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## Multiculturalism and the Legacy of Cultural Pluralism

“One ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder”(Du Bois 3). This is how W.E.B. Du Bois recapitulated the feeling of being an African-American at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “People of color,” and especially African-Americans, were excluded from the mainstay of American society, at least until the legislation stimulated by the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s began to have its effects. The “twoness” signified by Du Bois was a concern for many in the United States, namely immigrants. Dual allegiance was one of the major accusations addressed to Jews and Italians in the United States in the same years of the publication of *Souls of the Black Folk*. Although they were initiating the process of “whitening,” which, by the second half of the century, would bring them into the body of the nation, these two immigrant groups were still considered aliens incapable of participating fully in a modern democratic state (Jacobson 56-67). Becoming citizens and part of the national body politic seemed to pose an alternative between individual rights and community allegiance; retaining allegiance to the group of origin risked forfeiting the benefits of modern citizenship in a composite nation-state. Among others, Theodore Roosevelt made it clear in an article in the *Forum* magazine of 1894: “...whether the good or the evil [of immigration] shall predominate depends mainly on whether these newcomers do or do not throw themselves heartily into our national life, cease to be Europeans, and become Americans like the rest of us.” The alternative was to remain an outcast or return home, as requested by many nativists. Immigrants, therefore, had to dismiss centuries-old traditions and plunge themselves into the life of the nation to be “Americanized.” American society did not allow a bicultural solution that could be conceived only for certain peoples and for specific communities in which the contours of ethnic identity and language were clearly drawn. For this reason a long debate ensued on the social forms a multicultural society should take.

The present essay thus focuses on a group of intellectuals, identified as cosmopolitans and pluralists, who supported the right of the immigrants to maintain their tradition while entering American life. They presented the country with a pluralist reading that would result decades later in the multiculturalist approach. Some, among them, held that these “new Americans” could contribute a lot to the life of the nation by bringing with and within them different experiences and cultures. All that was required of them was to keep true to the mainstays of American citizenship and particularly to the idea of liberty and self-rule. As later highlighted by several scholars, and namely by Werner Sollors, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the choice seemed to be between consent and descent. The nation could be built on free choice and association of its members, who would then compromise between their identities and the demands of the civil body politic, or could be construed on a supposedly dominant stock that left out those not ready to discard other identities to be assimilated.

At a time when white supremacy, racial superiority, nativism, and Social Darwinism were triumphant in their efforts to exclude minorities, several intellectuals worked on a redefinition of identity and citizenship that tended to include at least some of them. This should have reconciled the free choice of the individual to belong to the nation-state embracing its civic values, with the allegiance to the group of origin and the legacy of the forefathers. In the first decades of the century, a new drive for recognition, and perchance inclusion, initiated. The two icons of American philosophy, William James and John Dewey, and anthropologist Franz Boas opened the way, while young intellectuals then coming of age followed suit. Among them, two names stand out in their attempt to reconcile consent and descent, to resolve the apparent contradiction between tradition and participation in the national mold: Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne. With two seminal essays by the telling titles, “Democracy vs. the Melting Pot” (1915) and “Trans-National America,” (1916), that were to become a starting point of the reflection on identity and nationality, they offered an interpretation of the new American society that was in the making.

Another major concern for the two intellectuals was to avoid the fierce exclusive nationalism so evident in the European countries then at war. The urgency of their writing sprang as much from immigration as from the war

in Europe. They provided the basis for a debate on the multicultural society that continued through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is still alive today. As students of James and Dewey, Kallen and Bourne elaborated their teachers' views of a pluralistic society capable of recognizing peoples' needs and values while permitting them to participate in the construction of a new national identity. William James had opened the way with an important series of speeches, published in 1909, with the title: *A Pluralistic Universe*. James' cosmopolitan approach took note of the inevitable interaction and interpenetration of the different constituents of the sensory world (55-61). "Pluralism," he wrote, "lets things really exist in the each-form or distributively" (320). The acquisition of knowledge and its expansion went through the sharing of human experience and the inevitable interconnectedness of human beings and their different points of view. Kallen, who studied under James, and Bourne projected these ideas onto American society and into the future. As Bourne put it in his essay for *The Atlantic Monthly*: "In the light of our changing ideal of Americanism, we must perpetrate the paradox that our American cultural tradition lies in the future." (256)

The debate on inclusion and exclusion within the body of the nation characterizes critical time periods in American history when economic and social instability calls for a redefinition of the meaning of being an American. While such debate deeply affected the position of new immigrant groups in American society, African-Americans as well as Native Americans remained excluded from the discussion on freedom, democracy, and difference. Although born on American soil, unlike the immigrants who landed in the U.S. in growing numbers between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these two minorities remained confined to the periphery of the discussion on Americanism. They were, in a way, the ultimate example of exclusion related to race and economic and social standing. Only the multiculturalism of the late 1900s would include them in the national discourse. For the immigrants the main question remained how their identities could be recognized and included in a national discourse while they adhered entirely to the country of which they were becoming or were already citizens.

At the beginning and at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were different factors at play which contributed in raising these questions. Some of them were similar if not the same as later ones: growing immigration of people

apparently hard to integrate, a market economy that insisted on the principle of freedom of enterprise and individual choice, globalization, and a growing involvement of the U.S. at an international level. The current debate on multiculturalism, begun in the late sixties and early seventies, to expand later until well after the end of the cold war, takes into account a central issue that was the concern of many an intellectual at the beginning of the century: democracy and difference; or better, the participation of identity groups, different from the dominant one, to the benefits of citizenship in the democratic nation-state (Ignatieff 105-120; Hollinger 103-107, 132-134).

If Du Bois advanced the idea that both “individual and collective self-respect were prerequisites of black participation in American cultural and political life,” (Hansen 103) Jane Addams took a similar stance transferring Du Bois’ approach to society at large. She assumed that the cosmopolitan outlook that Bourne would call trans-nationalism, would make a symphony of different voices that could merge into a national tune. A metaphor later refined and popularized by Kallen (220; Hansen 110). If the alternative was between a society of communities or one made up of individuals, these authors tried to reconcile the two. In his writings, Dewey repeatedly remarked that the two were not necessarily oppositional and could be compromised. The fear of many individualists nowadays, as in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, is that by paying too much attention to communitarian needs and values, the unity of the nation-state may be at risk.

Although mainly limited to the new immigrants coming from Europe, these were the issues raised by Bourne and Kallen at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their analysis of American multicultural society owed much to contemporary thinkers. They took their analysis a step further by imagining a community of harmony and understanding in which different identities could live in a communal purpose that went beyond the interest of what Kallen defined the “natio.” This was a way of labeling nationalism by race or descent. African-Americans, Native Americans, Mexican-Americans and Asians remained outside the picture drawn by experts and scholars of European origin. However, in the first two groups, there were several intellectuals led by Du Bois and Carlos Moctezuma, who proposed a version of a pluralistic society that affected later reflections on such a sensitive issue as well. Most likely, the only weakness in their theories is that they referred

mainly to the problem of emancipation of their own ethnic group, although Du Bois's approach was definitely more cosmopolitan than Moctezuma's. A notable exception was Alain Locke who, in the early 1920s, extended the reach of African-American thought to the wider society, returning to the idea of the beloved community Bourne had wished for. The Native Americans represented an exception, since the issue at stake in their case was one of sovereignty, national recognition, as well as of language and cultural traits (but this aspect cannot be part of the present analysis).

In many ways, while immigrants may integrate individually, they do not necessarily as a community. They may present a degree of inclusion that enables them to participate to an extent in the economic and political life of the country, which does not mean they have been recognized socially or culturally. The issue actually is not one of integration, merging or melting into the body politic, but rather how the process of becoming American takes place. This does not, or should not, mean to do away with one's own traditions to turn into a simulacrum of an English speaking, anglo-acting, whitening individual, maybe even expected to convert to some Christian denomination. Politically and legally speaking this should not be an issue. By becoming a citizen, an immigrant acquires certain rights that, however, do not necessarily mean he/she has been accepted into the fabric of the country. From a cultural, social, and psychological point of view, the newly arrived is an "alien." Henry James labeled the alien as inconceivable in his *American Scene*, again at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, inconceivable because it was difficult or impossible to conceive of him/her as well as for the immigrant to have been conceived on American soil (Trachtenberg 101). Yet, Henry James was no nativist, but had an ambivalent approach to the pressures of a modern industrial society that put at risk the essence of "American Anglo-Saxondom" (Posnock 490).

Kallen had launched a battle in support of hyphenated Americans at a time when the Anglo-Saxon elites pushed for Americanization if not the return of the immigrants to their lands of origin. He pointed out the Anglo-Saxons as being hyphenated as well; they only had the fortune to be the first-comers. This did not give them a right to exclude late-comers. Moreover, according to Bourne, later immigrants had not just missed the Mayflower; when they did make the trip to America, they did so with the same sentiment that had inspired the Pilgrim Fathers:

The early colonists came over with motives no less colonial than the later. They did not come to be assimilated in an American melting pot. They did not come to adopt the culture of the American Indian. They had not the smallest intention of 'giving themselves without reservation' to the new country. They came to get freedom to live as they wanted to. They came to escape from the stifling air and chaos of the old world; they came to make their fortune in a new land. They invented no new social framework. Rather they brought over bodily the old ways to which they had been accustomed. (249-250)

Kallen and Bourne, as well as James and Dewey, went against a dominant thought heavily influenced by racial theories of exclusion such as social Darwinism and Eugenetics. Assimilationists, Americanizers and racists, had different formulae to include the immigrants that altogether excluded African-Americans and Native Americans, and in the end led to the demise of the cultural identities of the immigrants themselves, if not, as in the case of lynching, also to their physical disappearance. Cultural pluralism started also as a reaction to a new theory, or popular myth then in vogue, but well rooted in the "American cosmogony," that claimed the actual possibility of implementing the national motto: *e pluribus unum*. "Melting-pot" was the keyword at the beginning of the century. A melting-pot that, in amalgamating all the different national characters into one multicolored dough, ended up negating difference and community allegiance. The liberal credo of the day excluded difference; this created an essential problem to nation-states based on the principles of freedom and democracy: i.e. the extent to which the state should guarantee equal rights to all when some members of society are not equal by definition. This is still a relevant question in multicultural nation-states. Actually, many reclaim their difference, and the problem becomes how to reconcile difference with freedom and equal treatment. Americanization was the answer given by the government and many social scientists to these simple questions. As highlighted by Gary Gerstle, Theodore Roosevelt who was for an Americanized multicultural society, believed that the way to overcome racism, exclusion and discrimination was to go beyond them by assimilating all foreigners, those of "valuable stock," i.e. of European descent (53-55). The others were confined to the margin. Nationalism in the end had to take over pluralism; his idea of consent was rather forceful, it went decidedly against

Kallen's statement about the fact that although externally an immigrant could change almost anything, internally "... he cannot change his grandfather" (194). In his article "True Americanism" of 1894, Roosevelt declared:

It is not only necessary to Americanize the immigrants of foreign birth who settle among us, but it is even more necessary for those among us who are by birth and descent already Americans not to throw away our birthright, and, with incredible and contemptible folly, wander back to bow down before the alien gods whom our forefathers forsook.

His civic nationalism squared with racial nationalism in that it did not compromise between consent and descent. It canceled the latter to favor the former. In his view, the only possible descent was in the end from the Anglo-Saxon stock. By reconciling consent and descent in a different way, Kallen and Bourne "...challenged the very assumptions underpinning Americanization and the melting pot" (Akam 54). The two young scholars were reacting to several major factors at play in their times: mass-society and the trend toward uniformity of manners and language, a capitalist economy that took advantage of the illiteracy and little self-consciousness of many groups and individuals who made up the unskilled manpower of an ever expanding industry, and the war in Europe. The latter being a major concern for Bourne, was however present in Kallen's mind when he wrote his essay in *The Nation*. Actually, a few months earlier he had made statements in this sense in a brief essay entitled: "Nationality and the Hyphenated American."

The major achievement of Bourne and Kallen was to unmask the hypocrisy of a society that, in order to reinforce its class distinctions, underlined difference as a major cause of instability (how similar to some of today's social issues). Kallen first, and then Bourne, insisted instead on the potential of difference as a factor constituting the essence of the modern nation-state. Actually, Kallen went even further, and this is something other intellectuals have noted since the publication of his essay but have not highlighted sufficiently. He insisted on the distinction between the nation and the state, where the nation stands for a uniformity of blood and soil and the state is instead an assemblage of different nationalities. These, Bourne reiterated, should co-operate in order to make the nation-state function. The idea of nation had to change in the direction of a set of

shared values. The final goal being that of creating a nation-state that does not lay its foundation on inheritance and descent or the territorial origin of a people, but on consent and choice. A nation-state where individuals share a common patrimony that, as indicated by Bourne, lies in the future and uses the past as foundations on which to build. This is the novelty of their idea that still affects many students of multiculturalism. Arguing with Woodrow Wilson's denunciation of hyphenated Americans, considered not trustworthy because of their dual allegiance, Kallen claimed in his "Democracy vs. The Melting Pot": "But a hyphen attaches, in things of the spirit, also to the 'pure' English American. His cultural mastery tends to be retrospective rather than prospective. At the present time there is no dominant American mind" (217).

While the two authors made "dualism" a strength of the members of American society whom, by encountering one another, exchanged cultural information that led to a pluralistic society, detractors constructed it as the major problem of recognition, and therefore citizenship, of the different nationalities composing the United States. The problem raised by many racists of the day was not, as stated by Kallen, destabilization of American society or the future of democracy. "Hence what troubles Mr. Ross [Sociologist Edward A. Ross] and so many other Anglo-Saxon Americans," added the author, "is not really inequality; what troubles them is *difference*" (219). The effect of the melting pot according to Bourne was actually to obliterate and "bring to uniformity all the different cultural traits that make up America." Whether they were cancelled or assimilated, the end result was that different cultures were thus bound to disappear. He wrote in an essay entitled "The Jews and Trans-National America": "Both make in the long run for exactly that terrible unity of pride, chauvinism, and ambition that has furnished the popular fuel in the armed clash of nationalism in Europe"(125).

In those same years, urged as well by immigration and the war in Europe, another outstanding intellectual of that generation, Louis Brandeis, held that the very strength of the country rested in the composite amalgam of its people. "America, on the other hand, has always declared herself for equality of nationalities as well as for equality of individuals," declared Brandeis in a famous speech at Faneuil Hall entitled "True Americanism. "It recognizes racial equality as an essential of full human liberty and true



brotherhood, and that racial equality is the complement of democracy.” Moreover, claimed the soon to be Justice of the Supreme Court, Americans could reconcile nationalism with tolerance and mutual respect, thus differentiating it from the exclusive nationalism of Europe. Brandeis, unlike Kallen, stressed the community as much as the individual. If, in a way, his discourse may sound exceptionalist, his intention was rather cosmopolitan in a time when chauvinism had led Europe on the verge of disaster and mutual annihilation:

The new nationalism adopted by America proclaims that each race or people, like each individual, has the right and duty to develop, and that only through such differentiated development will high civilization be attained. Not until these principles of nationalism, like those of democracy, are generally accepted will liberty be fully attained and minorities be secure in their rights. Not until then can the foundation be laid for a lasting peace among the nations.

Like Bourne, Brandeis anticipated to an extent Wilson’s plan for a lasting peace. Progressive idealism was at work and often cut across social and economic ideologies.

Brandeis, as Dewey, reconciled to an extent individual choice with community needs. For individual choice to belong, it must remain central to the life of the democratic state. Only by leaving the initiative to the individual will can the “circle of the We,” as David Hollinger calls the identity group, be more inclusive. This in the end would reconcile descent and consent. The affiliation to a multitude of identities enriches the individual as well as the nation. If the nation instead is identified with one stock and is defined only by descent, which is however a construction of the dominant group in order to exclude others, the life of the state dries up. Cooperative living, said Bourne, is the only hope for the survival of the state: “This strength of cooperation, this feeling that all who are here may have a hand in the destiny of America, will make for a finer spirit of integration than any narrow ‘Americanism’ or forced chauvinism” (Bourne 260). Similar was Dewey’s democratic ideal rooted in what he defined as “associated living” and “associated learning” (Hansen 79). By entangling experiences and identities, the country could avoid culture wars within its national borders. Dual or multiple identities would thus enrich the life of the nation. Historian Jonathan Hansen holds

that Dewey's approach to democratic citizenship contrasted with three forms of citizenship then in vogue:

a 'republican' ideal rooted in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a 'pluralist' ideal articulated at the turn of the twentieth century by, among others, Horace Kallen, and an 'organic' tradition derived from German romanticism. Both republican and pluralist theorists prized autonomy, self-discipline, flexibility, and compromise, but they applied these virtues toward different political ends. (Hansen 68)

This is where Kallen's and Bourne's approaches differed. While the former relied mainly on community and to an extent on individual will and choice, the latter concentrated on cooperative experience. For this reason, he considered the dual identity of ethnic groups an instrument for the achievement of peaceful, composite, and cooperative living. Bourne's approach was more cosmopolitan and international. Only by recognizing the right of each community to preserve and express itself through its traditions, could the state absorb progressively a multitude of different cultures capable of maintaining their identities and yet participate in the life of the nation-state. He and Kallen valued the Jewish experience as an important example of this possibility. In an essay for *The Menorah Journal* by the title "The Jews and Trans-National America," Bourne considered it a starting point of that "international citizenship to which, if our words mean anything, we aspire" (128).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Social Darwinism began adjusting its tenets, especially under the influence of Stanley Hall, Clark University distinguished psychologist, who abandoned the more individualistic positions to embrace a nationalist and racist interpretation that claimed the inevitable success of the Anglo-Saxon stock over others, because of its superiority (Hofstadter 202). In 1916, Madison Grant, sociologist and racial theorist, published what is considered the race manifesto of the modern United States: *The Passing of the Great Race*. Grant's decision to write this book came, as he said, from the fear of the immigrants' invasion that was changing the real character of the American people. The United States was risking the same fate that befell Europe. Its stock, he held, was deteriorating because of the negative influence of the "primitive people" whom he identified with the Alpine and Mediterranean stock (177). Edward Ross, the author confuted by Kallen, was a eugenicist and a progressive sociologist who feared the corrupting

influence of the new immigrants. In 1900, he was forced from Stanford because of his opposition to Chinese labor. Throughout the country many professors sympathized with him, and a national debate on free expression ensued. The theories on cultural pluralism were considered dangerous by many an intellectual in the first half of the century. Although several scholars and artists supported Kallen and Bourne, as well as DuBois and later Alain Locke, mainstream thinkers in the first three decades of the century discounted pluralistic theory as groundless and dangerous.

Bourne and Kallen both warned their fellow Americans about the risk of projecting yet again the culture wars of Europe on American national culture. At the time, the warning had its good reasons. The war in Europe was another ghost haunting the minds of many Americans. As already mentioned, it was certainly one of the springs that pushed the two authors, and Bourne especially, to write their essays on the issue of a multicultural society (Clayton 197-198). Actually, Bourne remained a pacifist also when Wilson decided to go to war against the central empires. Although the nationalistic drive of preparedness hit the United States in 1917, the previous years of war in Europe raised arguments about the consequences of a chauvinistic nationalism, something Bourne was vigilant about. By 1913, writes Olaf Hansen, Bourne “had already complained about American loyalty to Anglo-Saxon civilization, a loyalty which he considered a ‘great mistake’” (55). In Europe, obtuse nationalism was provoking scars hard to heal. Therefore, Bourne suggested that the United States stay out of war, in order to keep true to what Herbert Croly defined in 1909 the *Promise of American Life*. Almost warning Wilson even before he decided to enter the war, Bourne, in “Trans-National America,” made clear his idea about an international missionary sentiment that could cause the U.S. more damages than the benefits it would bring to Europe: “A trans-nationality of all the nations, it is spiritually impossible for her to pass into the orbit of any one” (263). The inevitable consequence of emulating European countries and their chauvinistic sentiments was self-destruction: “It will be folly to hurry herself into a premature and sentimental nationalism, or to emulate Europe and play fast and loose with the forces that drag into war” (263). What the country was actually bound to become was a nation of nations, thus steering clear of any European racist nationalism. Kallen wrote: “For in effect we are in the process of becoming a true federal state, such a

state as men hope for as the outcome of the European war, a great republic consisting of a federation or commonwealth of nationalities” (219). The vision of Kallen and Bourne anticipated in a sense the Wilsonian international ideal, but applied it within the country. It was too early to make such an “American thought” into an international promise.

The idea of an international nation developed by Bourne broke the conventions of the time and identified nationalism based on descent and racial appurtenance, then triumphant, as the cause of the European war, as much as the racism and nativism rampant in the United States. The young New York intellectual acknowledged the contribution made by Jewish intellectuals and Zionism to the idea of dual citizenship and trans-nationalism, something many authors have stressed about Kallen’s approach, but he took it a step further by internationalizing values that could and should not be confined to one nationality. Cultural and ethnic identity should cross the boundary of self-consciousness and self-reference to interact with the outer world. This was expected as much from the new immigrant groups as it was of the Anglo-Saxons.

The elaboration of pluralism used by Kallen, Brandeis, and Bourne, was to become an influential notion among multiculturalists in the 1980s and 90s (Hollinger 101-102). The idea that a segmented society made up of different communities could become a national whole by respecting as much collective needs as individual rights influenced later thinkers on democracy and difference. Although John Higham underlined the waning of Cultural Pluralism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its basic assumptions still hold today. His assertion regarding an “underlying consensus about basic values” that pluralists “took for granted and later tried to do without,” was in a way a consequence of the delusions of the 1970s and 80s (231-232). The pluralist idea anticipated the possibility of compromising between one’s own identity and the demands of a democratic state. Cultural pluralism was a product of its time and could not predict the cultural fragmentation of the late twentieth century that seemed to imperil the basic foundations of a multi-ethnic society. Yet, these were the very same fears of the racial nationalists of the early century.

The debate on multiculturalism in the United States and in the Western world today has proposed different hypotheses on possible ways of dealing with the issues of individual liberty and choice on the one hand, and communitarian identity and belonging on the other. In recognizing the

individual right to belong to the body of the nation, the risk is negating identification with the community of origin, be it ethnic, religious, linguistic or else, to which the individual owes his/her own allegiance. From Michael Walzer to Cornel West and bell hooks in the United States, to the Canadian multiculturalists Michael Ignatieff and Charles Taylor, the main question asked has been: to what extent does the democratic nation-state enable individuals, with all their cultural background and identity, to participate in the democratic process and share the advantages of a free country? The answers are, of course, different, depending on what one privileges: the individual or the community; tradition or change; democracy or pluralism. Democracy should extend its benefits to all people irrespective of their affiliations, and at the same time value the identities of the communities they belong to. But Kallen claimed that democracy should “apply to groups as well as to individuals, guaranteeing groups the right to exist” (Vaughan 130). Actually Stephen Whitfield, in his introduction to Kallen’s *Culture and Democracy*, contends along with Lawrence Fuchs, that Kallen began considering the “centrality of the voluntary nature of ethnic-Americanism” only after Dewey’s criticism of his federation of cultures (xxix). It is true that Kallen focused mainly on community identity, but this could also be a choice to better counteract the assimilationists.

From communitarians to individualists, today’s approaches tackle the dilemma of respecting the universality of individual freedom and initiative, and civil and political rights, while at the same time acknowledging difference. Michael Walzer’s hyphenated American relates to the idea of tolerance, but risks assuming a unilateral perspective: that of a white adult male whom, although not necessarily protestant or Anglo-Saxon, adopts as his point of view what is mythically considered the root of American identity. Moreover, such an approach risks bringing the issue back to the dualism from which the pluralist thought had first sprung.

If not ready to create a “federation of cultures,” the United States of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century was at least capable of accepting a reality that has accompanied the history of the nation since its birth: citizens can be “good Americans” while maintaining a cultural and social identity shared with their group of affiliation. Although the solution to the multicultural riddle is far from being expounded, attempts to find a key continue to be made

mainly by social scientists and historians. Noteworthy are the achievements of Cornel West and David Hollinger in the 1990s (themselves “hyphenated Americans”) who take race and ethnicity as a starting point of their analyses to move on to what Hollinger defines as a “postethnic” society. The issue of ethnicity was definitely a central one at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when most of the major themes still dealt with today were raised. In recognizing and accepting difference lies the overcoming of the barrier of ethnic identity. Scholars of the 1980s and 1990s have identified the issue as a central one for the redefinition of oneself and one’s own identity within his/her community and within the nation at large. This is what Bourne considered an important goal of the American experience:

What we have achieved has been rather a cosmopolitan federation of national colonies, of foreign cultures, from whom the sting of devastating competition has been removed. America is already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogeneous peoples under the sun. (260)

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