The Odd Couple:
Pluralism and Assimilation

This chapter, originally written five years after “Confusion Com­pounded,” explores a problem noted toward the end of that essay, namely, the problematic relationship between assimilation, which the melting pot is understood to symbolize, and pluralism, which has historically been contrasted to both assimilation and the melting pot. This discussion focuses more directly on conceptual content than did the two surveys of melting pot usage. But conceptual content is inseparable from the terminology in which it is embedded, and the essay reprinted here will show that the concept of pluralism is at least as complex and ambiguous as the symbol of the melting pot.


Nothing that has transpired since 1984 seems to me to require mod­ification of the historical review up to that point. Four works published since then demonstrate that scholars of ethnicity continue to interpret pluralism in different ways. According to Rivka Shpak Lissak’s understanding, cultural pluralism requires “the perpetuation of ethnic-cultural uniqueness and the cultivation of distinct immigrant cultures through cultural institutions” purposefully maintained by self-conscious groups. By contrast, Mary C. Waters sees the “ultimate goal of a pluralist society” as a situation of “symbolic ethnicity” in which every individual is free to identify, or not identify, with elements of his or her ethnic-cultural her­itage on a strictly voluntaristic basis. For Gary Gerstle, the currently normative sense of cultural pluralism is a universalistic “belief in the right of every individual, in the United States and around the world, to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, irrespective of creed, color, or
nationality." Lawrence H. Fuchs deals with the problem of multiple meanings by introducing a whole range of subspecies—voluntary pluralism, coercive pluralism, predatory pluralism, sojourner pluralism, tribal pluralism, caste pluralism, and racial pluralism. His own position, however, is quite clear: the normative version of American pluralism recognizes and celebrates individual rights, not group rights.

The resurgence of racialist thinking and its association with a "strong" version of cultural pluralism, both of which are noted at the end of this essay, have continued since 1984. A new development along these lines, which can only be mentioned here (although it deserves extended treatment in its own right), is the recent emergence of "multiculturalism" as a public issue. Earlier associated primarily with Canada, where it was adopted as official policy in 1971, multiculturalism seems to have gained its first foothold in this country among educators, who used the term more or less synonymously with cultural pluralism. In 1990, it burst upon the general public when a "multicultural" curriculum was proposed for the New York schools which its critics regarded as embodying objectionably racialist features.

By that time, another stream of influence—that represented by the new "cultural studies"—merged with and reinforced the educationists' multiculturalism at a higher level of abstraction. This movement, which is championed principally by academics in the fields of language, literature, and women's studies, derives from European theorists such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, whose work is said to "legitimize diversity" and "empower" resistance to "Eurocentric domination." The 1987-88 curricular battle at Stanford University dramatized the programmatic possibilities of ideas that obviously lend themselves to application in racial, ethnic, and gender studies. According to one of its Latino proponents, the "multiculturalism" that draws on these sources was, by 1990, fast becoming "the new common sense" in artistic and literary circles. All this unquestionably complicates matters, especially since there are various kinds of multiculturalism, some of which (according to champions of other versions) amount to nothing more than "warmed over cultural pluralism." But it is quite clear that the demands of the more extreme multiculturalists have aroused a strong reaction and that this reaction includes a vigorous reaffirmation of the universalistic values embodied in liberal assimilationism. Indeed, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., opened his critique of multiculturalism with a genuflection toward the melting pot. Thus, though the terms of the debate are murkier than
ever, the contrasting positions are still fundamentally the same as those described at the end of “The Odd Couple.”

Students of ethnicity in the United States are agreed that the terms pluralism and assimilation designate two quite different concepts. Pluralism, generally speaking, affirms the existence and persistence of diversity and prescribes its preservation. Assimilation is associated with unity; it concerns itself with and generally approves of the processes by which various elements have been blended into the overall national culture.

I would not deny the broad differences between pluralism and assimilation, but I believe they have been greatly exaggerated and handled much too rigidly. The tendency to dichotomize the two viewpoints includes the moral aspect as well as the theoretical; in many discussions of the so-called new ethnicity, they were treated as mutually exclusive categories, and pluralism was associated with everything good in social policy and assimilation with everything bad. This is unfortunate from the viewpoint of theoretical understanding because the two concepts, as they have been used historically, overlap and relate to each other in a dialectical manner. The failure to appreciate this fact confuses matters grievously, especially with respect to policy debate, because it beclouds the issues and prevents people from recognizing what their agreements and disagreements actually are.

In the pages that follow I will sketch the way these two concepts have been used in twentieth century discussions of American ethnic affairs. This review will show that at the very beginning of its theoretical career, and in the last few years, pluralism was strongly antiassimilationist; from the late 1930s through the 1960s, however, pluralism resembled assimilation much more closely.

Assimilation was the first of the two terms to come into general use. It emerged around 1900 in the context of concern over the nation’s capacity to absorb the millions of immigrants who were pouring into the country and referred in the broadest sense to the blending of different elements into one people. Assimilation was used interchangeably with Americanization, and the production in 1908 of Israel Zangwill’s drama The Melting-Pot introduced a vivid image that gained immediate and widespread popularity as a symbol for the process of assimilation. Intermarriage was often linked with assimilation, but it was usually distin-
guished from “amalgamation,” or biological mixing. As one writer put it, the end product of assimilation was nationality, and that implied not “unity of blood,” but “unity of institutions and social habits.”

But while assimilation was an elastic term that could accommodate a wide variation of interpretations, it became more closely identified with a narrow nativistic insistence that immigrants had to conform themselves closely to the prevailing American norms before they could be considered satisfactorily assimilated. This development is reflected in Henry Pratt Fairchild’s *Immigration* (1913), a work by a leading sociologist of old American stock who accepted the prevailing scientific racialism of the day and was deeply troubled about the implications of immigration for the national culture. Basing his discussion on the “physiological analogy” of the digestion of food by the body, which he believed underlay the concept of assimilation as a social process, Fairchild said that “true and complete assimilation of the foreign elements in the United States involves such a complete transformation and unification of the new constituents that all sense of difference between the new and the old completely disappears.” Fairchild added that assimilation presupposed the existence of a national type that the immigrant was to conform to, and the “native American” was that national type.

This version of assimilation not only was offensively ethnocentric; it also proposed a standard impossible to meet in practice. First-generation immigrants simply could not make themselves over so completely, even if they had been willing to do so (which most of them were not), and even if the receiving society had been willing to regard them as unqualified Americans after they had done so (which it was not). It was therefore natural that spokespersons for immigrant groups would reject assimilation altogether if this was what it meant. The work that prompted their boldest champion to step forth was not Fairchild’s book, but Edward A. Ross’s *Old World in the New* (1914), a veritable diatribe against the new immigrants. Ross, a progressive sociologist at the University of Wisconsin, did not discuss assimilation systematically, but his disbelief that immigrants could come up to American standards was patent throughout, and in the chapter entitled “American Blood and Immigrant Blood” he really let himself go. Even the physical appearance of the newer immigrants betrayed them as a “sub-common” people of obviously low mentality who really belonged in animal skins, beside wattled huts, at the end of the great ice age. Ross was appalled by their “sugar-loaf heads, moon-faces, slit mouths, lantern jaws, and goose-bill noses.” Jews he singled out as puny and sissified, the saddest possible contrast to the type of the American pioneer.
This was too much for Horace M. Kallen, a German-born Jew, a Zionist, a Harvard Ph.D., and a colleague of Ross's at the University of Wisconsin. The appearance of The Old World in the New prompted him to set forth a radically antiassimilationist interpretation of American nationality in an article entitled “Democracy versus the Melting Pot.” Originally published in the Nation in February 1915, this essay was reprinted with very minor changes in 1924, at which time Kallen gave the name “cultural pluralism” to his position. Since he was reacting to extreme hundred-percent Americanism, it is perhaps understandable that Kallen went to the opposite extreme in his formulation of cultural pluralism. His statement was long and diffuse, downright obscure in places, but the overall argument may be summarized as follows.

First, Kallen denied that there was an American nationality as such, a generic national identity defining the whole people considered as a collectivity, to which the immigrants could be assimilated. Such a generic national culture had at one time existed, he stated, but it had been dissipated by the great waves of immigration. As a result, the United States in the twentieth century was not really a nation but a political state within the borders of which dwelt a number of distinct nationalities.

Second, Kallen assumed that these distinct nationalities would perpetuate themselves indefinitely. Although the language here was vague, his thinking was clearly rooted in a romantic kind of racialism. “Like-mindedness” was the key to nationality, and it was “inward, corporate and inevitable” because it sprang from “a homogeneity of heritage, mentality and interest.” Members of an ethnic group shared a “prevailing intrinsic similarity” that Kallen seemed to regard as forever fixed. “What is inalienable in the life of mankind,” he declared, “is its intrinsic positive quality—its psycho-physical inheritance.” Because a person “cannot change his grandfather,” ethnic nationalities were destined to perdure indefinitely through a kind of biological determinism.

The third feature of Kallen’s thinking brings us to the policy question. Given the existence of many nationalities in the same country and the prospect of their remaining permanently distinctive, what should be done? Kallen saw two alternatives, which he designated the options of “unison” and “harmony.” By unison he meant the effort to make everyone conform to a common pattern—essentially the hundred-percent Americanization policy. By harmony he meant the glad embrace of the existing multiplicity. Kallen opted decisively for harmony; indeed, he affirmed that it was the truly American and democratic policy, whereas the effort to enforce conformity to a common pattern actually violated democratic ideals and the spirit of American institutions.
COMING TO TERMS WITH ETHNICITY

Kallen had turned the tables on the Americanizers very neatly, but as a policy prescription his cultural pluralism amounted to little more than a lyrical vision. The following rhapsodic passage is the closest he ever came to describing how cultural pluralism would be put into operation, how his "great and truly democratic commonwealth" would function in practice:

Its form would be that of the federal republic; its substance a democracy of nationalities, cooperating voluntarily and autonomously through common institutions in the enterprise of self-realization through the perfection of men according to their kind. The common language of the commonwealth . . . would be English, but each nationality would have for its emotional and involuntary life its own peculiar dialect or speech, its own individual and inevitable esthetic and intellectual forms. The political and economic life of the commonwealth is a single unit and serves as the foundation and background for the realization of the distinctive individuality of each nation that composes it and of the pooling of these in a harmony above them all. Thus "American civilization" may come to mean the perfection of the cooperative harmonies of "European civilization"—the waste, the squalor and the distress of Europe being eliminated—a multiplicity in a unity, an orchestration of mankind.6

As this passage reveals, the assumption of automatic harmony among a multiplicity of permanently distinct ethnic nationalities should be added as the fourth feature of Kallen's original formulation of cultural pluralism. It was, in fact, precisely this assumption that permitted Kallen to disregard entirely the need for assimilation to American ways that other commentators stressed so heavily. For although he denied the existence of American nationality as such and repudiated the Americanization programs of the day, Kallen silently included assimilation in his theory by postulating a degree of consensus adequate to assure cooperation and harmony among all elements in his contemplated federation of nationalities. Kallen thus made tacit provision for the unum of the national motto, although his rhetorical stress was altogether on pluribus and his theoretical assumptions seemed to rule out any kind of fundamental merging-into-one of the many immigrant nationalities that made up the American people.

The publication of Kallen's article in 1915 attracted the attention of a few intellectuals, but its republication and the introduction of the term cultural pluralism in 1924 passed almost completely without notice. No
doubt the principal reason for this neglect was that the passage in 1924 of a stringent immigration restriction law removed ethnic concerns from the forefront of public discussion. More than a decade passed before the expression *cultural pluralism* entered into circulation, even in the limited universe of scholarly observers of intergroup relations.

Before examining the way cultural pluralism was understood in the late thirties, however, we must pause to catch up on what was happening to the concept of assimilation. As the examples of Fairchild and Ross attest, cultural anxieties on the part of old-line Americans caused them to formulate the concept in a narrow and nativistic way even before the outbreak of World War I intensified the atmosphere of social and cultural crisis. The outburst of ethnic nationalism and the manifestations of immigrant loyalty to Old World homelands that marked the neutrality years (1914–17) convinced many more Americans that "hyphenation" was a danger and lent greater urgency to programs of Americanization. But as these efforts at forced assimilation took on a chauvinistic character that bordered on the hysterical, a reaction against them set in. Not only were liberal intellectuals put off by their hypernationalism; thoughtful observers also recognized that they were counterproductive—rather than facilitating the integration of immigrants into American life, forced Americanization programs left them more alienated than ever. In these circumstances, a more liberal version of Americanization was set forth.

Its most impressive embodiment was the series of "Americanization Studies" sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation and published by Harper Brothers in the immediate postwar years. According to this interpretation, Americanization did not mean forcing immigrants into a predetermined "old American" mold. Rather, they were to be assisted toward full partnership in the national life by means of "a mutual giving and taking of contributions from both newer and older Americans in the interest of the common weal." Far from demanding the suppression of immigrant languages and societies, the liberal Americanizers looked upon these elements of the immigrants' heritage as the vehicles that made it possible for them to play a role in society. Though outwardly "foreign," ethnic newspapers and organizations brought them into contact with their new homeland in countless ways and thus acted as agencies of Americanization in spite of themselves. In time, the immigrants (or their children) would be fully incorporated into the national life, which was, by definition, assimilation. The process was "as inevitable as it is desirable"—inevitable because it was the natural outcome of ongoing social interaction; desirable because by its workings immigrants eventually became full participants in a democratic social order.
This understanding of assimilation was quite in line with the most authoritative sociological thinking of the day. The congruence was natural since Robert E. Park of the University of Chicago was a major participant in the “Americanization Studies” project and the principal author of the standard treatise on sociology in the period between the two world wars. This was the famous *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (1921) by Park and E. W. Burgess that served as “the green bible” for generations of graduate students as sociology came of age in the American university.

Assimilation figured here as the culminating phase of “the four great types of [social] interaction,” which were competition, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation. This sequence in slightly modified form was soon christened “the race-relations cycle” and took on special importance for students of intergroup relations in the United States. Park did not restrict his focus to this country, however; rather, he regarded assimilation as “central in the historical and cultural process” on the broadest scale. But while he and Burgess gave great prominence to assimilation, their discussion left certain ambiguities as to the meaning of the concept. They defined assimilation as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life.” This definition, and the preponderance of the discussion in the 1921 volume, seemed to make assimilation primarily a psychological and cultural process, a matter of the subjective consciousness of people who come to think of themselves differently from the way they had before the process began. Yet the authors played down the degree to which “like-mindedness” was required for assimilation, indicated that it might leave fundamental cultural patterns or racial characteristics unchanged, and talked in one place as though assimilation was more a matter of interdependence in social relationships than of subjective disposition or cultural orientation. This left the degree of cultural cohesion required for assimilation quite indeterminate; yet being “incorporated in a common cultural life” was central to the definition.

Park continued to grapple with the problem, and by the time he wrote the entry on “Assimilation, Social” for the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (1930) he had grown definitely skeptical about cultural cohesion as a defining feature of assimilation. In fact, he began his “most concentrated theoretical discussion of assimilation” by saying that it was more a political than a cultural concept. It was simply the name of the process by which people of diverse backgrounds who occupied a common
territory “achieve[d] a cultural solidarity sufficient at least to sustain a national existence.” Culturally speaking, the process was to be understood in minimalist terms. “The common sense view of the matter,” Park reported approvingly, “is that an immigrant is assimilated as soon as he has shown that he can ‘get on in the country.’” Indeed, he added, it was questionable whether culture as anthropologists conceived it could be said to exist at all in a complex modern society with its highly refined division of labor, specialization of roles, and so on. In these circumstances, assimilation did not mean close conformity to a definite cultural pattern but merely the acceptance of “those ideas, practices and aspirations which are national . . . the generally accepted social customs and political ideas and loyalties of a community or country.”

This loose and largely political interpretation of assimilation left much room for diversity among the subgroups of a population all of whose constituent elements accepted a minimum of general norms that enabled them to get along together, to undertake essential collective tasks, and to discuss their differences in a free and open manner. Indeed, this was a version of assimilation that could be understood “pluralistically.”

More detailed research would be required to establish in detail just how the concept of assimilation was used by social scientists and commentators on intergroup relations in the 1930s, but it is safe to say that it had become somewhat problematic. On the one hand, assimilation was regarded in the abstract as a very significant process; it was also believed to be proceeding inevitably in American society, and with generally beneficent results since it operated to reduce the likelihood of intergroup conflicts and to facilitate the participation of minorities in American society. At the same time, however, assimilation still carried nativist overtones as a result of its association with chauvinistic hundred-percent Americanism and the racial xenophobia of the early 1920s. Virtually all informed commentators in the 1930s deprecated efforts at forced Americanization, and increasing attention was being paid to the costs of assimilation considered as a natural social process. The “marginal” situation of the second generation, for example, was thought to exact a heavy psychological toll, and there were also more generalized murmurs of regret at the decline of diversity in American culture.

Complicating the picture further was the enhanced cognitive authority of the anthropological concept of culture, which was rapidly coming to be regarded as “the foundation stone of the social sciences.” One result of this development was that the term acculturation was often used more or less interchangeably with assimilation; but it was not clear whether the two terms meant precisely the same thing or, if not, wherein
they differed. Park, as we have seen, was moving toward a differentiation of assimilation from cultural incorporation, but the preponderance of usage was in the other direction, and two of Park's students later remarked that assimilation and acculturation illustrated the way in which the terminologies of sociology and anthropology "half-blended in a grand confusion."11

The growing prestige of the anthropological concept of culture had two other notable effects: it discredited the idea that differences in group ways of life were explainable in racial terms; and it inculcated the ethical imperative of tolerance for diversity, which was assumed to follow as a corollary from the empirical finding that cultural values and norms differed from group to group. The latter point was often spoken of as "cultural relativism," and it had a good deal more in common with cultural pluralism than mere verbal similarity.15 But both developments, along with the general influence of the anthropological outlook, were important background factors in the reintroduction of the expression cultural pluralism in the late 1930s and its popularization in the next decade. And if acculturation stood in a somewhat ambiguous relation to assimilation, the status of cultural pluralism was considerably more paradoxical, for it was no longer posited as an alternative to assimilation; rather, it was usually presented as an enlightened and liberal means of achieving the goal of assimilation, a harmoniously united society.

The 1937 volume Our Racial and National Minorities, edited by Francis J. Brown and Joseph S. Roucek, was the earliest major landmark in the reintroduction of the term cultural pluralism. The evidence it provides indicates clearly that Kallen was not the source from which the new version stemmed, although he was the one who put the expression into circulation in the first place. Part 4 of this compendium of specialized studies by different authors was entitled "The Trend toward Cultural Pluralism," but not one of the contributors to this part referred to Kallen, and his name was missing from the sixty-six-page bibliography of the book. The chapters included in part 4 emphasized the positive contributions to American life made by Indians, Negroes, and immigrants and urged preservation of "the best that each group has brought." But while it was portrayed as desirable to preserve "the fundamentals of [group] heritages . . . for generations,"16 the writer who discussed these matters most explicitly denied flatly that cultural pluralism meant "the ultimate preservation of different cultural streams in our civilization." E. George Payne, a prominent educational theorist at New York University, did not regard such an eventuality as harmful; it was simply that inevitable
acculturation ruled it out and pointed toward the emergence of “a new and superior culture.” Cultural pluralism, Payne explained, “does not imply that the special cultures will continue unchanged for all time. The theory involves essentially a technique of social adjustment which will make possible the preservation of the best of all cultures.”

This version of cultural pluralism differed sharply from Kallen’s original formulation since he did assume that distinct ethnic cultures would perdure indefinitely, not as contributors to a common American culture but as equal participants in a federation of nationalities. Despite his use of the same term, Payne’s cultural pluralism was actually a liberal variation of assimilation theory much like that of the post–World War I Americanization Studies. As such it strongly resembled the approach that many earlier commentators had associated with the melting pot, although Kallen wrote his piece as a corrective to melting pot thinking.

Brown and Roucek’s volume (of which two later editions were published) opened the era in which cultural pluralism entered into general usage and eventually became a conventional touchstone of liberal enlightenment among commentators on American society. The most thorough investigation of the subject, done by James H. Powell, identifies some sixty-four persons who wrote about cultural pluralism between 1940 and 1955. Powell distinguishes three versions of cultural pluralism in that era: Kallen’s original federation-of-nationalities type; the liberal Americanization version; and a third alternative that combined elements of the other two in envisioning the retention of ethnic cultures as supplements to, rather than as substitutes for, an overall American culture. The third type, which was sometimes called “cultural democracy,” differed from the second only hazily in stressing diversity within unity as a permanent rather than a temporary condition. Both of these versions made explicit provision for assimilation while simultaneously calling for toleration of diversity; the federation-of-nationalities type, however, was strongly antiassimilationist. But according to Powell, no one who interpreted cultural pluralism in the federation-of-nationalities sense applied the concept to American society; rather, it was used exclusively in reference to the “minorities problem” of Eastern Europe. This is a most important finding because it means that when cultural pluralism attained popularity in commentary on the American scene, it designated a variety (or two varieties) of assimilationist theory rather than constituting a significant alternative to assimilationism.

Even more striking is that by midcentury Horace Kallen himself had abandoned the federation-of-nationalities version of cultural pluralism. Although he touched on related matters in the forties, Kallen’s first major
statement on the subject in three decades was *Cultural Pluralism and the American Idea* (1956), a volume consisting of three essays by Kallen and responses to his ideas (overwhelmingly favorable) by nine other scholars. He was still glowingly committed to cultural pluralism, but it was a very different thing from what he had outlined in 1915 and 1924. All hint of racialism was, of course, gone; and there was no suggestion that immigrant nationalities would perpetuate themselves indefinitely. Indeed, pluralism was no longer specifically related to ethnicity at all. It embraced the “diverse utterance of diversities—regional, local, religious, ethnic, aesthetic, industrial, sporting, and political.”

Kallen had also enlarged his terminology: besides cultural pluralism he spoke now of “the philosophy of Cultural Pluralism” and of philosophical pluralism more generally; of spontaneous pluralism, of fluid, relational pluralism, of the actual pluralism of experience; and, with very negative overtones, of absolutist pluralism and isolationist pluralism. The relationship between pluralism and Americanization had also changed. In the twenties, Kallen attacked Americanization vehemently; but now he spoke approvingly of an “Americanization, supporting, cultivating a cultural pluralism, grounded on and consummated in the American Idea.” Americanism was appropriately capitalized, since Kallen regarded it with religious awe and declared that it represented “that apprehension of human nature and human relations” to which all must be converted if they were to live together peaceably. But despite elevating Americanism into a civil religion, Kallen still thought he was opposed to assimilation. When an admiring commentator hailed him for discerning “that our country is a true melting-pot,” he indignantly disavowed all sympathy for the melting pot.

As Kallen’s performance suggests, the concept of cultural pluralism had by the mid fifties become highly elusive and contradictory, not to say hopelessly muddled. The most important factors in bringing this situation about were the great revival of the democratic ideology in World War II, the postwar critique of conformity, and the popularization of pluralism as an interpretation of American politics.

The war of course created an urgent need for national unity. Since assimilation is associated with unity, while pluralism implies differentiation, one would naturally expect the war to generate a strong push for assimilation. That did happen, although it seemed that just the opposite was going on. What obscured matters was that the demand for unity was usually couched in the language of pluralism and diversity instead of being talked about in terms of assimilation or Americanization. The explanation for this seemingly paradoxical state of affairs was that unity
was sought on the common ground of ideological consensus, and the principle of tolerance for diversity was heavily stressed as a key element in the democratic ideology behind which all were supposed to rally in the wartime crisis.

Unity was sought on the basis of ideological consensus because, as Gunnar Myrdal insisted at the time, “this War is an ideological war fought in defense of democracy.” It pitted the United States against totalitarian regimes that denied the premise of human equality and perverted the ideals of freedom and self-determination beyond recognition. Confronted by the monstrous contrast of Nazism, it was quite understandable that Americans were galvanized to a deeper appreciation of democracy and that their leaders should reaffirm the nation’s collective commitment to freedom, equality, and respect for human dignity. To be an American was to identify oneself with these values. Race, religion, or ethnic background were secondary issues; true Americanism was defined by ideological commitment.

But if ideological consensus was to serve as an effective basis for national unity, Americans would have to do more than profess democratic principles—they would have to live up to them, which was something they were notoriously not doing in the area of race relations. This was the reason that tolerance for diversity came to be regarded as so vital an element of the democratic creed. It was bad enough that racial prejudice and discrimination were embarrassing inconsistencies that invited exploitation by enemy propagandists; even more distressing was that intergroup hostilities weakened national unity and thus hampered the war effort. The need for mutual tolerance and good will among all segments of the population was recognized even before the United States became involved in the fighting. But the outburst in 1943 of race riots in Detroit and mob violence against Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles lent much greater urgency to the task of reducing intergroup tensions. According to one count, there were no fewer than 123 national organizations working for better intergroup relations by the end of the war. This sort of “action for unity,” as one study called it, carried over into the postwar era. At the same time, programs of “intercultural education” were widely adopted in the schools, and the study of race and minority problems became major specialties among social scientists.

Cultural pluralism and cultural democracy became part of the standard terminology of this broad movement to improve intergroup relations, but its goals were social harmony and national unity, not heightened consciousness of the differences among cultural groups in the population. On the contrary, differences among population groups were precisely the
problem, and the real message of many of the preachments about diversity was that fundamentally people were more alike than different and that the failure to be guided by recognition of that fact was what constituted prejudice.30

The word *assimilation* was not generally used in discussions of race relations—no doubt because it was too closely associated with the sensitive issue of intermarriage—but the goals of the struggle for civil rights and integration were, as Lewis M. Killian puts it, "fundamentally and unrelentingly assimilationist."31 In these circumstances, the original antiassimilationist version of cultural pluralism, vaguely racial in its assumptions and open to a segregationist interpretation, simply could not be admitted.32 But as it gained currency in the loose tolerance-for-diversity sense, the concept of cultural pluralism became quite blurry and moved in the direction of self-contradiction. Verbally it seemed to celebrate differences between groups; actually it rested on the assumptions that basic consensus made Americans one people in essentials, that the differences between groups were relatively superficial, and that toleration of those differences was required by the value system on which consensus was grounded.

But while assimilationist assumptions and goals were thus fundamental to the campaign for better intergroup relations, those who were committed to the good cause did not think of themselves as assimilationists. On the contrary, the word *assimilation* had a disreputable air about it. Those concerned with the most serious problem, race relations, had good reason to avoid using the term. In the area where it had been traditionally used—discussions of immigrant adjustment—the conventional wisdom of the day held that assimilation had done its work, and perhaps overdone it. Immigration had been virtually cut off for a generation, and it was widely held that the children and grandchildren of the earlier immigrants were becoming completely Americanized. Hence assimilation was no longer a problem: Americans could relax on that score. And being able to relax, a good many felt embarrassed about the extremes to which assimilationist efforts had sometimes been carried. Awakening to the realization that our minorities were vanishing, social commentators in the postwar years were clearly uncomfortable with the concept of assimilation.33 Cultural pluralism was much more attractive. It took unity for granted—and why not, if assimilation was an accomplished fact?—and combined with it an appealing invocation of diversity.

Rising postwar concern over the evils of "mass society" highlighted certain negative consequences of assimilation and, by doing so, reinforced the appeal of cultural pluralism.34 The critics of mass society were,
after all, champions of diversity; they bemoaned its decline and the con­
comitant homogenizing of society into a bland, standardized sameness. 
Assimilation was clearly one of the main culprits here; it was hardly more 
than another name for homogenization.

Even more troubling, however, was the linkage between immigrant 
assimilation and a constellation of socio-psychological morbidities that 
the critics discerned in mass society—alienation, anxiety, anomie, over­
conformity, ethnocentrism, and, most ominously, authoritarianism. It 
was a commonplace in those days that immigrants and their children 
were to some extent “marginalized” by the process of assimilation and 
plunged as a result into a kind of “psychological civil war.” The bearing 
of this phenomenon on the symptomology of mass society was not de­
developed in a systematic way, but there is evidence that it was perceived 
by observers at midcentury. Erik H. Erikson, for example, mentioned 
immigration in connection with identity problems, and other influential 
writers portrayed immigrants as archetypically American in their being 
uprooted and cut off from the past. Being rootless, ethnic Americans 
were vulnerable to status anxieties; they might easily become ethnocen­
tric, and they were almost bound to be conformists. In short, they were 
prime candidates for recruitment into irrational, authoritarian social 
movements, and their support for McCarthyism was interpreted by sev­
eral commentators along the lines suggested by this sort of mass society 
analysis.

No one argued that immigrant assimilation was primarily responsible 
for the evils of mass society. But given the linkages just outlined, it was 
obviously part of the problem rather than being a solution to it. The 
antidote for tendencies toward massification was diversity; hence plu­
ralism was bound to be stressed. And that is what happened: a group of 
political analysts emerged in the 1950s who offered “pluralism” as an 
interpretation of the American system and as a preventive for the dangers 
of extremism inherent in the politics of a mass society. These writers 
drew on an intellectual tradition different from that of students of inter­
group relations; they seldom, if ever, referred to cultural pluralism as 
such, and the focus of their interest was different. Yet their approach 
was compatible with the midcentury versions of cultural pluralism, and 
since that had become extremely vague anyhow, the newer political 
pluralism merged with the existing tradition of usage to make pluralism 
more diffuse and generalized than ever.

Pluralism, in the new sense, designated a theory of interest group 
politics. It portrayed the American system as an interplay between dif­
ferent groups—labor unions, business associations, religious bodies,
professional societies, and so on—which mobilized their resources to influence political decision making by means of publicity, lobbying, and other forms of pressure. Alliances were forged and dissolved according to the changing needs of the groups involved. Political parties functioned as coalitions of interest groups. Since they were naturally desirous of attracting as much support as possible, parties inclined toward comprehensiveness; this made them reluctant to embrace rigid ideological positions or to identify themselves with extremist solutions to problems. That interest groups (sometimes called “veto groups”) often nullified each other also worked against domination of the system by extremist elements. Moreover, the individual citizen belonged to a variety of different interest groups, and the “crosscutting pressures” set up by multiple group loyalties likewise militated against all-out commitment to an overriding ideological goal.

According to the pluralists’ interpretation, the diffusion of power and influence among a multitude of shifting groups thus forestalled many of the dangers of a mass society in which atomized individuals were apt to be swept up in irrational movements that promised a totally new order. But their theory also excluded totalitarian extremism by definition—that is, they insisted that for pluralism to work, all the groups involved had to exercise moderation, had to abide by the rules of the game. This meant, in general, accepting the constitutional framework, following agreed-upon democratic procedures, and being guided by the conventions of civility and basic decency in the political struggle. Without this kind of democratic consensus, pluralism would imply not an acceptable and indeed healthy “limited warfare” but a brutal contest in which naked force would quickly dominate political life and democratic government would be impossible.

Ethnic groups did not have a distinctive place in this theory, as they had with respect to cultural pluralism. Yet it certainly covered the case of ethnic groups along with all others that opted to participate in the political process. And we have already seen that Horace Kallen had by 1956 vastly extended what he still called cultural pluralism to embrace a whole range of diversities besides those of ethnic origin. These points of contact make it understandable that the two versions of pluralism blended together. Yet there was another similarity between them that is even more significant from our perspective. Each was predicated on consensus around the American value system despite seeming to place a premium verbally on diversity.

The consequence of this double dose of pluralism, as we might call it, was that Americans tended to mislead themselves as to how deeply
they were committed to diversity. In discussions of the political system and of the key social issue of intergroup relations, pluralism and diversity were endlessly extolled. Indeed, pluralism was made virtually synonymous with the democratic social and political order. This inevitably gave rise to confusion as to the relation of cart and horse because it obscured the point that pluralism and toleration for diversity did not define democracy but were corollaries that flowed from the prior acceptance of democratic values as the basis of national unity. For, in spite of all the celebration of diversity, it was not pluralism as such that constituted the American identity; rather, it was ideological consensus, a common commitment to the ideals of freedom, equality, and democratic self-government.

All of this was clear enough in the realm of ideology as such. It was notorious that “un-American” ideas, movements, and organizations were beyond the pale of tolerable diversity. In the era of the Cold War there was no question of applying to Communists the principle of pluralistic acceptance: they were a part of a totalitarian movement that was excluded by virtue of its self-definition and its intrinsic nature. But there was another group, bitterly opposed to Communists but sometimes likened to them anyhow, whose situation was more ambiguous—American Catholics. As a religious minority they presumably belonged in the pluralistic picture. But their Americanism seemed very questionable to some influential observers (including, incidentally, Horace Kallen). The controversies that arose between Catholics and elements of the Protestant, Jewish, and liberal communities often featured charges of “divisiveness” and are highly revealing of the complexities of pluralism and assimilation in the 1950s. This whole area takes on added importance because cultural pluralism seemed to be resolving itself into religious pluralism. We must therefore look briefly into the relation of pluralism to American Catholicism, despite the complications it entails.

The case for regarding Catholics as full partners in the pluralistic experiment was strong. They had been in the land since early colonial days; freedom of religion was a basic American postulate; religion itself was a key element in the culture of many ethnic groups; and the American Catholic community was made up of a large number of ethnic subgroups. Besides these important points, Catholics had often been victims of nativist hostility, which gave added force to their claim for tolerance as fully accredited actors on the pluralistic scene.

At the same time, the Americanism of Catholics seemed doubtful to many, just as it had in the past. Uneasiness at midcentury revolved
primarily around the church’s internal organization and discipline, which was hierarchical and authoritarian; her teachings on the union of church and state and various moral issues such as divorce and birth control, which were conservative if not reactionary; and her doctrinal dogmatism and generally absolutist intellectual stance. In view of these characteristics, many American liberals (Protestant, Jewish, and secular) found Catholic professions of commitment to American principles unconvincing. The Catholic church was too undemocratic to be trusted; according to her severest critics, she was too close to being totalitarian to merit unqualified admission to the theater of American pluralism.

These doubts were brought into focus in the late 1940s and early 1950s as sharp religious controversy broke out, pitting Catholics against libertarians (religious and nonreligious), the latter being supported by others who entertained a more generalized religious suspicion of Catholics. A number of factors were involved, but the most important and enduring source of friction centered on the question of public support for religious education and particularly the use of public funds for Catholic parochial schools. It was in this context that the issue of divisiveness was raised.

The term had been used earlier, but it was given special prominence when the president of Harvard University, James B. Conant, warned in 1952 against the dangers to democratic unity posed by a “dual system” of public and private schools. Affirming his commitment to the “fundamental belief in tolerance for diversity so basic to our society,” and denying that he advocated suppressing private schools, Conant nevertheless contended that the public schools should serve “all creeds and economic groups within a given geographic area,” and he pointed out that many foreign observers had commented on the function of public schools in “assimilat[ing] so rapidly the different cultures which came to North America in the nineteenth century.” Then Conant added two sentences that attracted wide attention: “The greater the proportion of our youth who fail to attend our public schools and who receive their education elsewhere, the greater the threat to our democratic unity. To use taxpayers’ money to assist private schools is to suggest that American society use its own hands to destroy itself.”

Catholics naturally resented the implication of divisiveness; and they made the point that it was the very existence of Catholic schools, not just public support for them, that Conant branded as a threat to democratic unity. From their viewpoint, the maintenance of a separate school system reflecting their distinctive religious and moral values was a legitimate expression of pluralism, thoroughly in line with American prin-
ciples, and in no way a threat to democratic unity. On the contrary, they interpreted the exclusive equation of democratic education with the public schools as evidence of a “statist” or even totalitarian tendency in American life. As one of the most respected Catholic spokesmen put it, “the notion of ‘public education’ as meaning a unitary and monolithic school system which singly and alone is entitled to public support has rightly been called... ‘an aberration in the general picture of our society, which is pluralistic.’”

The pertinent question for us is not whose interpretation here was correct; it is, rather, What distinguishes the “divisive” from the “pluralistic”? The two terms are practically interchangeable in denotation, for that which is divided has thereby been made plural, and if something is pluralized it must necessarily have been somehow divided.

Perhaps there were attempts to draw analytical distinctions; if so, they did not attract widespread notice, to say nothing of gaining general acceptance. The real difference between divisiveness and pluralism as it comes through in the literature is strictly connotative, rather than denotative; that is, divisiveness was an invidious term for forms of social differentiation one disapproved of, while pluralism was a positive label for differences one found acceptable or good. The tacit criterion for distinguishing good from bad forms of social differentiation was presumably the democratic ideology or, more precisely, whether the difference in question was or was not compatible with the democratic value system. Catholics and their antagonists differed on this basic question, and that was why institutions that were “pluralistic” to the former were “divisive” to the latter. But the terminology in which the controversy was carried on tended to conceal rather than clarify what was really at issue, namely, differing interpretations of democracy and what it permitted or required in the sphere of education. Discussions carried on in this fashion, as John Courtney Murray once observed, seldom reached the arduously attained level of clearcut disagreement. Instead they floundered in confusion.

On rare occasions pluralism as such was evaluated negatively in connection with the Catholic threat. In June 1951 the Christian Century ran a lengthy report on what was perceived as an effort to mobilize Catholics in Buffalo into religiously segregated associations with the goal in mind of “making this a Roman Catholic city.” Accompanying this alarmist account was an editorial headed “Pluralism—National Menace,” which began by warning that Buffalo was not the only city “facing the threat of a plural society based on religious differences.” The idea of a plural society,” the editors continued, “is so new to Americans that many
will not even understand the term." They might have added that those familiar with current thinking on cultural pluralism would have been the most shocked of all, for what the *Christian Century* was talking about differed radically from the benign versions of pluralism to be found in the American literature. This species was described in unrelievedly negative terms. It applied to a situation in which different elements existed side by side in the same polity without mingling, each pursuing its own group interests as far as it could. A pluralistic society of this sort had no national will; anarchy, instability, or the domination of one element by another was to be expected; and materialistic economic considerations were exalted above all else because nothing of a more elevated nature united the various groups of the society.  

This version of pluralism derived from the writings of J. S. Furnivall, the earliest of the "plural society" theorists, a group whose work did not become generally known, even to American social scientists, until the 1960s. The work of these scholars dealt with colonial and newly postcolonial lands and was quite negative in assessing the social costs of internal cleavages deriving from differences in race, language, religion, and so on. It was a kind of nightmare vision of Kallen’s original federation-of-nationalities pluralism gone sour, and its application to the American scene was anomalous in the extreme. What the episode indicates is the degree to which growing Catholic strength and assertiveness disturbed spokesmen for Protestantism. Confronting this kind of pluralism, the editors of *Christian Century* felt no embarrassment in calling universal public education “the *sine qua non* of a homogeneous society” and in urging “straightforward, uncompromising resistance to any efforts by any group to subvert the traditional American way of life.”  

Although the *Christian Century*’s editorial attracted much attention among observers of the religious scene, interreligious feeling mellowed in the mid-fifties, and the fearsome variety of pluralism it presented left no trace on subsequent usage. In January 1958, *School and Society* even ran an article entitled “Subsidized Pluralism,” which argued that the time had come to provide public funding for private schools that were set up to meet special group needs not adequately provided for by the public schools. The author, Robert F. Creegan, was affiliated with a state teachers college in New York; he regarded pluralism as “a philosophy of freedom” that merited public support, and he felt that a way could be found to provide it without contravening constitutional prohibitions in respect to church/state and desegregation.  

This proposal caught the attention of Joshua A. Fishman, then at the University of Pennsylvania, who arranged a symposium on the topic
at the 1958 meeting of the American Psychological Association. The preponderance of opinion there was unsympathetic. Marshall Sklare of the American Jewish Committee seemed bemused that the topic was being discussed at all, and he suggested that it might be more timely to think about moderating pluralism rather than strengthening it. Subsidized pluralism would deepen "divisiveness" and would cause concern among Jews because "greater support for parochialism" might increase the dangers of authoritarianism and anti-Semitism. Other black and Jewish participants were firmly opposed to the idea, alluding to the evils of segregation, apartheid, and "cultural parallelism." It was even suggested that by expanding the welfare state, Creegan's proposal would reinforce tendencies toward totalitarianism and thus imperil genuine diversity and freedom. Only Charles Donahue, a Catholic professor from Fordham University, argued that the proposal was justifiable in terms of the nation's tradition of religious pluralism.

In reviewing the discussion, Fishman brought out several points highly relevant to the relation of pluralism and assimilation. Despite verbal adherence to cultural pluralism, he observed, Americans were not really in agreement about what groupings in society were viable candidates for permanent survival and merited public support along the lines visualized by Creegan's proposal. Racial and religious groupings seemed permanent but were ineligible for public support on account of constitutional prohibitions; immigrant ethnic groups were eligible, in Fishman's view, but assimilation worked against the likelihood of their survival, and they were "not popularly defined (or even self-defined) as meriting permanent existence in American society." The latter groups were thus too far gone along the road to assimilation to make group maintenance feasible; and, leaving the constitutional issue aside, Americans did not want to encourage religious diversity because it might cut too deeply, upsetting the existing modus vivendi. For although they had learned to live with diversity, Americans were not really committed to promoting it. "The kind of diversity we have come to respect," Fishman wrote, "... [and] to proclaim via brotherhood weeks, interrelations committees, assembly programs for school children, and hollywoodized fiction is a respectable, westernized, protestantized diversity—a diversity of agreeable sorts and proportions. Above all, it is a participationist diversity and not a separatist diversity."

The tone of Fishman's analysis left some doubt as to whether he approved or disapproved of the national taste in diversity, but he had put his finger on the underlying paradox of pluralist thinking in the 1950s, that is, its assimilationist substructure. Almost equally striking is the
aptness of the labels *participationist* and *separatist* for designating the divergence that developed among American Catholics themselves in reference to pluralism.

Catholics were virtually at one in regarding religious differences as the key differentiating elements in a pluralistic society. By religious differences they understood “divergent and incompatible views” with respect to basic questions such as the existence and nature of God, the ontological order of reality, the nature and destiny of man, and the sources of moral obligation. Because it involved differences so fundamental, pluralism necessarily implied “disagreement and dissension within the community”; but it also implied “a community within which there must be agreement and consensus.” This, as Murray observed laconically, constituted “no small political problem,” for some way had to be found whereby all religious groups could participate in the oneness of the community, despite their dissensions; yet the common principles of participation could not be such as to interfere with the maintenance by each group of its distinctive religious identity.

With this formulation of the pluralistic problem nearly all Catholics would have agreed. Where they differed among themselves was in their assessment of the relative importance of these dialectical contraries and in the inferences they drew as to policies to be followed in the practical order. The traditional and still predominant approach in the 1950s can be called “separatist” in that it gave priority to preserving the religious identity of Catholics by means of Catholic schools and other religiously based associations that performed a boundary-maintaining function. Such an approach was, in the minds of its supporters, required by the facts of the pluralistic situation and justified by American pluralistic principles.

The contrasting “participationist” interpretation of pluralism rose to prominence in the 1950s when it won the support of the liberal Catholic intelligentsia, whose principal organ was the weekly journal *Commonweal*. The great concern of these *Commonweal* Catholics, as they were sometimes called, was to bring the church out of its “Catholic ghetto” and into the “mainstream” of American life. From their standpoint, separatism was precisely what was wrong with American Catholicism; they were therefore highly critical of “ghetto organizations” that sealed Catholics off from interaction with their fellow citizens of other (or no) religious background. According to their understanding, American society was pluralistic because it consisted of persons and groups of diverse origin and character, all of whom worked together in the common enterprise of national life. The appropriate response to this situation was for Cath-
olics, as individuals, to involve themselves in "pluralistic" activities, that is, organizations, causes, and movements in which Catholics took their places alongside Protestants, Jews, and secular liberals in working for goals that would advance the common good of society.

The assimilationist tendency of this approach is obvious. It was further reflected in the sympathetic interest shown by Catholic liberals of the fifties in the historical tradition of ecclesiastical "Americanism," which was recovered by a great outpouring of scholarship in the postwar era. But the term assimilation was never used in reference to the participationist strategy—at least not with positive connotations. Rather, it was simply called "pluralism."

American Catholics thus collectively espoused two sharply contrasting versions of pluralism—one that justified the self-segregation of Catholics in denominationally based social and cultural associations and another that justified the mixing together of Catholics and non-Catholics in every sort of social context except those relating directly to worship. This naturally gave rise to confusion. And as pluralism came to be closely identified with democracy in general American usage, Catholic confusion took on a more impassioned polemical quality because spokesmen for both versions interpreted pluralism as a normative concept, one that should guide behavior. In other words, the separatist and the participationist versions—each simply described as "pluralistic"—were offered as the democratic prescription for how Catholics should respond to the conditions of American life. It was difficult at best for Catholics to decide how they should respond to American life; by using the same equivocal term to designate opposite strategies, they made it an almost insoluble problem.

As Catholics thrashed about in this semantic muddle, their situation vis-à-vis pluralism was becoming a matter of more general theoretical interest. Will Herberg's Protestant-Catholic-Jew (1955) was the first major landmark in this development. Glazer and Moynihan's Beyond the Melting Pot (1963) and Milton Gordon's Assimilation in American Life (1964) continued to emphasize the importance of religion as a key element in pluralism, but the appearance of these books presaged an era in which race and ethnicity came to dominate the consciousness of those who talked and wrote about pluralism.

Herberg's brilliantly provocative analysis of the postwar "revival of religion" gave the factor of religion unprecedented salience as the key element in American cultural diversity. Yet if Herberg articulated a new form of pluralism, as Powell maintains, he did so largely in the process
of tracing the workings of assimilation, and the moral he drew from his investigation was that religion itself was in danger of being assimilated to the "American Way of Life." He was a determined religious pluralist in resisting such an eventuality, but he clearly regarded assimilationist forces as much stronger in American society than those tending to preserve cultural or religious diversity.

Assimilation figured in Herberg's argument in at least three ways, which are distinguishable but closely related. The problem he set out to explain was how it could be that American society was experiencing a great revival of religion, while in every other respect it seemed to be growing more secularized than ever. To solve this paradox he turned to the social psychology of an immigrant-derived people. The religious revival, he suggested, was their response to the psychic malaise induced by contemporary mass society. People felt rootless and alone in mass society; religion gave them a sense of where they belonged by providing a link of continuity with the past and a meaningful location in the world of the present. Religion was the only viable linkage with the past because assimilation had eroded all the other elements of immigrant culture. In identifying themselves with organized Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism, persons of immigrant background were therefore giving expression to their residual ethnic loyalties and at the same time protecting themselves from anomie, alienation, and the other ills of mass society.

Its role in leaching away the nonreligious elements of immigrant heritages (language, societies, etc.) is the first way in which assimilation figures in Herberg's analysis. The second relates to the Americanization of immigrant religious heritages, for, while they survived, they did not survive unchanged by assimilation. Herberg devotes separate chapters to the history of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism showing how each tradition was modified in interaction with New World circumstances, the last two being most clearly Americanized as they moved toward equal standing as "the three great faiths of democracy."

The mention of democracy brings us to the third dimension of assimilation in Herberg's interpretation, and the only one toward which he adopted a definitely critical stance. The democratic ideology, or what he called the "American Way of Life," was, in Herberg's judgment, the real religion of Americans, and he thought they prized traditional organized religion because it was functionally useful in buttressing the national ideology. Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism, in other words, enjoyed public approbation because they provided three equally acceptable ways for the individual to manifest his or her commitment to the "spiritual values" underlying the "American Way of Life," not because they were
looked upon as embodiments of autonomous religious truth. Herberg had great admiration for democracy as a socio-political ideology, but he resolutely opposed the tendency to erect it into a civil religion. His conviction that such a tendency existed and that it threatened to denature the true religious quality of the "three great faiths of democracy" is a measure of the degree to which he believed assimilation was carrying everything before it.\(^{60}\)

Herberg's analysis of religious pluralism thus testified to the pervasive influence of assimilation. In the racial sphere, the assimilationist-oriented drive for integration and civil rights assumed new importance after the mid-fifties and soon demanded equal time with religion from those who discussed the sources of diversity in American life. In 1963 Glazer and Moynihan's \textit{Beyond the Melting Pot} brought the convergence of these elements into full articulation by proposing that religion and race were the two most important organizing principles in American society. In the nation's great cities, they said, "four major groups emerge: Catholics, Jews, white Protestants, and Negroes, each making up the city in different proportions." Looking into the future, they ventured the prediction that religion and race would "define the next stage in the evolution of the American peoples."\(^{61}\)

This forecast was based on a study of New York City which had shown that group identity among Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish was a powerful force in shaping the social and political life of the metropolis. Only the racial half of the prediction was borne out by events, but the book has been so closely linked to the great upsurge of racial and ethnic consciousness that followed its publication that the reader today is startled by the importance attached by the authors to religion. The same linkage with the new ethnicity has probably misled those only casually acquainted with the book into thinking that it provides an unqualified confirmation of the cultural pluralist interpretation of American society. The position taken by the authors is considerably more complex, although it is pluralist in a general sense.

Glazer and Moynihan invited an oversimplified reading by the title they chose and by the statement, made twice, that "the point about the melting pot is that it did not happen."\(^{62}\) For, despite this seemingly categorical assertion, they did not deny the reality of assimilation. On the contrary, they regarded assimilation as a powerful solvent that washed out immigrant languages, customs, and "the specifically national aspect" of ethnic cultures in two or three generations. For that reason they looked upon "the dream of 'cultural pluralism' " as no more realistic than "the hope of a 'melting pot.'"\(^{63}\) Glazer and Moynihan might therefore have
said with equal justice that cultural pluralism “did not happen” either; what their analysis actually suggested was that the processes designated by both terms had really taken place, although neither had worked out as people seemed to expect. The melting pot did change immigrants and their descendants quite profoundly; yet ethnicity persisted in American society despite the transformation wrought by assimilation. Pluralism did exist and was based on ethnicity; but ethnicity itself had been reshaped by the assimilative forces of American society and no longer constituted itself clearly around identifiable cultural traits or foreign nationality. Thus the ethnic group was “not a survival from the age of mass immigration but a new social form” produced by the interaction of group heritage and American conditions.61

This subtle analysis underscored the dialectical relationship of assimilation and pluralism, but it was usually portrayed by later spokesmen for the new ethnicity as having completely discredited the “fearful and contempuous” theory of melting pot assimilation.65 Something of the same sort happened to Milton Gordon’s Assimilation in American Life, which appeared the year after Glazer and Moynihan’s book and presented an interpretation congruent with theirs in certain respects.

Gordon’s work was the most ambitious theoretical study till then undertaken of the role played in American society by ethnicity, assimilation, and pluralism, and any attempt to capture its main points in a few words runs the risk of distortion. Nevertheless, we must confine ourselves to three aspects of the book: the salience it accords to race and religion; the treatment of assimilation and pluralism as such; and the nature of its contribution to later thinking about these matters. The first point will not detain us long, but it is important to note that, like Glazer and Moynihan, Gordon treated religion and race as the main sources of diversity in American life. He also referred to Protestant-Catholic-Jew, and in one place made use of Herberg’s image of multiple melting pots, the most important of which had religious or racial labels. And a long chapter entitled “The Subsociety and the Subculture in America” is divided into subsections devoted to Negroes, Jews, Catholics, white Protestants, and intellectuals (whom Gordon considered a kind of incipient ethnic group).66

Gordon began his treatment of assimilation proper with an informative review of the way social scientists had defined it and related concepts such as acculturation and amalgamation. On the basis of this review and his earlier discussion of social structure and culture, he then elaborated a seven-stage model of the assimilation process.67 The crucial distinction was between the first stage, “cultural or behavioral assimi-
plation,” and the second, “structural assimilation.” The former, which Gordon equated with acculturation, referred to the adoption by those undergoing assimilation of the cultural patterns of the host society. He left the meaning of cultural patterns vague, but in general cultural assimilation meant adopting the English language and conforming to other visible, external features of American culture. Structural assimilation, on the other hand, meant large-scale entry into the “cliques, clubs, and institutions of [the] host society” on the level of primary-group relationships. In other words, structural assimilation was not a matter of how one acted but of who one interacted with.

The remaining stages involved in the process Gordon listed as follows: marital assimilation, marked by large-scale intermarriage; identificational assimilation, marked by the development of a sense of peoplehood exclusively on the host society; attitude receptional assimilation, which referred to the absence of prejudice against the group being assimilated; behavior receptional assimilation, referring to the absence of discrimination against those being assimilated; and civic assimilation, meaning that there were no political differences concerning issues of power and values between the group being assimilated and the host society.

Gordon referred variously to this scheme as an ideal type, an analytical model, and an array of assimilation variables, but the reader could hardly be blamed for assuming that it was being presented as a description of social reality. For by applying the model to American society, Gordon was able to elicit facts that led him to conclude that cultural assimilation was the first to take place, but its taking place did not necessarily mean that structural assimilation would follow. These conclusions were said to be borne out by the history of immigration, from which one would infer that social reality did conform to the model. Moreover, the variables were interrelated causally from structural assimilation on down. For although cultural assimilation did not necessarily bring structural assimilation in its wake (and had not done so historically, according to Gordon), structural assimilation was indissolubly linked to marital assimilation, which led in turn to identificational assimilation, and so on down the line, “like a row of tenpins bowled over in rapid succession by a well placed strike.” This insight led to a formulation that sounded as much like a fact of nature as an analytical relationship: “Structural assimilation, then, rather than acculturation, is seen to be the keystone of the arch of assimilation.”

By analogy to the distinction between cultural and structural assimilation, Gordon also distinguished between cultural and structural plu-
Cultural pluralism was the appropriate term to use before cultural assimilation took place, when the intergroup situation was characterized by diversity of languages, customs, and other visible manifestations of cultural differences. Structural pluralism, however, was the proper designation after the various groups involved had undergone acculturation but were not yet structurally assimilated. Readers who followed all this could hardly have been surprised by Gordon’s assertion that structural pluralism was “the major key to the understanding of the ethnic makeup of American society.” And they certainly would have been justified in assuming Gordon was making a statement about social reality when he said that structural pluralism was “a more accurate term for the American situation . . . than cultural pluralism, although some of the latter also remains.”

Whatever he may have intended, and despite language suggesting here and there that his conceptual scheme was a purely theoretical construct not meant to be taken as a description of social reality, Gordon’s analysis implied that such assimilation as had actually taken place was shallow and superficial—being largely confined to the first of seven possible stages—and that pluralism was a much deeper and more meaningful reality in American society than assimilation. This brings us to the influence the book had on subsequent thinking about pluralism and ethnicity. I have not systematically surveyed the literature with that question in mind, but, as one professionally interested in ethnicity during the entire period since the book was published, my impression is that Gordon’s work was, like Glazer and Moynihan’s, generally regarded as having discredited the “assimilationist myth.” His distinction between cultural and structural pluralism, although noted by serious students of ethnicity, had no impact on popular usage, an area where the ethnic revival was soon to make “cultural pluralism” more of a shibboleth than ever. By offering scholarly confirmation of the persistence of some sort of pluralism based on ethnicity, Gordon’s work doubtless reinforced this outcome, despite its argument that cultural pluralism was passing from the scene as a result of cultural assimilation.

Writing in 1972, Michael Passi touched on this matter in professing puzzlement at what he deemed Gordon’s inconsistency. He could not understand how Gordon could perceive the reality of pluralism as fully as he did and still maintain that cultural assimilation had actually taken place on a large scale. In Passi’s view, cultural pluralism was as much a continuing fact as structural pluralism, and he interpreted Gordon’s obtuseness on this point as evidence of the “transitional nature” of his book. Passi wrote as an advocate of the new ethnicity, and he was
certainly correct that thinking on pluralism and assimilation had changed drastically in the years since Gordon's book had appeared.

The transition toward which Beyond the Melting Pot and Assimilation in American Life pointed was the great upsurge of ethnic feeling that arose as an aspect of the radical social and cultural changes of the late 1960s. These developments are too complex to enter into; and what was variously called the ethnic revival, the new ethnicity, or the new pluralism produced a literature too extensive to review. All we can do here is highlight a few of the issues most directly related to assimilation-pluralism polarity.

The assertion of ethnic claims in many parts of the world suggests the inadequacy of a strictly national explanation, but in this country the most important single factor in the ethnic revival was the new spirit of group-centered militance shown by American blacks. The mid-sixties shift from the assimilationist-oriented drive for integration and civil rights to a more aggressively particularistic emphasis on black power, black pride, and black culture legitimized ethnicity—a word that came into widespread use only in the late 1960s as the designation for the kind of "we-group" feeling that would have been branded in the 1940s or 1950s as ethnocentrism. After it was legitimized by blacks, ethnicity was quickly taken up by other groups in American society.

The rapid emergence of red power, brown power, and white ethnic movements underscores another important point about the assertion of ethnicity, namely that it served group interests. Ethnicity became a means for mobilizing group energies to enforce group demands, and it was generally associated with a claim on public authorities for the redress of wrongs or some other kind of action designed to benefit the group in question. Glazer and Moynihan pointed out in 1963 that ethnic groups were also interest groups, and as national policy moved toward affirmative action, the significance of the group interest dimension of ethnicity stood forth more clearly than ever. Students of the "plural society" type of pluralism, whose work was becoming more widely known in the 1970s, also stressed the group interest angle, some even portraying it as the basic element in the whole phenomenon of ethnicity and pluralism.

The persistence of ethnicity (as qualified by Glazer and Moynihan and Gordon), the influence of the black example, and the group interest angle all figure as positive factors in the enhanced salience of pluralism that marked the revival of ethnicity. But there was an equally important negative factor: the discrediting of assimilation that was an inevitable by-product of the revulsion from traditional Americanism brought on by
the racial upheaval and the Vietnam War. The crisis engendered by these and related developments (e.g., urban riots and campus disruptions) severely shook the confidence of Americans in their national values and institutions. Few, it is true, accepted the extreme view that “AmeriKKKa” was fundamentally vicious and oppressive, but the damage to collective self-esteem was sufficient to discredit assimilation because assimilation means identification with national values, ideals, and institutions. In the distemper of the sixties, “Americanization” became a term of abuse, and the melting pot was held up to scorn as a hateful symbol for a contemptible goal, which had, however, not been realized because of the enduring ethnicity of our pluralistic population.

The new ethnicity thus accentuated the ostensible contrast between pluralism and assimilation; and by associating the former with admirable social goals and the latter with disreputable goals it made the terminology more value laden and rigidly judgmental. This aggravated the semantic obscurities of the past and generated some new ones as pluralism was ritualistically invoked in the support of the most diverse positions. Critics of the new ethnicity soon appeared, and the picture grew more complicated in the mid-1970s. From the vantage point of the early 1980s, the most significant development appears to be the emergence of a radically “separatist” interpretation of pluralism, which is associated with a revival of racialist thinking, and which is likely to arouse a reaffirmation of assimilation as a respectable social policy.

In the early stages of the ethnic revival, most people seemed to have a participationist version of pluralism in mind when they used the term. Participationist here means the kind of pluralism that embodies a healthy chunk of assimilation without labeling it as such. It envisages loosely defined groups interacting on a basis of consensus about basic social values, showing mutual respect and tolerance, each conceding the right of others to be different, but none in fact differing significantly enough to constitute a “divisive” element in the overall harmony of society. This was the kind of pluralism promoted by the American Jewish Committee, the most influential single force in the white ethnic movement. Its National Project on Ethnic America was intended to ease the confrontation between blacks and working-class whites and thereby to “help polarization dissolve into pluralism.” The leaders of this “depolarization project” were alert to the dangers of ethnocentrism and destructive separatism and sensitive to the “difficulty of going beyond fragmentation toward a genuine pluralism.” The same notes are sounded repeatedly in the hearings on a 1970 bill to establish “ethnic heritage studies centers.” The sponsor, Congressman Roman C. Pucinski of Il-
linois, disavowed any intention of promoting separatist ethnic consciousness. "The main thrust of this legislation," he declared, "is to try to eliminate the differences [between people] by letting people know about each other and recognizing their differences." A book review in a Sunday newspaper supplement suggests the bland and innocuous manner in which this participationist version of pluralism came across to the general reading public: "Cultural pluralism means that each culture within a country will have its respected place, and every individual will be free to choose the elements he may find attractive in another lifestyle." Pluralism meant more than that to many spokesmen for ethnic groups, and the rise of black nationalism in the late sixties legitimized demands for "militant pluralism" all along the line. This term was used by Nathan Hare, the embattled organizer of a black studies program at San Francisco State University, who defined it as "the right [of a group] to exist as an equal, akin to parity, as a distinct category." Paralleling the rhetoric of black separatism, if not directly inspired by it, was the call for "community control" of institutions, such as schools, which served a black clientele. Chicano separatists envisaged a "Plan of Aztlan" whereby all the territories ceded by Mexico to the United States in 1848 would be restored to Chicano control. Separatism and tribal autonomy had always figured prominently in the relationship of American Indians to the national society, and as the new ethnicity gathered momentum, Vine Deloria proposed that tribalism be applied across the board to guarantee "the basic sovereignty of the minority group," strengthen its bargaining position, and guard against the dangers of "co-optation." The contrast between this approach and the participationist vision of individuals freely choosing elements of other lifestyles was brought out starkly in Deloria’s comment that, in the arrangement he urged, everyone would have his or her special enclave, and "alienation would be confined to those times that people stray from their own neighborhood into the world of other peoples."}

Ethnic activists pioneered in separatist pluralism, but it eventually affected academic studies too. Among scholars, the tendency toward a more militant pluralism first took the form of increasingly strident rejection of "assimilationist values, with their connotations of elitism and a monocultural society" and an insistence on the perduring quality of ethnicity. These were the main themes of Michael Passi’s historical critique of academic studies of ethnicity, and the cultural pluralists were his heroes. However, James Powell’s dissertation, written in the same year (1971), showed that most advocates of cultural pluralism had really
been liberal assimilationists or, at best, advocates of unity-cum-diversity. Powell reported this finding with detachment; by the late 1970s others were reacting more indignantly. Nicholas Montalto, for example, branded the cultural pluralism of many involved in the intercultural education movement of the 1940s as "almost hypocritical"; theirs was a "pluralism of deception." Another historian charged that those seeking reform in Indian educational policy in the 1930s were not real cultural pluralists because they did not believe "in the indefinite preservation of cultural qualities requiring political self-determination or permanent self-separation." Their thinking was "flawed or insidious," and the cultural democracy they offered was merely a "softer version" of "crass assimilationism." 

Writers of this persuasion tend to be highly critical of the liberal democratic assumptions of the earlier cultural pluralists. In this respect their outlook reflects the alienation from national values and institutions that pervaded social commentary in the late sixties and early seventies. Nicholas Montalto brings out the connection in a frank avowal of the "biases which may have shaped his perceptions" of the issues involved in intercultural education and pluralism. "I believe that the disorders of our society, the spiritual unrest, the materialism that provides the only confirmation of self-worth, the loss of creativity and freedom, are consequences of an out-moded social system, which attempted to suppress those centers of valuation and opinion in conflict with the 'core culture.' In its uncorrupted form," he continues (without elaborating on corrupted forms), "the revival of ethnic consciousness is but one aspect of a larger movement for social change, a movement to protect the environment, to adapt technology to human needs, to find satisfaction in work, to regain power over our lives, to eliminate racism, and to reorder relations among the nations."

Montalto included the elimination of racism among the goals associated with the ethnic revival, but the new pluralism has in fact been accompanied by a strong resurgence of racial thinking. Racial thinking as used here does not mean holding that one race is inherently superior or inferior to another. It refers rather to the outlook that regards race as a valid social category, that accepts the classification of individuals into racial categories on the basis of ancestry or the "rule of descent," and that justifies differential treatment of individuals according to their racial classifications. The development of this sort of racialism has been closely linked to affirmative action and other forms of "benign quotas" that are predicated on the assumptions spelled out above. It is thus to be understood primarily as the unanticipated by-product of policies intended to
overcome the effects of America's historic racism. But there were also more positive factors in the development of racial thinking. One was the heavy emphasis by black nationalists and their counterparts in other groups on the distinctive racial qualities, “soul,” or consciousness of \textit{la raza}, that marks the group in question. Another was the insistence of the new pluralists that ethnicity is a “primordial” quality that deserves more adequate recognition in the institutional arrangements of society.\textsuperscript{87}

In thus harking back to something like Kallen's original federation-of-nationalities pluralism, the new pluralists found themselves being led almost irresistably to the vaguely racialist interpretation of ethnicity that Kallen himself entertained in the teens and early twenties.

In view of the extent to which racialist assumptions have been tacitly accepted in practice, it is not surprising that one can now discern the beginnings of a new theoretical interest in the subject which treats seriously the possibility that genetically determined factors in social life are real and demand scientific attention. Pierre L. van den Berghe's \textit{Ethnic Phenomenon} (1981) is the most explicit manifestation of this tendency and the most fully elaborated. Van den Berghe grounds his interpretation in socio-biological theory, arguing that “ethnic and racial sentiments are [an] extension of kinship sentiments. Ethnocentrism and racism are thus extended forms of nepotism—the [genetically based] propensity to favor kin over nonkin.” From this it follows that “ethnocentrism and racism, too, are deeply rooted in our biology and can be expected to persist even in industrial societies, whether capitalist or socialist.”\textsuperscript{88} Van den Berghe is well aware that this view is flagrantly at odds with both liberal and radical ideologies, and well as with the scholarly consensus on race that has prevailed for a half-century, and he is at pains to make clear that he does not approve of ethnocentrism and racism. His position, rather, is that to be able to deal with these unattractive aspects of our nature, we must understand how deeply they are embedded in our evolutionary history.\textsuperscript{89}

Van den Berghe is “adamantly universalist” in ideological orientation and has written critically of the American revival of ethnicity,\textsuperscript{90} but another writer sympathetic to the new ethnicity hints at a somewhat similar biologically linked racialism. This is Fred Wacker, who seems to regard the abandonment of Lamarckian racialism not as a clear scientific advance but as a problem requiring explanation. He interprets the shift away from Lamarckianism (by which is meant the belief that the cultural traits of a people are transmitted by hereditary mechanisms) as resulting from two kinds of factor: ideological considerations, such as a commitment to democratic reform and the elimination of prejudice; and changes
in scientific assumptions, specifically “a movement toward a stronger and more dogmatic environmentalism.” Wacker takes explicit note of Kallen’s racialism but does not treat it as a scientific error or a faulty basis on which to erect a theory of cultural pluralism. He is, however, sufficiently embarrassed by Kallen’s sharing the same assumptions as the nativist racists of the day to add: “One can argue . . . that it makes an important and even vital difference whether a person looks at racial or group stereotypes as positive heritages or marks of backwardness.”

Wacker’s writings illustrate how the logic of the new ethnicity leads its proponents toward a scientific rehabilitation of racialism. But they are not the only ones tending that way. Certain critics of “the myth of ethnicity” start from the other side of the street, so to speak, but they contribute to the same result by drawing so sharp a distinction between race and other heritage-related social groupings as to make the conclusion inevitable that only race is real and deserving of recognition. They sometimes, but not invariably, add the allegation that the revival of ethnicity is merely a cover for white racist backlash against affirmative action.

A recent and authoritative example of this general line of interpretation is provided by M. G. Smith, a West Indian scholar prominent in the study of plural societies. Although he does not accuse the editors of the Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups of being motivated by backlash, he regards their having subsumed race under the more general heading of ethnicity as a “monumental confusion” that vitiates the conceptual foundation of their whole undertaking. According to Smith, race is a reality in nature; it has social consequences; and to disregard these facts, no matter how high-minded the reasons, makes it impossible to understand “those fundamental differences within America between its major racial stocks on the one hand and the multitude of ethnic groups on the other which have exercised and continue to exercise such profound influences on the development and structure of the society from its earliest beginnings.”

As a result of the practical and theoretical revival of racialism—in addition to the affirmation of “unmeltable” ethnicity and the discrediting of traditional Americanism—a drastically “separatist” variety of pluralism has developed in the past ten years or so. It resembles Kallen’s 1915 version of cultural pluralism but differs fundamentally from the cultural pluralism that has predominated since the late 1930s and that Kallen himself championed in the 1950s. Not everyone who speaks of pluralism today has this militantly separatist variety in mind, for the term is still used in a participationist sense and invoked to celebrate the blandest sort of diversity. This circumstance, coupled with the vagueness that has
always surrounded the expression and its use for so long without acknowledgment of the assimilationist substructure it tacitly embodied, tended to mask what was happening for some time. But the recognition that something significant was afoot has gradually dawned, and in 1981 Milton Gordon illuminated the topic brilliantly in an important article entitled “Models of Pluralism: The New American Dilemma.”

As the subtitle indicates, Gordon believes the nation now confronts a situation comparable in importance to that addressed in Gunnar Myrdal’s classic work, *An American Dilemma* (1944). For Myrdal, the dilemma had to do with the unwillingness of Americans to live up to the requirements of the democratic ideology in their actual treatment of blacks. He did not regard the ideology itself as problematic; nor did he find it difficult to specify what “the American Creed,” as he called it, actually required in the way of equal treatment of blacks. Today, however, it is precisely these matters that have become problematic: the liberal democratic consensus has been challenged, and Americans disagree among themselves about what would constitute equal treatment and how it should be realized.

The traditional position Gordon designates *liberal pluralism*. This corresponds to the participationist pluralism that flourished in the forties and fifties. Premised on democratic individualism, it envisages ethnic and racial relations as falling outside the scope of legal coercion or direct governmental control, except that the state is supposed to prevent discrimination. Racial and ethnic groups have no juridical standing in the polity and no legal rights as entities in themselves; individuals are free to associate themselves with such groups as they see fit, but their doing so, or not doing so, has no bearing on their status in law or their entitlement to the benefits of citizenship. Equality is understood in terms of equal opportunity for individuals, regardless of racial or ethnic background, not in terms of equality of outcomes for groups considered collectively. Officially, liberal pluralism prescribes tolerance and a laissez-faire policy with respect to the perpetuation of structural differentiation and cultural distinctiveness among the groups composing the population. In fact, however, its universalistic premises run contrary to the logic of particularistic distinctiveness, and liberal pluralism deprecates differentiation that tends to become “divisive.”

Against the traditional position, Gordon contrasts the newer *corporate pluralism*. This approach corresponds to what I have called the militantly separatist version, but Gordon develops its implications more systematically. It envisages formal standing before the law for ethnic and racial groups; recognizes group rights in the political and economic
spheres; and makes the enjoyment of rights by individuals conditional, to some extent, on whether they belong to specified groups. With respect to equality, corporate pluralism would require proportionally equal outcomes for groups rather than equality of opportunity for individuals. And without explicitly rejecting the need for national unity, it would officially foster structural separatism and cultural and linguistic differentiation among the constituent groups in society. Corporate pluralism would not require what Gordon calls "area exclusivism," or the establishing of territorial enclaves, but it would find such a development acceptable, even though it might result in limitations on the rights of outsiders to travel through or reside in the areas in question.

Although he lays out the two positions in an abstract, "ideal typical" manner, Gordon is convinced that they correspond to real differences in outlook and policy that now confront the American people and demand a choice. Moreover, he insists that the choice is not between unrelated alternatives in discrete areas of concern; rather, "there is an inherent logic in the relationship of the various positions on these public issues which makes the choice one between two patterns—two overall types of racial and ethnic pluralism each with distinctly different implications for the American way of life."5

Gordon is correct on these points, in my opinion; and I would add that his spelling out so clearly the contrasting meanings of pluralism is a major contribution toward raising the discussion from the morass of semantic confusion to the hard-won level where clearcut disagreement becomes possible. My own belief is that as more people come to realize what the corporate version of pluralism actually implies, there will be a strong reaffirmation of the traditional values of democratic universalism and a frank espousal of assimilation understood as a social policy promoting identification with those democratic values by all Americans, regardless of ethnic or racial background. The beginnings of such a reaffirmation are already discernible; as the illiberal—indeed, anti-liberal—implications of corporate pluralism come to be appreciated for what they are, the reaffirmation will gain in strength.

Until Gordon's analysis appeared, proponents of corporate pluralism could draw on the moral capital accumulated by a whole generation's uncritical celebration of liberal pluralism despite the fact that it (corporate pluralism) rested on diametrically opposed theoretical foundations and prescribed quite different social policies. Now it should be clear to those committed to the traditional values of liberal democracy that they can no longer endorse any and every call for "cultural pluralism." In the past, the great majority of those who championed cultural pluralism were far
more deeply committed to assimilation understood as ideological consensus on democratic values than they seemed to realize. Now it is the democratic consensus itself that is at issue—what it consists in and what it implies for government action in the area of racial and ethnic relations. Pluralists may have thought they could take all that for granted, but they cannot. They cannot even begin to discuss these fundamental questions constructively until the terminology of pluralism is demystified and people realize that it usually confuses rather than clarifies what is really at issue.

NOTES


b. Mary C. Waters, Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America (Berkeley, Calif., 1990), esp. 7-8, 167.


d. Lawrence H. Fuchs, The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture (Middletown, Conn., 1990). Fuchs rejects Kallen’s original federation-of-nationalities pluralism and equates what he (Fuchs) calls “voluntary pluralism” with Kallen’s later assimilationist-oriented version of cultural pluralism (74). He states, “When Americans celebrated diversity, often calling it pluralism, they were really celebrating individual rights” (561, n. 1).


f. A key “text” in popularizing the term is Rick Simonson and Scott Walker, eds., The Graywolf Annual Five: Multi-Cultural Literacy (St. Paul, Minn., 1988). Although it contains little theorizing of the rarefied European sort, this “diversity” anthology provides materials suitable for college use. The title was adopted in reaction to E. D. Hirsch’s Cultural Literacy, but multiculturalism was so new a term that it is not used prominently (if at all) by any of the contributors. Even Ishmael Reed, who does use monocultural, entitles his piece “America: The Multinational Society.” Nor is the new term included in the list of words and expressions the editors drew up as a supplement to Hirsch’s list, although multilingual and multinational are there. (I am
grateful to Werner Sollors for calling my attention to this work and noting several of
the points made here.)

g. George Yudice, “Latino Identity and the Reconceptualization of ‘America’ as a
Multicultural Society,” paper presented at the American Studies Association con­
vention, New Orleans, November 1990.

h. Ibid. In another piece, Yudice and a coauthor refer also to “hegemonic plu­
ralism” and “ersatz pluralism.” See Juan Flores and George Yudice, “Living Borders/
Buscando America: Languages of Latino Self Formation,” Social Text, 8, no. 2 (1990),
62, 66.

i. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., When Ethnic Studies Are Un-American,” Wall Street
stood in a liberal assimilationist sense, as opposed to the “particularism” of the extreme
multiculturalists. For a critique by the former prophet of the ethnic revival, see Michael
Novak, “A Call for Disunity,” Forbes, 146 (July 9, 1990), 65; see also John Leo, “A
Fringe History of the World,” U.S. News & World Report, 109 (November 12, 1990),
25–26; and Fred Siegel, “The Cult of Multiculturalism,” New Republic 204 (February

1. Richard Mayo-Smith, quoted in Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, Introduc­
Cf. also Sarah E. Simons, “Social Assimilation,” American Journal of Sociology, 6
(1900–1901), 790–822; John R. Commons, Races and Immigrants in America (1907;


4. Horace M. Kallen, “Democracy versus the Melting Pot,” Nation, 100 (February
18, 25, 1915), 190–94, 217–20; reprinted in Kallen, Culture and Democracy in the
United States (New York, 1924), 67–125. John Higham, Send These to Me: Jews and
Other Immigrants in Urban America (1975; Baltimore, 1984), 198–232, is a splendid
analysis of ethnic pluralism in modern American thought. For other perspectives, see
Milton M. Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York, 1964), chap. 6; Milton
Rischin, “The Jews and Pluralism: Toward an American Freedom Symphony,” mimeo,
available from American Jewish Committee Project on Group Life and Ethnic America;
Arthur Mann, The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity (Chicago,

5. Kallen, Culture and Democracy, 124. For a fuller analysis of Kallen’s position,
see Philip Gleason, “American Identity and Americanization,” in Stephen Thernstrom,

6. This 10-volume series was republished in 1971 with new introductions by contem­
porary scholars. For background on the original series and a general review of its find­
ings, see William S. Bernard, “General Introduction to the Republished Studies,” in Frank

7. Park and Burgess, Science of Sociology, 773; William I. Thomas, Robert E.
Park, and Herbert A. Miller, Old World Traits Transplanted (1921; Montclair N.J.,
1971), esp. chap. 9. Thomas’s name was not included among the authors when the
book was originally published for reasons explained in Donald R. Young’s introduction
to the reprint. Young also observes that the book “supports a pluralistic policy” in
general, although it "recognized that immigrant groups and their original heritages cannot survive indefinitely" (xiv). Thomas, Park, and Miller dealt critically with the Kallenesque type of pluralism (229ff.). Kallen, *Culture and Democracy* (150-65, 169-70) returned the compliment with a negative assessment of *Old World Traits*, although he had earlier (155) alluded to the "brilliant work" of W. I. Thomas on *The Polish Peasant*. He was presumably unaware that Thomas had any part in *Old World Traits*.


10. Ibid., 737, 756, 758-60.


12. The matters touched upon in this paragraph and the two following are dealt with at greater length in chap. 6.


14. Everett C. Hughes and Helen M. Hughes, *Where Peoples Meet* (Glencoe, Ill., 1952), 30-31. About the same time another scholar wrote, "The relationship between assimilation and such other terms as 'diffusion,' 'accommodation,' 'culture contact,' and 'transculturation' remains rather vague even at this date." *Social Behavior and Personality. Contributions of W. I. Thomas to Theory and Social Research*, ed. Edmund H. Volkart (New York, 1951), 260-61n. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, which is discussed in a later section of this chapter, makes a helpful distinction between cultural and structural assimilation and equates cultural assimilation with acculturation.

15. Illustrative of the affinity between the two concepts is that a volume of essays by Melville J. Herskovits (published posthumously and edited by his wife, Frances Herskovits), is entitled *Cultural Relativism: Perspectives in Cultural Pluralism* (New York, 1972).


17. Ibid., 763.

18. James H. Powell, "The Concept of Cultural Pluralism in American Social Thought, 1915-1965" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1971), 169-70. Largely ignored earlier, says Powell, cultural pluralism "had, as it were, arrived" (173-74).

19. Ibid., 128ff.

20. Ibid., 129. Actually, Powell covers one work that does discuss the federation-of-nationalities version as applicable to American society, but only to reject it with the harsh judgment that it was tainted with "racism and a totalitarian spirit." The work was Arnold Rose and Caroline Rose, *America Divided* (New York, 1948), which Powell treats briefly (142-43).


22. Ibid., 50, 51-52, 55.

23. Ibid., 97.

24. Ibid., 204-5.

25. Ibid., 109, 197ff. For other indications of Kallen's raising of science, democracy, and secularism (which he amalgamated together) to the level of civil religion, see his "Democracy's True Religion," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 34 (July 28,
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26. For fuller treatment of matters discussed in this paragraph and the two following, see Gleason, "American Identity," 47ff.; and below, chap. 6. Higham, *Send These to Me*, 218–21, provides insights to which I am much indebted.


30. In 1944 upwards of four thousand American psychologists subscribed to a "Psychologists' Manifesto" dealing with war, peace, and human nature. The third proposition states: "Through education and experience people can learn that their prejudiced ideas about the English, the Russians, the Japanese, Catholics, Jews, Negroes, are misleading or altogether false. They can learn that members of one racial, national, or cultural group are basically similar to those of other groups, and have similar problems, hopes, aspirations, and needs. Prejudice is a matter of attitudes, and attitudes are to a considerable extent a matter of training and information." Gardner Murphy, ed., *Human Nature and Enduring Peace. Third Yearbook of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues* (Boston, 1945), 455–56. Cf. also Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954; New York, 1958), 477–80.


32. It was for these reasons that Arnold and Caroline Rose rejected cultural pluralism so vehemently; see their *America Divided*, 166–74.

33. There was some effort to promote use of the term integration in place of assimilation, even in contexts other than black/white relations, the argument being that integration conveyed more clearly that the relationship involved was mutual, a "two-way street" of influence and adaptation. See W. D. Borrie, ed., *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants* (Paris, 1959), 92–94, 292; M. R. Davie's "Our Vanishing Minorities." In Francis J. Brown and Joseph Roucek, eds., *One America: The History, Contributions, and Present Problems of Our Racial and National Minorities*, rev. ed. (New York, 1946), 540–51, was more complacent about the disappearance of minorities than his title might suggest, but he favored cultural pluralism as a strategy of liberal assimilation. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, 51–53, assumes the near complete assimilation of immigrants, and so does W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Strole, *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* (New Haven, Conn., 1945), 295–96.


41. Paul Blanshard was the best-known liberal critic of Catholicism; see his *American Freedom and Catholic Power* (Boston, 1949) and *Communism, Democracy, and Catholic Power* (Boston, 1951); and James M. O’Neill, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York, 1952), a Catholic reply to Blanshard.


43. Conant discussed these matters in lectures in 1952 and included a slightly reworked version in his *Education and Liberty* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953); quotations from 80–81. In his memoirs, *My Several Lives* (New York, 1970), Conant devotes chap. 34 to the episode and reproduces one of his 1952 lectures (665–70). He also notes here (470) that he did not actually use the word divisive himself; but he grants that his statement could be translated as “independent schools are divisive” and that “it would have seemed like a quibble” to object that he did not use it.

44. See the editorial from the *Boston Pilot* reproduced in Conant, *Education and Liberty*, 140–41.

45. John Courtney Murray, S. J., *We Hold These Truths* (New York, 1960), 147. The person quoted by Murray was Robert E. Rodes, Jr., a Catholic law professor.

46. Ibid., 15.


50. The presentations at the symposium were published in *School and Society*, 87 (May 23, 1949), 246–67.

51. Ibid., 260–63.

52. Ibid., 251–53, 259–60 (emphasis in original).


54. Ibid., 264–67.

55. Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, x. The entire book is relevant, but see esp. 5–24, 125–39.


59. Ibid., chaps. 6–10.

60. Ibid., chaps. 5, 11.


63. Ibid., 12–14, 313.

64. Ibid., 16, 17. The passage quoted is italicized in the book.

65. See the review by G. Paulding in the *Reporter*, 29 (October 10, 1963), 59.

66. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, 130–31, 160–232. Other notable features of the book are Gordon’s discussion of the interaction of class and ethnic factors, his introduction of the concept of the “ethclass,” and his historical review of theories of assimilation in separate chapters entitled “Angle-Conformity”—a term that he effectively introduced into the discussion of ethnic affairs—“The Melting Pot,” and “Cultural Pluralism.” The book, Gordon wrote, was ultimately concerned with problems of prejudice and discrimination, and the concluding chapter was devoted to spelling out the implications of Gordon’s theoretical analysis for improving intergroup relations. Powell, “Concept of Cultural Pluralism,” 204–17, is a helpful summary and commentary.


68. Ibid., 69, 74, 80, 82.

69. Ibid., 75–78.

70. Ibid., 80–81.
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71. Ibid., 157–59; also, “To understand ... that acculturation without massive structural intermingling at primary group levels has been the dominant motif in the American experience of creating and developing a nation out of diverse peoples is to comprehend the most essential sociological fact of that experience” (114).


73. The best introduction to the revival of ethnicity is Mann, The One and the Many, chaps. 1–2. Perry L. Weed, The White Ethnic Movement and Ethnic Politics (New York, 1973) is narrower in focus but also quite informative. David R. Colburn and George E. Pozzetta, eds., America and the New Ethnicity (Port Washington, N.Y., 1979) is a useful collection of readings. My own interpretation, which agrees in general with Mann’s, is developed more fully in “American Identity.” 52–55.


75. Colburn and Pozzetta, America and the New Ethnicity includes a selection on women’s liberation which characterizes the United States as “the most exploitative, brutal, and complex oppressor nation in the history of western imperialism” (67).

76. The most ambitious critiques were Orlando Patterson, Ethnic Chauvinism: The Reactionary Impulse (New York, 1977); and Howard F. Stein and Robert F. Hill, The Ethnic Imperative (University Park, Pa., 1977).

77. See Murray Friedman, ed., Overcoming Middle Class Rage (Philadelphia, 1971), 15–53, 269–78. On the American Jewish Committee’s depolarizing work, see also Mann, One and Many, 25ff. William Greenbaum, “American in Search of a New Ideal: An Essay on the Rise of Pluralism,” Harvard Educational Review, 44 (1974), 411–40 is extremely vague and diffuse, but it seems to be a participationist version of pluralism. As the abstract of the article put it, Greenbaum “recommends support of pluralistic institutions and communities, setting policies that honor diversity as a way of maintaining unity, and, at the same time, developing a new, universal ideal.”


82. Deloria, quoted in Friedman, Middle Class Rage, 276. See also George Feaver, “Wounded Knee and the New Tribalism,” Encounter, 44 (February, 1975), 28–35.

Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics (New York, 1972) combines strident antiassimilationism with the proclamation of perduring ethnicity.


86. See Killian, "Black Power and White Reactions," esp. 49–54; Pierre van den Berghe, "The Benign Quota: Panacea or Pandora's Box," American Sociologist, 6, no. 3 (1971), 40–43; van den Berghe, Race and Racism; A Comparative Perspective, 2d ed. (New York, 1978), xxviii–xxix; and Glazer, Affirmative Discrimination.


88. Van den Berghe, Ethnic Phenomenon, Preface and chaps. 1–2; quotations from 18, xi.

89. Ibid., xi–xii; van den Berghe, Race and Racism, xviii–xxii.

90. Van den Berghe, Race and Racism, xx for universalist ideology; ibid., xviii–xxix for critique of ethnic revival, which is also criticized in his Ethnic Phenomenon, 227–28.


92. Ronald Takaki, "The Myth of Ethnicity: Scholarship of the Anti-Affirmative Action Backlash," Journal of Ethnic Studies, 10 (1982), 17–42 is an extreme example; van den Berghe, Ethnic Phenomenon, 224–28 advances a generally similar interpretation, citing Patterson, Ethnic Chauvinism as an authority for interpreting ethnicity as "an alibi for race and class."


