tribes are a partial exception). Historically, corporatist arrangements have only been worked out for groups that do. In fact, they have only been worked out when the fixity was guaranteed by a rigid dualism, that is, when two communities were locked into a single state: Flemings and Walloons in Belgium, Greeks and Turks in Cyprus, Christians and Muslims in Lebanon. In such cases, people not identified with one community are

virtually certain to be identified with the other. The residual category of intermarried couples and aliens will be small, especially if the two communities are anciently established and territorially based. Problems of identification are likely to arise only in the capital city. (Other sorts of problems arise more generally; these examples hardly invite emulation.)

America's immigrant communities have a radically different character. Each of them has a center of active participants, some of them men and women who have been "born-again," and a much larger periphery of individuals and families who are little more than occasional recipients of services generated at the center. They are communities without boundaries, shading off into a residual mass of people who think of themselves simply as Americans. Borders and border guards are among the first products of a successful national liberation movement, but ethnic assertiveness has no similar outcome. There is no way for the various groups to prevent or regulate individual crossings. Nor can the state do this without the most radical coercion of individuals. It cannot fix the population of the groups unless it forces each citizen to choose an ethnic identity and establishes rigid distinctions among the different identities, of a sort that pluralism by itself has not produced.

It is possible, however, to guarantee representation to ethnic groups without requiring the groups to organize and choose their own spokesmen. The alternative to internal choice is a quota system. Thus, Supreme Court appointments might be constrained by a set of quotas: a certain number of blacks, Jews, Irish and Italian Catholics, and so on, must be serving at any given time. But these men and women would stand in no political relationship to their groups; they would not be responsible agents; nor would they be bound to speak for the interests of their ethnic or religious fellows. They would represent simply by being black (Jewish, Irish) and being *there*, and the Court would be a representative body in the sense that it reflected the pluralism of the larger society in its own membership. It would not matter whether these members came from the center or the periphery of the groups, or whether the groups had clearly defined boundaries, a rich inner life, and so on.

This kind of representation depends only upon external (bureaucratic rather than political) processes, and so it can readily be extended to society at large. Quotas are easy to use in admitting candidates to colleges and professional schools and in hiring them for any sort of employment. Such candidates are not elected but selected, though here, too, there must be a fixed population from which selections can be made. In practice, efforts to identify populations and make quotas possible have been undertaken, with state support, only for oppressed groups. Men and women, marked out as victims or as the children and heirs of victims, have been assigned a right to certain advantages in the selection process; otherwise, it is said, they would not be present at all in schools, professions, and businesses. This is not the place to consider the merits of such a procedure. But it is important to point out that selection by quota functions largely to provide a kind of escape from group life for people whose identity has become a trap. Its chief purpose is to give opportunities to individuals, not a voice to groups. It serves to enhance the wealth of individuals, not necessarily the resources of the ethnic

community. The community is strengthened, to be sure, if newly trained men and women return to work among its members, but only a small minority do that. Mostly, they serve, if they serve at all, as role models for other upwardly mobile men and women. When weak and hitherto passive groups mobilize themselves in order to win a place in the quota system, they do so for the sake of that mobility, and are likely to have no further *raison d'être* once it is achieved.

Considered more generally, there is a certain tension between quota systems and ethnic pluralism, for the administrators of any such system are bound to refuse to recognize differences among the groups. They come by their numbers through simple mathematical calculations. It would be intolerable for them to make judgments as to the character or quality of the different cultures. The tendency of their work, then, is to reproduce within every group to which quotas are applied the same educational and employment patterns. Justice is a function of the identity of the patterns among groups rather than of life chances among individuals. But it is clear that ethnic pluralism by itself would not generate any such identity. Historically specific cultures necessarily produce historically specific patterns of interest and work. This is not to say that pluralism necessarily militates against egalitarian principles, since equality might well take the form (socialists have always expected it to take the form) of roughly equal recompense for different kinds of work. It is not implausible to imagine a heterogeneous but egalitarian society: the heterogeneity, cultural and private; the equality, economic and political. Quotas point, by contrast, toward group uniformity, not individual equality. Though it would be necessary for individuals to identify themselves (or to be identified) as group members in order to receive the benefits of a quota system, these identifications would progressively lose their communal significance. The homogenization of the groups would open the way for the assimilation of their members into a prevailing or evolving national culture.

STATE AND ETHNICITY

The state can intervene in two basic ways to structure group life. It can encourage or require the groups to organize themselves in corporatist fashion, assigning a political role to the corporations in the state apparatus. This is the autonomist strategy, the nearest thing to national liberation that is possible under conditions of multiethnicity. The effect of autonomy would be to intensify and institutionalize cultural difference. Alternatively, the state can act to reduce differences among groups by establishing uniform or symmetrical achievement standards for their members. Each group would be represented, though not through any form of collective action, in roughly equal proportions in every area of political, social, and economic life. This is the integrationist strategy: it can be applied in a limited and compensatory way to particular (oppressed) groups or more generally to all groups. Applied generally, its effect would be to repress every sort of cultural specificity, turning ethnic identity into an administrative classification.

What the state cannot do is to reproduce politically the pluralist pattern that the immigrants and their children have spontaneously generated, for that pattern

is inherently fluid and indeterminate. Its existence depends upon keeping apart what nation-state and corporatist theory bring together: a state organized coercively to protect rights, a society organized on voluntarist principles to advance interests (including cultural and religious interests). State officials provide a framework within which groups can flourish but cannot guarantee their flourishing, or even their survival. The only way to provide such guarantees would be to introduce coercion into the social world, transforming the groups into something like their Old World originals and denying the whole experience of immigration, individualism, and communal rebirth. Nothing like this would appear to be on the American agenda.

The survival and flourishing of the groups depends largely upon the vitality of their centers. If that vitality cannot be sustained, pluralism will prove to be a temporary phenomenon, a way station on the road to American nationalism. The early pluralists may have been naïve in their calm assurance that ethnic vitality would have an enduring life. But they were surely right to insist that it should not artificially be kept alive, any more than it should be repressed, by state power. On the other hand, there is an argument to be made, against the early pluralists, in favor of providing some sorts of public support for ethnic activity. It is an argument familiar from economic analysis, having to do with the character of ethnicity as a collective good.

Individual mobility is the special value but also the characteristic weakness of American pluralism. It makes for loose relations between center and periphery; it generates a world without boundaries. In that world, the vitality of the center is tested by its ability to hold on to peripheral men and women and to shape their self-images and their convictions. These men and women, in turn, live off the strength of the center, which they do not have to pay for either in time or money. They are religious and cultural freeloaders, their lives enhanced by a community they do not actively support and by an identity they need not themselves cultivate. There is no way to charge them for what they receive from the center, except when they receive specific sorts of material help. But their most important gain may be nothing more than a certain sense of pride, an aura of ethnicity, otherwise unavailable. Nor is there anything unjust in their freeloading. The people at the center are not being exploited; they want to hold the periphery. Freeloading of this sort is probably inevitable in a free society.

But so long as it exists—that is, so long as ethnicity is experienced as a collective good by large numbers of people—it probably makes sense to permit collective money, taxpayers' money, to seep through the state/ethnic group (state/church) barrier. This is especially important when taxes constitute a significant portion of the national wealth and when the state has undertaken, on behalf of all its citizens, to organize education and welfare. It can be done in a variety of ways, through tax exemptions and rebates, subsidies, matching grants, certificate plans, and so on. The precise mechanisms do not matter, once it is understood that they must stop short of a corporatist system, requiring no particular form of ethnic organization and no administrative classification of members. A rough fairness in the distribution of funds is probably ensured by the normal work-

ings of democratic politics in a heterogeneous society. Ticket-balancing and coalition-building will provide ethnic groups with a kind of informal representation in the allocative process. Democratic politics can be remarkably accommodating to groups, so long as it has to deal only with individuals: voters, candidates, welfare recipients, taxpayers, criminals, all without official ethnic tags. And the accommodation need not be bitterly divisive, though it is sure to generate conflict. Ethnic citizens can be remarkably loyal to a state that protects and fosters private communal life, if that is seen to be equitably done.

The question still remains whether this kind of equity, adapted to the needs of immigrant communities, can successfully be extended to the racial minorities now asserting their own group claims. Racism is the great barrier to a fully developed pluralism and as long as it exists American Indians and blacks, and perhaps Mexican Americans as well, will be tempted by (and torn between) the anti-pluralist alternatives of corporate division and state-sponsored unification. It would be presumptuous to insist that these options are foolish or unwarranted so long as opportunities for group organization and cultural expression are not equally available to all Americans. A state committed to pluralism, however, cannot do anything more than see to it that those opportunities are *available*, not that they are used, and it can only do that by ensuring that all citizens, without reference to their groups, share equally, or roughly equally, in the resources of American life.

Beyond that, distributive justice among groups is bound to be relative to the vitality of their centers and of their committed members. Short of corporatism, the state cannot help groups unable or unwilling to help themselves. It cannot save them from ultimate Americanization. Indeed, it works so as to permit individual escape (assimilation and intermarriage) as well as collective commitment. The primary function of the state, and of politics generally, is to do justice to individuals, and in a pluralist society ethnicity is simply one of the background conditions of this effort. Ethnic identification gives meaning to the lives of many men and women, but it has nothing to do with their standing as citizens. This distinction seems worth defending, even if it makes for a world in which there are no guarantees of meaning. In a culturally homogeneous society the government can foster a particular identity, deliberately merging culture and politics. This the U.S. government cannot do. Pluralism is thus still an experiment, still to be tested against the long-term historical and theoretical power of the nation-state.

MICHAEL WALZER

POLES

Polish Americans are one of the largest ethnic groups in the United States today. In 1972 the *Current Population Survey* estimated that there were 5.1 million Americans of Polish heritage, and figures of as high as 6 million have been published. Although these estimates may include some people whose ancestors belonged to minorities who lived within the territories of Poland and who assimilated in the course of time, the vast majority of Polish Americans share two characteristics: they arrived, or their forbears arrived, speaking Polish,