

Race, Class, and the New Ethnicity

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Recent behavior of working-class Americans, sometimes called "new ethnics," has deeply shocked and bewildered many acute commentators. The supposed return to militant self-identification has led one radical, Pete Hamill, to claim that "the working-class white man is actually in revolt against taxes, joyless work, the double standards and short memories of professional politicians, hypocrisy and what he considers the debasement of the American dream."

The same display of muscular working-class behavior has led Herbert Hill, an equally radical critic, to assert that "the hard-hat labor unionists, and they are by no means limited to the building trades, have joined with the military élite and their political spokesmen. This suggests the great danger of the rise of a proto-fascist workers' movement in the United States. Whatever social and cultural forces may be invoked to explain this development, it is already manifesting itself in a variety of ways. The racist hard-hats from many unions are the potential street fighters of American fascism."

From the foregoing statements it is difficult to surmise who is in greater need of depolarization, the working class or its intellectual respondents. Whatever actual evidence we have is considerably more bland and nondescript than either projections for an ethnic-based fascism or for an ethnic-based new politics. At the level of attitudes several generalizations can be made. *First*, working-class ethnics for the most part are neither more nor less prejudiced against the black community than the wealthier classes. *Second*, classical aspirations of upward mobility and geographical relocation along class rather than ethnic lines still permeate working-class ambitions. *Third*, traditional class allegiances to the party

system remain essentially as fluid or as fixed as they have been for other classes. *Fourth*, it has been questioned whether feelings of alienation and anomie have affected the working class any more than other social sectors. The working class continues to favor government welfare and income maintenance programs, especially those affecting them in particular.

In a recent prestigious colloquium it was asserted that even at this late date there remains no clear definition of the working class; no statement, even at a statistical level, of any special economic squeeze against the working class; and finally, there remains the highest doubt that a problem specific to blue-collar workers or to white ethnics as such exists. Problems seem universal, affecting blue-collar and white-collar people alike, affecting ethnics and blacks alike, and affecting different nationalities and religious groups alike. In short, economic problems are endemic to the United States of America, and the ethnic aspects of these problems are simply expressions of such universal class dilemmas.

Whether or not the foregoing summation is complete, the rise of a new literature on blue-collar ethnics does herald something novel in the social sciences. At the least, earlier analyses based on the end of class interests, class ideologies, and class politics have receded to the point of either a memory or a whisper, only to be replaced by a verbal celebration of ethnic interests, ethnic ideologies, and ethnic politics. See inserts for some of these studies.

Any attempt to define ethnicity raises at least three sociological problems: (1) Who is an ethnic? (2) How can ethnicity be distinguished from other social variables and character traits? and (3) What can ethnicity predict, what are its behavioral consequences? Before coming to terms with the current ideological and political uses of ethnicity it may be worthwhile to describe the ideological sources of the current celebration of ethnicity.

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The general characterization of ethnicity in the social science literature can be summarized under seven headings.

1. It is frequently claimed that ethnics are neither very rich nor very poor, nor part of either the ruling class or the under class. Rather, they are often identified with either the blue-collar working class or the lower middle class.

2. The current literature presents highly selective idiosyncratic definitions of ethnicity. Jews and Japanese are often excluded by intellectual fiat from the ethnic category on the basis of their middle or upper-middle-class position and on the basis of their upward mobility through education; at other times they are included as a political category of an "anti-WASP" sort.

3. Ethnicity *within* lower-class groups or racial groups such as blacks seems to be excluded from discussion. Thus, for example, distinctions and differences between East African blacks and Jamaican blacks are very rarely spoken of by those defining or employing the "ethnicity."

4. There is a strong tendency to describe ethnics in terms of whites living in the urban complex or in the inner city, in contrast to whites living in suburban or nonurban regions.

5. A distinction is often made between nativists and ethnics, that is, between people who have Protestant and English-speaking backgrounds and those with Catholic and non-English-speaking backgrounds, although in some cases (for instance, the Irish) ethnics may be identified solely on the basis of religion.

6. Ethnics are said to have in common a vocational orientation toward education, in contrast to a liberal arts or humanities orientation. They tend to be non-academic, anti-intellectual, and highly pragmatic. Interestingly, although blacks are perhaps the best illustrations of a vocationally oriented subculture, they are not generally categorized as ethnics.

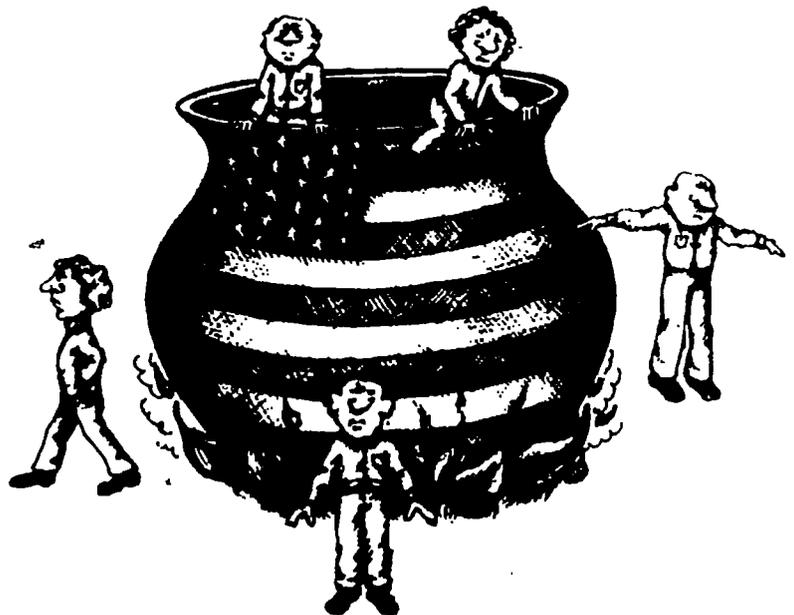
7. Ethnics are usually said to possess characteristics and attitudes identified with those on the political Right: strong patriotic fervor, religious fundamentalism, authoritarian family patterns, and so forth. Indeed, characterizations of ethnicity and conservatism show such a profound overlap that the only difference would appear to be the currently positive attitude toward such behavior on the part of learned observers.

Determining who is an ethnic has more to do with sentiment than with science. The concept defines a new, positive attitude toward those who fit in the model. One now hears "them" spoken of as middle class, lower middle class, or working class in contrast to lower class. They are said to be part of a great new wave of populism: the struggle against opulence on one hand and welfare on the other. As such, the concept of ethnicity claims a political middle ground. It does not celebrate a national con-

sensus, nor does it accept the concept of a class struggle. Its ideologists perceive of ethnics as an interest group rather than a social class. In this sense there is a kinship between classical liberalism and the ideology of ethnicity. It promotes the theme of cultural pluralism and cultural difference rather than social change or social action. Perhaps this explains why dedicated civil libertarians have moved their attentions and affections from the black under class to the white ethnic class (for example, Robert Coles, Michael Novak, Thomas J. Cottle, and Milton Friedman).

One of the more customary ploys in refocusing attention away from blacks and toward ethnics is to point to quantitative parity. The new ethnics take note of the fact that there are nearly as many Americans of Italian and Irish extraction as there are of African extraction. The supreme difficulty in this sort of quantitative exercise is the absence of qualitative common sense: The blacks have a unique and special history in America that provides them with a solidarity and a definition quite apart from other Americans, whereas the Italians and Irish, and other ethnic groupings as well, have a far weaker sense of delineation and definition. The blacks (and this they share uniquely with the Jews) represent a group apart; the new ethnics represent groups which would like the future payoffs, but not the historic penalties, of becoming a group apart.

The rise of ethnicity as a separate factor reflects the existence of what has been called a crosscutting culture in America that reduces any sense of common identity among those who comprise the eighty million members of the working class. A number of observers have discussed the



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persistence of ethnic identity from this vantage point. As John Howard notes: "Michael Parenti has observed that in a single weekend in New York separate dances for persons of Hungarian, Irish, Italian, German and Polish extractions are advertised in the neighborhood newspapers and the foreign-language press. Herbert Gans and Gerald Suttles have discussed the persistence of a tightly knit network of relationships among Italians living in Boston and in Chicago. Occupationally, the \$5,000 to \$10,000 category embraces secretaries and assembly line workers, senior clerks and cab drivers. Geographically, workers spread out over the south with its racially dominated politics, the midwest where fear of communism is a serious sentiment, and the northeast where problems of traffic congestion and state financial support for parochial schools excite political passions."

Ethnicity refers to a cluster of cultural factors that define the person beyond or apart from the racial or class connections of that person. It defines the binding impact of linguistic origins, geographic backgrounds, cultural and culinary tastes, and religious homogeneity. In this sense the concept of ethnicity is not only distinguished from class but in a certain respect must be considered its operational counterpart. It provides the cultural and theological linkages that cut through class lines and form new sources of tension and definition of inclusionary-exclusionary relationships in an American society grown weary of class perspectives on social reality.

In part, the renewed emphasis upon ethnicity signifies the decline of an achievement orientation and the return to an ascriptive vision. Generational success can no longer be measured in terms of job performance or career satisfaction. Therefore, new definitions of group membership are sought in order to generate pride. These often take the form of a celebration of ethnic origins and a feeling that such origins somehow are more significant to group cohesion than is class.

The notion of ethnicity, like other barometers of disaffection, is indicative of problems in self-definition. Americans have long been known to have weak class identification. Most studies have shown that class identification is weak because class conflict is thought foreign to American society; everyone claims to be of the middle class. As a result, class as a source of status distinction is strong, but as a source of economic mobilization it is weak. In a sense the concept of ethnicity closely emulates the concept of race; for race, unlike class, is based upon ascription rather than achievement. But ethnicity defines a community of people having language, religion, and race in common, but not necessarily a commonality of tastes. For example, Poles and Italians share religious similarities, but they are not likely to share ethnic identities. The Church has long recognized ethnicity on the basis of linguistic and national origin

rather than simply the universal ministerial claims of Catholicism.

The problem with trying to predict how ethnic groups will act is the difficulty of establishing whether there are common political demands or even common economic conditions that all national and linguistic minorities face. Aside from the fact that a bare majority of ethnics participate in Democratic Party politics, there is little evidence that ethnics do in fact share common political goals. There seem to be greater gaps between first- and second-generation Irish and Poles than between Irish and Poles of the same generation. Hence the actual power of ethnicity as an explanatory variable must be carefully evaluated and screened.

In large measure the new ethnicity reflects rather than shapes the new politics. Disillusionment with the American system and its inability to preserve a universal series of goals has led to a reemergence of community-centered parochial and particularistic doctrines. Indeed, the positive response of the American nation to the historical injustices heaped upon the black people has made it seem that ethnics could achieve the same results by using a similar model of social protest.

There has been a notable shift of attitudes at the ideological level. What once appeared to be a minority problem with its attendant drives toward integration into the American mainstream has now become an ethnic problem with its attendant drives toward self-determination apart from the American mainstream. To be more precise, there has been an erosion of that mainstream. With the existence of 20 to 30 million first- and second-generation Italian-Americans, 9 to 19 million Spanish-speaking Americans, some 13 million Irish-Americans (these often overlapping with 48 million Catholics), who in turn share a country with 8 million Jews and 23 million blacks, the notion of majority status for white Protestant America has been seriously eroded. The notion of the WASP serves to identify a dominant economic group but no longer a political or cultural group uniquely gifted or uniquely destined to rule. Thus ethnicity has served to express a genuine plurality of interests, without necessarily effecting a revolution in lifestyles or attitudes. Equality increasingly becomes the right to be different and to express such differences in language, customs, and habits rather than to share a position in the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethos which dominated the United States up to and through the end of World War II and the cold war period.

Ethnicity is also an expression of the coming into being of new nations throughout the Third World—African nations, Asian nations, Latin American socialist states, Israel as a Jewish homeland, the reemergence of Irish nationalism. The international trend toward diversified power bases has had domestic repercussions on minority standing in the

United States. The external reinforcement of internal minorities has changed the self-image of these internal minorities. The new ethnics are (in part at least) the old minorities in an era of postcolonialism, in an era when capitalism is on the defensive as a cultural ideal if not also as an economic reality. Thus, whether ethnicity takes revolutionary or reactionary forms internally, its rise to conceptual and ideological preeminence is clearly a function of the breakup of the old order in which Anglo-American dominance went uncontested.

The concept of ethnicity is not only an attempt to simulate the strategy of the blacks for gaining equality through struggle, it is also patterned after the main tactic of the Jews for gaining equality through education. Whether such simulation or imitation will be successful depends on whether ethnicity is an overriding concept or simply a word covering differences of a profound sort between linguistic groups and religious groups. The fact of being Irish may be of binding value, but the fact of being Protestant Irish or Catholic Irish certainly would take precedence over the ethnic unity. Similarly, being a Ukrainian may be a binding value as long as Ukrainians are defined exclusively in nonreligious terms. For the Ukrainian Jews certainly do not participate in the same ethnic goals, despite a shared geographic and linguistic background. Hence, the concept of ethnicity may explain little in the way of behavior unless it can be demonstrated that it forms the basis of social solidarity and political action and is not simply a residual category.

All models are subject to particular limitations. The call for "Ethnic Power," modeled as it is upon the past decade of civil rights struggles, provides a perfect illustration of this fact; it involves a blurring of the special circumstances of blacks in the United States. It would not be entirely amiss to recall that the black presence in the United States was largely involuntary, whereas the ethnic minority presence was largely voluntary. Moreover, the black experience in America was linked to the plantation as a total institution and connected to their degradation as a people; white immigration (ethnic immigration) involved participation in the building of America and particularly in the building of its industrial life. Thus, while models for ethnic separatism are premised on the black movement, at the same time they display little awareness of the different circumstances of black participation in American affairs throughout the last hundred years.

Few doubt that a latent function of current appeals to a new ethnicity are directly related to the Great White Hope, to the theme of ethnics preventing blacks from becoming the major power bloc in urban America. As such, ethnicity becomes not just a response to present superordinate traits of the

dominant American sectors. Ethnicity becomes a euphemism for the fight against crime in the streets and for the fight to maintain a white foothold in the major urban centers. Support for the claims of ethnicity must also be viewed as a reaction to the flight of huge sectors of the middle class to suburban America, thus leaving the white working-class ethnics to absorb the full impact of black militants and black organizations in the American cities.

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Herbert Hill, "Racism and Organized Labor," *New School Bulletin* (February 8, 1971).

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The celebration of ethnicity is not so much a recognition of the special contribution of Europeans to America as it is the manufacturing of a new conservatism. Ethnicity gives expression to an organized group of white working-class Americans dedicated to the maintenance of their comparative class positions. As such, ethnicity becomes yet another hurdle for black Americans to jump in order to gain equity in this society. An overt struggle between whites and blacks is intellectually unpalatable; hence ethnicity emerges to defuse racial tension by shifting the struggle to the loftier plane of downtrodden blacks and denigrated ethnics.

At an entirely different level the celebration of

ethnicity has brought about strange new alliances or the potential for new coalitions. Most important in this connection has been the renewed effort in the Jewish community to reach an accommodation with ethnic leadership. The informal pact between the Jewish Defense League and the Italian-American Club simply highlights tendencies in current ethnic politics to accept the current American value system and to reject claims of national or racial separation.

After years of struggle in support of black egalitarianism and in particular black institutions of higher learning, Jews are now being criticized as never before by their black colleagues. Whatever the roots of black nationalism, its first contact is with the Jew as landlord, shopkeeper, and realtor. Whether the turn of the Jewish community to ethnics will resolve their problems with blacks is difficult to ascertain. In fact, what is being jeopardized is the special philanthropic relationship which has existed throughout the twentieth century between the black and Jewish communities and which perhaps is epitomized by such established black leaders as the late Martin Luther King and such Jewish leaders as the deceased Rabbi Stephen Wise. The middle-class character of the alliance between blacks and Jews has long been understood. Its focus on education as the main source of upward mobility ruled out a priori the possibility of revolution. And as young blacks move more conscientiously toward revolutionary goals and as an older generation of Jews move with equal rapidity toward reformist goals, the historic alliance between these two peoples becomes seriously jeopardized.

Various organizational efforts to sensitize and depolarize, although well intentioned and intellectually sincere, start from a fundamentally erroneous premise; namely, that the key polarity is presently between black America and ethnic America. Such a formulation does permit various organizations, especially Jewish middle-class organizations, to perform their historic role of honest broker and friend at both courts. However, the likelihood is that, despite the differences between Poles and blacks in cities like Detroit or Gary, their problems arise from common sources—a lack of steady jobs, poor upgrading procedures, lack of meaningful retraining programs, and a breakdown of urban development—all of which should (if the proper conclusions are drawn) create the basis for class solidarity rather than simple ethnic separation along racial or religious lines.

It can be understood why some organizational leaders of the Jewish community would seek rapprochement with ethnic groups. However, since the ethnics themselves often define the Jews as outside ethnicity, and since the class formations that separate ethnic America from Jewish America continue unabated, the possibility of alliance seems remote and, when executed, tenuous. It may represent a tactical side bet in a specific community where Jewish-ethnic

interaction is high, but little else. Again, the cross-cutting characteristics of race, class, and ethnicity tend to make nonpolitical coalitions exceptionally difficult to maintain over any period of time.

The special tactical relationships between blacks, Jews, and ethnics is really the crux of the future of the working class in the United States. Since the United States has become something of a three-track nation, the blacks are identified as being either on the government payroll or on the government dole. The Jews are identified as being entrepreneurial kingpins in America. The ethnics are seen, or perceive themselves, as the true heirs of the working-class spirit. In a sense the tendency of Communist parties throughout the world to accept, if not adopt, outright, anti-Semitic postures is a very real response to its working-class and black constituencies, which see Jews very much as the exploiters rather than exploited, and likewise see them as elements unwilling to participate in the American way of life by virtue of their alleged dual allegiance to Israel.

It is interesting, however, that even the Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has recognized that blacks subconsciously apply a higher standard in the expectations of Jewish attitudes than of any other group and hence become deeply disturbed when Jewish behavior is like that of other whites. Similarly, it is evident that Jewish response to manifestations of black anti-Semitism are often in terms of the European holocaust rather than the American ghetto experience. Black-Jewish competition has been defused by leading black and Jewish organizations, notably by religious leaders. Black Christians and more liberal Jewish organizations have assumed leadership in overcoming the intense racial-religious dichotomies of the past decade. To the extent they succeed, the tactic of accommodating the new ethnicity will lose its impulse. The more traditional alignments of blacks and Jews on a liberal axis will confront the white ethnic on a conservative axis.

Ethnicity is at least as much a tactic as a definition. The new ethnicity is a statement of relatively deprived sectors seeking economic relief through political appeals. Traditionally, such relief was found through the trade union movement. However, the growing bureaucratization of trade unions has signified a parallel decline of faith in class warfare. To seek relief from factory owners or managers has come to seem less efficient than appeals or, if necessary, threats leveled directly at the federal government.

The idea of a direct bargaining process between an outside group and the federal administration is not new. The essential tactic of black organizational life, certainly since the New Deal, and intensified

after World War II, was precisely a direct negotiation with the political system, in this manner circumventing the economic subsystem. The efficacy of this newer political model is attested to by health and welfare legislation, civil rights rulings, Supreme Court decisions on educational opportunity, and Presidential commissions on minority rights. Negotiation between mass outsider groups and state officialdom achieved more results than the previous search for economic equality through class struggle. This shift from economic to political realms has come to be shared by ethnic representatives, by those who seek to obtain from the government for Americans of Polish, Italian, or Irish extraction similar rights to those achieved by the black leadership.

The dilemma of this approach arises not so much in the model. Indeed, to extract promises and seek restitution from federal agencies does seem more promising than to achieve wage benefits from industry. Rather, the dilemma resides one step further back in time: in the different histories of the black people and of the ethnic groups who seek to emulate this racial style within American politics. Even the most ardent defenders of the new ethnicity admit to substantial differences between race and ethnicity on this score. As Michael Novak writes:

The new ethnicity does *not* entail: (a) speaking a foreign language; (b) living in a subculture; (c) living in a "tight-knit" ethnic neighborhood; (d) belonging to fraternal organizations; (e) responding to "ethnic" appeals; (f) exalting one's own nationality or culture, narrowly construed. Neither does it entail a university education or the reading of writers on the new ethnicity. Rather, the new ethnicity entails: first, a growing sense of discomfort with the sense of identity one is supposed to have—universalist, "melted," "like everyone else"; then a growing appreciation for the potential wisdom of one's own gut reactions (especially on moral matters) and their historical roots; a growing self-confidence and social power; a sense of being discriminated against, condescended to, or carelessly misapprehended; a growing disaffection regarding those to whom one had always been taught to defer; and a sense of injustice regarding the response of liberal spokesmen to conflicts between various ethnic groups, especially between "legitimate" minorities and "illegitimate" ones. There is, in a word, an inner conflict between one's felt personal power and one's ascribed public power: a sense of outraged truth, justice, and equity.

The new ethnicity is thus a subjective matter of discomfort, dissatisfaction, and disaffection. It is not a question of oppression or subjugation. As a result, it is hard to avoid the conclusion arrived at by Gunnar Myrdal, that the new ethnicity is not a popu-

list movement but an élitist demand by a rootless third-generation intelligentsia.

In addition to a missing urge to reach the masses for whom they pretend to speak, the writers on historical identity rather systematically avoid the problem of poverty and all that is related to it. To this also belong the limited horizons, the lack of a rational perception of themselves and the nation, and a reluctance to organize with other groups having the same interests to press their demands through the means freely provided by a democratic America. It is poverty and all this, not the lack of historical identity, that holds American ethnics down. At the same time, it permits the formation of policies that run counter to the American dream of a free and democratic society that creates happiness for all its people, from wherever they have come.

The "enemy" the ethnic intellectuals commonly put up as a target—i.e., those people in America who believe in the perfection of the melting pot—is a straw man. For several decades I have been closely following events in this country, and I have seldom met any fairly well-educated American who subscribed to the melting pot with the naïveté customarily attributed to those who supposedly held that idea.

That America is a pluralistic society where people with different cultural backgrounds have to live together and mold a nation is an obvious fact. And that this creates problems and difficulties is also obvious. But America in general has shown great capacity to absorb cultural patterns from diverse sources.

This set of demands made by "voluntary ethnics" may very well not be representative of the wishes or desires of Americans of Polish, Italian, Irish, or other European extractions. Myrdal's summary of the distinction between problems of identity and problems of poverty indicates the essentially middle-class psychologism underlying at least one part of the new ethnicity.

In its most current and sophisticated form the analysis of ethnicity is made in terms of the migration, absorption, and identification of new groups. In its celebrationist form it is said that America has been uniquely able to incorporate all new groups into its social life and political experience. The current charge is that such integration and incorporation is largely chimeric in nature. The evidence for this is that the culture costs of immigration, no less than the class exploitation of ethnic groups, have been vastly understated.

The weighting of the ethnicity factor with respect to race, religion, and class remains an issue not only in terms of the identification

that people have with ethnicity but also its galvanizing impact. We have first the empirical question of the importance of ethnicity and then, second, the strategic question of the ability of ethnicity to generate political action. Implicit in a great deal of literature on ethnicity is an automatic assumption that ethnicity and working-class membership are axiomatic, while the blacks are identified as lower class, or outside the system of the working class. In a sense sociologists have exaggerated the idea of a lower-class culture. More to the point, there has been a profound misreading of the actual distribution of the blacks in American society, for if they have a distinctive culture, they nonetheless form an essential human core in the U.S. labor force, particularly in service industries, government work, and heavy-duty labor. They represent between 15 to 16 per cent of the labor force, in contrast to 11 per cent of the population as a whole. They are becoming unionized at a more rapid rate than their white ethnic colleagues. They also are a crucial factor in assembly-line activities such as steel and auto. What sets them apart is not that they are low class while the white ethnics are working class, but that the bulk of black labor (because of its historical marginality and non-technological characteristics) remains nonunionized, while a larger percentage of white ethnic labor (also deriving from historical sources such as immigrant syndicalist backgrounds and specialized craft forms of labor) is, and has been for some time, largely unionized. Accentuating the gap between lower-class black culture and working-class white ethnicity is a profoundly conservative reading of actualities, one that disguises the acute responsibilities of an American labor force sharply divided between the one-fourth which is highly organized, in contrast to the three-fourths which are poorly organized, if organized at all.

What becomes evident is the strategic nature of the concept of ethnicity. The assumption is that there is a lockstep arrangement between ethnic identification, followed by political confrontation, which in turn will presumably create the basis for ethnic and racial harmony. The notion of collective self-interest or group self-interest, so important in the development of the black civil rights movement, thus becomes the model for ethnic self-improvement. A dilemma exists nonetheless, since it might well be that distinctions and differences between Catholics and Protestants or, for that matter, between ethnic enclaves within Catholicism will exert far more influence than the simple divisions required to make ethnicity a successful strategy and response to racial identity.

Ultimate class identities can readily become blurred by the immediate ethnic pluralities. The rhetoric of racial and ethnic antagonism may be heightened rather than lessened by the assumption that separate organizational forms are now required

for both black and ethnic groupings. To define tensions between ethnics and blacks without clearly demarcating the similarity of their class interests, which might also involve an identity of class hostilities, serves to exacerbate rather than eliminate tensions. It is to assume that specialized interest groups and momentary tactical considerations must always prevail over long-run tendencies and trends in the class composition of American society.

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The new world of ethnicity is filled with premises and strategies based upon models largely derived from other groups. The selective and subjective method of defining membership in an ethnic group permits the concept to be employed in any number of political contexts. It might well be that however flawed the concept of ethnicity may be at the theoretical level, it can nonetheless serve as a rallying cry for those groups who are dismayed and disturbed by the breakup of ethnic communities in American society. The Jews, in particular, are castigated for being the first to abandon the urban ship in favor of suburbia. But why ethnicity must, perforce, take an urban rather than a suburban form is rarely examined, much less critically dealt with.

Patterns of disaffiliation have found expression throughout all sectors of American society. Those who identify with the past, like those who trust only in the future, have similar problems with the present system of affluence; but quite clearly they have posed different solutions. It is plain that forms of social change will be scarcely less painful in the United States than they have been elsewhere. Such forms involve coalitions and consolidations of a type that may, in the long run, lead to racial harmony and class unity. However, the more likely immediate outcome will be a forging of ethnic sensitivity that will tend to minimize and mitigate against such efforts at unification and national integration. In addition to class and race, ethnicity must now be seen as a measure of disintegration in the American sociopolitical system. Indeed, however weak this variable might be, the fact that it has left the sociology texts for the neighborhoods is indicative of the tragic ruptures in a nation unable to overcome the collapse of federalism at home and the shrinkage of imperialism abroad.

Ethnicity is in sum and substance a surrogate concept, an expression of disintegration and deterioration of the national economic system and national social priorities. Like other notions of a particularistic nature, its importance derives more from who are excluded than who are included. It is a response to a collective anomie, an era in which the halcyon days of confident national priorities and arrogant international goals have become remote. Representative government has turned unrepresentative. Regulatory mechanisms have turned oppressive and bureaucratic. Large factory management and large factory unionism have joined forces to present the ordinary laborer with an unresponsive structure. The drive for economic rationalization has led to the multinational corporation and international cartelization at an accelerated rate. This conglomerate push has underscored the economic impotence of the ordinary person; and the tendency toward subsystemic approaches is reflected in the turn toward ethnicity.

The revival of ethnicity as a working-class value is paralleled by the middle-class return to race, sex, property, and other definitions for surmounting the vacuity and vapidness of postindustrial capitalist life. The weakness of the success ethic and the achievement orientation is revealed in middle-class youths' emphasis on rurality, fundamentalism, psychologism, and other forms of the *Gemeinschaft* community of fate that presumably was left behind with the Old World and its feudal relationships. Those groups identified with the blueing of America (*pace* Peter and Brigitte Berger) are no more content with the progress of this nation than are those who are part of the greening of America (*pace* Charles Reich).

That expressions of discontent should take different forms in different classes is certainly not without precedent, but what is surprising is the uniformity of the demand to get beyond the present malaise, the widespread resentment that makes clear that the old sociological consensus and the old political checks and balances are no longer effective mechanisms against disaffection of large portions of American society.

If ethnicity is a surrogate concept, it is nonetheless necessary to make plain what it is a surrogate on behalf of. Politically it represents a demand for larger participation in the federal bureaucracy; economically it is a demand for higher rewards for physical "hand" labor, at the expense of mental "head" labor; and culturally it is a statement of the rights of groups to their distinctive lifestyles. Beyond that, however, are the historical dimensions. The return to ethnicity, insofar as it is more than an intellectual pipe dream, is also a return to community: a pristine era in American life, before the melting-pot ideology boiled out the impurities of the immigrant generation with a weird mixture of external pressure and internalized guilt.

The return to ethnicity is more than a restatement of ascribed values; it harkens back to a period in which family allegiances, patriarchal authority, foreign languages, and the meaning of work itself had a certain priority over occupational and monetary achievement. At this point there can be no question that the prime targets are the blacks, who have employed the welfare model in order to gain a measure of influence and even self-respect, and the Jews, especially those of the second and third generations, who have employed the educational model to create the basis for rapid upward mobility. The problem is that the new ethnics have a hard time thoroughly identifying with the former model, and an equally hard time gaining access through the latter model. Tragically enough, it lacks a model of its own.

Ethnicity is a final formula for linking people and classes who would otherwise tend to be more divided than united by matters of religion, country of origin, and linguistic affiliation. Whether in fact ethnicity can, in an operational sense, prove to be as potent a factor as class or race seems somehow to be less important than the fact that the American social science community has moved beyond its old formulas of class, status, and power to a newer formulation of class, race, and ethnicity—in which questions of status and power become intervening variables in the larger matrix of primary human associations. The rise of ethnicity as a basic concern and a root concept should not be dismissed, nor should it be celebrated. But ethnicity certainly must be charted and ultimately channeled if this nation is to transform its current marginality into a new level of centrality, that is, of mass participation in the democratic processes.