


HORACE M. KALLEN'S USE OF EVOLUTIONARY THEORY IN SUPPORT OF AMERICAN JEWS AND DEMOCRACY

by Matthew Kaufman 

Abstract. This article examines the rhetorical deployment of Darwinian natural selection by the Jewish social philosopher Horace M. Kallen (1882–1974), in what is now widely regarded as the first articulation of cultural pluralism, “Democracy versus the Melting-Pot” (1915). My analysis proceeds in two steps. First, I identify specific strategies by means of which Kallen endeavored to insert his ideas more deeply into national discourse. I also trace reactions to his essay in the Jewish press, and argue that these indicate ongoing conversations concerning Kallen’s ideas, and they also reveal how he was reinterpreted for different reading audiences. Second, I argue that Kallen’s strategy was to stress the survival value of cooperation rather than competition in natural selection, and he believed that this view supported both the natural biological inclinations of social groups and reflected American democratic values. Kallen’s intervention serves as a striking example of how Darwinian natural selection was deployed to support Jewish participation in American life.

Keywords: American Jews; Judaism and science; Horace Kallen; natural selection; social Darwinism

In 1915, prominent Jewish public intellectual, political and social scientist, psychologist, and philosopher Horace M. Kallen (1882–1974) published “Democracy versus the Melting-Pot” in the *Nation*, an intellectual weekly magazine of opinion (Kallen 1915a, b). Kallen’s article is considered to be a classic in the literature on the invention of ethnicity in America (Sollors 1996). There is a large body of scholarship that critiques Kallen’s notion of ethnicity and cultural pluralism, and that explores his self-fashioning as a Jew and Zionist (Higham 1975; Sollors 1986; Konvitz 1987; Gleason 1992; Hollinger 1995; Schmidt 1995; Toll 1997; Greene 2006; Hattam 2007; Pianko 2008). However, “Democracy versus the Melting-Pot” has

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not yet been examined in its original print culture context. Taking that context into consideration offers a fresh perspective into how the relationship between science and Judaism is embedded in social discourse.

My analysis proceeds in two steps. First, I identify specific strategies by means of which Kallen endeavored to insert his ideas more deeply into national discourse. I also trace reactions to his essay in the Jewish press, and argue that these indicate ongoing conversations concerning Kallen's ideas, and they also reveal how he was interpreted for different reading audiences. Second, I argue that Kallen's strategy was to stress the survival value of cooperation rather than competition in natural selection. He believed that this view supported both the natural biological inclinations of social groups and reflected American democratic values.

Among Jews who engaged with the social sciences during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period, and who accepted the premise of a racialized Jewish identity, many turned to a Lamarckian mechanism of evolution to support their constructions of Jewish identity because this evolutionary view was perceived by them to be an effective strategy to counter the biological determinism that undergirded racialized antisemitism (Efron 1994; Hart 1999). Thus, for example, against the racist social scientists who believed that the "Jewish race" was somehow deficient in comparison to, say, the "Teutonic race," Jewish social scientists like Joseph Jacobs, Samuel Weissenberg, and Ignaz Zollschan argued that any perceived deficiency was a result of toxic environmental pressures that, once relieved, would permit the resumption of the natural and healthy development of the "Jewish race." As important as these voices were, other views are also attested among philosemitic or Jewish scientists. There was, for example, a vocal minority who, like Redcliffe Salaman, embraced Mendelism (Endelman 2004). Kallen's own view was a hybrid of different evolutionary views. He believed in Jewish racial purity and the indelible nature of ethnic psychophysical inheritance, and at the same time he styled himself a philosophical Darwinist. His essay serves as an unusual but important discursive intervention regarding the terms of Jewish participation in American life. His evolutionary view, coupled with his academic credentials as an instructor in philosophy and psychology at the University of Wisconsin, positioned him to be an able defender against racist social scientists, and it gave him the conceptual framework to fashion an ethno-racial Jewish identity.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF "DEMOCRACY VERSUS THE MELTING-POT"

The influx of millions of immigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries spurred a national debate concerning whether and how they might be assimilated. The image of the

“melting pot,” a metaphor popularized by Israel Zangwill’s 1908 play of the same name, became an important symbol in the debate regarding the impact of immigration (Zangwill 1909). Zangwill did not invent the term, to be sure, but the recent massive immigration increased its currency. At the turn of the century, its central meaning was that America should be culturally homogeneous. However, among “assimilationists” (referring to those who viewed favorably the prospect of social integration), the proposed method for and projected result of cultural homogenization remained unresolved. Some (predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant) wished “to melt down the immigrants and to then pour the resulting, formless liquid into preexisting cultural and social molds,” historian David Hollinger observes, while others (including assimilated American Jews) believed that the encounters between the different peoples “would act chemically upon each other so that all would be changed, and a new compound would emerge” (Hollinger 2003, 1366). These two perspectives are expressed, respectively, in Zangwill’s two metaphors, the “melting pot” and the “American symphony.” Kallen, however, did not accept either of these options. Against the ideology of the melting pot he argued for the preservation of difference and distinctiveness, with social stability achieved not through homogenization but through cooperation. For this reason, he chose to title his article “Democracy *versus* the Melting-Pot” (emphasis added).

In opposition to the “assimilationists” was a growing nativist reaction, which by the 1920s achieved powerful political expression through the Ku Klux Klan. Kallen’s colleague at the University of Wisconsin, Edward Alsworth Ross, a pioneering sociologist who left behind a complicated and contradictory legacy of progressive social reform ideals coupled with scientific racism, helped to reinforce the nativist reaction with the publication of *The Old World in the New* in 1914 (Ross 1901, 1908, 1914). In the context of the era, Ross doubtlessly believed (as did other like-minded social scientists) that he was making empirically based claims, but by today’s standards his book exhibits troubling racist and nativist sentiment (for a fuller treatment and sympathetic interpretation of Ross’s legacy, see Weinberg 1972; Keith 1988). He analyzed specific physical, mental, and moral racial traits of Celtic Irish, German, Scandinavian, Italian, Slavic, eastern European Hebrew, and other “lesser” immigrant groups, and determined that the massive influx of immigrants was having a deleterious effect upon “native white” American racial stock. Published by the Century Company, the book was a compilation of essays that Ross had contributed to the conservative monthly *The Century Magazine*. In it, he warned not only of the disastrous economic, political, and social effects that unrestricted immigration would cause, but also of the physical and moral degradation that would take place because of the intermingling of these races with the American pioneering breed. America, he concluded, was committing race suicide.

Kallen published “Democracy versus the Melting-Pot” in response. He began by observing that Ross’s opinions were widely shared: “Mr. Ross is no voice crying in a wilderness. He simply utters aloud and in his own peculiar manner what is felt and spoken wherever Americans of British ancestry congregate thoughtfully” (Kallen 1915a, 191). Kallen’s perception of popular attitudes was quite correct. The spectre of race suicide had been raised by no less prominent a figure than President Theodore Roosevelt as early as 1907, and the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act was passed “to preserve the ideal of U.S. homogeneity” (U. S. State Department 2016). The shift away from Gilded Age individualism towards Progressive Era state collectivism created also the conditions to legislate eugenics-based reform programs. America began to assert state regulatory powers over race-related issues, including marriage, fertility, and immigrant population (Paul 2003, 214–39). This was the racially charged climate of anti-immigrationist sentiment into which Kallen fired his salvo against Ross.

“Democracy versus the Melting-Pot” marks a significant moment in American social thought. In it, Kallen set forth the basic parameters of cultural pluralism (although he did not employ that term there), conceived as a kind of social “harmony,” as against the “unison” of the melting pot. “Unison” implies the imposition of will and the eradication of difference. “Harmony” preserves individuality: “What do we *will* to make of the United States—a unison, singing the old Anglo-Saxon theme ‘America,’ the America of the New England school, or a harmony, in which that theme shall be dominant, perhaps, among others, but one among many, not the only one?” (Kallen 1915b, 219). He described democratic society as an “orchestra,” composed of every type of instrument with “its specific timbre and tonality, founded in its substance and form; as every type has its appropriate theme and melody in the whole symphony, so in society each ethnic group is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are its theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all make the symphony of civilization” (Kallen 1915b, 220). The ethnic groups of society are musical “instruments” within the “orchestra” of America. The music is emphatically not a “unison,” but features the interplay of individual instruments that create “harmony and dissonances and discords.”

PROMOTION AND RECEPTION OF KALLEN’S IDEAS

The significance now attributed to “Democracy versus the Melting-Pot” is not reflective of its contemporaneous reception. The notion of cultural pluralism did not become commonplace until mid century: “It takes about fifty years for an idea to break through and become vogue,” Kallen later reflected (Schmidt 1976, 60). He knew that in order for his ideas to gain traction, he would have to take steps to cultivate a receptive audience.

There were three distinct strategies that he employed to do this. First, he sent his writing to select public intellectuals who, he hoped, would use their influence to propagate his views. This proved to be an effective strategy; thus, for example, philosopher John Dewey responded positively to Kallen's article: "I quite agree with your orchestra idea, but upon condition we really get a symphony and not a lot of different instruments playing simultaneously. I never did care for the melting pot metaphor, but genuine assimilation *to one another*—not to Anglo-saxondom—seems to be essential to an America. That each cultural section should maintain its distinctive literary and artistic traditions seems to be most desirable, but in order that it might have the more to contribute to others" (Dewey 1915). Dewey's approval was conditional, but at the same time it reassured Kallen of the approval of one of America's most important philosophers. Essayist and public intellectual Randolph Bourne acknowledged his indebtedness to Kallen in "Trans-National America," published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and again in "The Jew and Trans-National America," published in the *Menorah Journal* (Bourne 1916a, b). Kallen was also pleased to learn, as he noted in a letter to Henry Hurwitz, editor of the *Menorah Journal*, that his article had attracted the notice of the U.S. president: "Democracy *vs.* Melting Pot seems to [have] created [a] stir. I'm told even [President Woodrow] Wilson has mentioned it" (Kallen 1915c).

Second, Kallen was very active on the lecture circuit. He addressed Jewish students on university campuses across America, intent on promoting the Menorah movement, an intercollegiate organization for Jewish university students, and building up the nascent American Zionist movement. His cross-country touring schedule was grueling, and ended up invaliding him for a time. In a one-week period alone, from January 27 to February 3 (his first article in the *Nation* appeared just two weeks later, on the 18th), he delivered no fewer than nine different addresses to students in California, and attended a half dozen other meetings. Among the topics he spoke on was "Democracy *vs.* the Melting-Pot," which he delivered in San Francisco on January 29, 1915 (Kallen 1915c).

Third, Kallen engaged with a reading public in two consecutive issues of the *Nation*. Here he sought to cultivate a receptive climate of public opinion among the liberal intellectual readership of the *Nation*, published then as a weekly supplement to the daily *New York Evening Post*. The *Nation* typically covered a wide range of topics, from current events to literature, science, and philosophy. Its subscription numbers were, by its own admission, rather small, but it prided itself on its disproportionate influence and its educational appeal: "[T]hose whom it taught and inspired were all the time going out to teach and inspire others," read an editorial on the occasion of the *Nation's* semi-centennial in 1915. "In the colleges it was a power with the choicer natures; on more than one farm it was a college to awakening intelligences denied a college education" (*Nation* 1915). Kallen likely saw

it as a venue to nurture the creation of an alternative public opinion to that of the conservative readership enjoyed by Ross. Although his article was a response to Ross, their different publishing venues (one, conservative, and the other, liberal) shows that they addressed different reading publics. Kallen did not try to convince a public already swayed to Ross's point of view; he attempted to foster an alternative body of public opinion.

This third tactic, however, did not result in the kind of impact for which he had hoped. Even though the *Nation* afforded Kallen a substantial twenty-four columns of space over the course of two issues, there was very little response to his article in the popular press. The English-language Jewish press appears to have taken the most interest in him. The first review for Jewish readers appeared in the *American Israelite*, the print organ for the Reform movement, in its issue of February 25, 1915. It appeared on the same day that the second installment of Kallen's article was published in the *Nation*. It was thus a review of only the first installment that had appeared the previous week, on February 18. Even though the editors could have had no idea what conclusion Kallen would draw, they were delighted with the prominent public forum Kallen had been accorded. To them, the only point that really mattered was that Kallen had arrived as an able defender of the Jews against the racist, eugenics-driven ideology of scientists like Ross: "Prof. Edward A. Ross, whose unjust attacks on the Jews the *Israelite* refuted in its issue of September 30, found a very able opponent in Dr. Horace M. Kallen," read an editorial following the appearance of Kallen's first installment. "It is a source of gratification that a paper of the standing of the New York *Nation* allows to Dr. Kallen's argument thirteen columns of space. . . . We are glad that the championship of the Jewish immigrant is in such able hands and receives the advantage of such a prominent public forum" ("Editorial," *American Israelite*, February 25, 1915, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The American Israelite* [1854–2000]).

The editors focused attention on the theme of freedom in America: "To the readers of the *Israelite*, one point raised by Dr. Kallen is of considerable importance. Dr. Kallen says: 'The Jews come far more with the attitude of early settlers than any of the other peoples, for they, more than any other present-day immigrant group, are in flight from persecution and disaster; in search of economic opportunity, liberty of conscience, [and] civic rights'" (*American Israelite* 1915a). The editors make no reference to the question of Jewish ethnicity and its relationship to the forces of Americanization, perhaps because they did not yet perceive the thrust of Kallen's developing argument, or, as seems more likely, because the ideas Kallen represented were at odds with the Reform movement's stated purpose to promote Jewish religious identity.

For the Reform movement, Jewish group life, beyond the fact of religious community, was to be deemphasized. It considered the basic social unit

to be the individual citizen. American Jews, therefore, were to participate in the civil life of the country as individuals, not as a group. It was this point that they seem to have read into Kallen's article: "The main point which Dr. Kallen makes is that the immigrant of today has the same right to the development of his individuality as had his predecessor of the seventeenth century" (*American Israelite* 1915a). For the readers of the *Israelite*, Kallen's article was interpreted as an argument for freedom and individual rights in America. The *Israelite* carefully qualified its approbation of Kallen: "We may be pardoned for the suggestion that Jews, more than anybody else, should welcome men of such brilliant attainments as Brandeis and Kallen, and gladly extend to them the freedom of expounding their views which is granted to them before a larger public, though these men may differ with the views held by the majority of Jews on the religious interpretation of our cause" (*American Israelite* 1915a). The editorial thus intimated that the ideological divide separating Kallen (who propounded a secular, racial identification with Judaism) from Reform Judaism (which institutional platform insisted that Judaism was an exclusively voluntary, faith-based identity), would normally preclude the *Israelite's* receptivity to him, but there was a pressing need to provide a united front against antisemites.

Two weeks later, the *Israelite* published a second editorial on Kallen's article, which had now been printed in its entirety. The *Israelite's* continuing interest in him indicates that he had provoked an ongoing discussion among its readers. It observed that Kallen's "notable article" was a response to those who believed "that all ethnic, racial and religious divergencies of immigrants will be obliterated by Americanism and a homogenous race [will] result," and noted that Kallen argued that "these differences will be maintained permanently" (*American Israelite* 1915b). The editors did not comment further regarding Kallen's claim. The latter half of Kallen's essay had contained an extended reflection on the place of the Jewish community in America, which was here reprinted. The reader could thus digest what was of interest to Jews through the *Israelite* without the need to engage with the full breadth of Kallen's article in the *Nation*.

The *Israelite's* second editorial was largely a reprint of an editorial that had appeared one week earlier in the pre-eminent English-language Jewish periodical, the nondenominational *American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger* (*American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger* 1915a). There, the editorial caption had added a description of Kallen's "striking article" as a response to "the views of those who consider that all ethnic, racial and religious divergencies of the immigrants into America will be obliterated by 'Americanism'" (*American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger* 1915a). It thus told the reader how to read "Democracy versus the Melting-Pot"—as a response to those who think Americanism is a threat to Jewish identity.

In contrast to the *Israelite*, which had printed its editorial in a visually nondescript manner, as one among many different editorials on various topics of current interest, the *American Hebrew* visually spotlighted Kallen's article among its other editorials. It placed a special, double-lined box on the page with the title, "Democracy versus the Melting Pot," in bold and enlarged print, occupying the horizontal space of two columns. A separate editorial was carried in that same issue of the *American Hebrew* that focused attention on Kallen's sociological thesis:

In short, Prof. Kallen would have the United States, instead of playing "Yankee Doodle" on a penny whistle, conduct a grand concerto in which all the elements of the nation can contribute their share. The picture is a pleasing one, but we fancy that Prof. Kallen rather underrates the influence of American surroundings on even the newer immigration and exaggerates the permanent effect of ethnic diversity. . . . But there can be no doubt that his thesis is true of the new immigration for the next generation or so, and his careful analysis of the sociological consequences deserves widespread attention. . . . It is signally appropriate that so careful a study should come from a son of the "new immigration" (*American Hebrew & Jewish Messenger* 1915b)

The *American Hebrew* thus also registered qualified support for Kallen. Its reservation, however, was not ideological, but sociological. It suggested that the social forces of assimilation would eventually erode the boundaries of ethnic diversity. His thesis, it opined, was therefore valid only "for the next generation or so." At this stage in Kallen's career, the record from the English-language Jewish press shows that, with respect to his acceptance as a social critic and politically active public intellectual, he had begun to acquire social capital within the Jewish community. But the absence of reaction to his article in the non-Jewish press indicates that he had not yet gained much attention outside of that community.

The editorials in the two different Jewish periodicals were, in effect, engaged with two different discourses that were in simultaneous circulation in the Jewish community. One was a defensive discourse that developed as a response to antisemitism, while the other was a positive embrace of certain racial images (Hart 2007). The *American Israelite* was interested in Kallen's article as a response to antisemitism. They were concerned primarily with equality of opportunity for Jews in America. The *American Hebrew*, on the other hand, was engaged in a discourse concerning the constitution of Jewish identity, and evaluated Kallen's views on ethnicity accordingly. Discussions concerning the viability of ethnicity in the face of the forces of assimilation emerged from a desire to understand the enduring foundation of Jewish identity. With the replication of parts of Kallen's article in both periodicals, his essay had become the subject of a conversation extending over several weeks at least, and it was a conversation that Kallen sought to see continued when he reintroduced his essay into circulation in 1924 in

his compilation work *Culture and Democracy in the United States* (Kallen 1924).

THE SOCIAL APPLICATION OF NATURAL SELECTION

Kallen's notion of democracy derived from evolutionary discourse, which had become the driver for socioeconomic and political theories. Both Kallen and Ross accepted the notion that racial and cultural traits were inseparable from each other and were heritable, but a close examination of their divergent claims shows that they had different underlying assumptions. Ross emphasized competition in society, citing the "modern competitive order" (Ross 1914, 30), whereas Kallen highlighted the value of cooperation.

Ross began his *The Old World in the New* by highlighting the defining role of the struggle for existence: "When you empty a barrel of fish fry into a new stream there is a sudden sharpening of their struggle for existence. So, when people submit themselves to totally strange conditions of life, Death whets his scythe, and those who survive are a new kind of 'fittest'" (Ross 1914, 17). In his construction of America, the pioneers were a noble and hardy stock, whose value and mettle were proved by prevailing against hostile environmental forces. The "sifting of the wilderness" resulted in improved American stock "fiber" that was passed on to their descendants. "It is such selection that explains in part the extraordinary blooming of the colonies after the cruel initial period was over" (Ross 1914, 19). His evaluation of each immigrant group was, in essence, an assessment of their relative ability to contribute to the survival worthiness of the American stock, and each group was found wanting. Based upon his racial analysis, he then drew pessimistic conclusions concerning the economic, political, and social effects of immigration, and ended with the warning that the mixing of "American blood" with "immigrant blood" would result in dysgenic selection.

Ross's inclusion of Eastern European Jews in his list of immigrant groups reveals his belief that Jews were primarily an ethno-racial, rather than a faith-based, group. In this regard, Kallen and Ross shared the same basic assumption, since Kallen also viewed the Jews as, first and foremost, an ethno-racial group. Ross, however, was particularly focused upon the question of the assimilability of these new immigrants: "It is too soon yet to foretell whether or not this vast and growing body of Jews from Eastern Europe is to melt and disappear in the American population just as numbers of Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French Jews in our early days became blent with the rest of the people" (Ross 1914, 167).

Ross described these immigrant Jews in stereotypical terms: "None can beat the Jew at a bargain, for through all the intricacies of commerce he can scent his profit" (Ross 1914, 148). He identified "intellectuality," a

“combinative imagination,” and “abstractness” as specifically Hebrew racial traits, and added, “The Jew has little feeling for the particular. He cares little for pets” (Ross 1914, 160). These oddly specific traits were, he believed, objective facts. He believed that American upper-crust society’s discriminatory practices against Jews composed a natural reaction to their racially determined objectionable behaviors: “In New York the [race] line is drawn against the Jews in hotels, resorts, clubs, and private schools, and constantly this line hardens and extends. They cry ‘Bigotry’ but bigotry has little or nothing to do with it. What is disliked in the Jews is not their religion but certain ways and manners” (Ross 1914, 164). Nevertheless, although Ross found discrimination against immigrant Jews to be understandable, he objected to the “cruel prejudice” of “all lump condemnations,” and opined that America could absorb “thirty or forty thousand Hebrews from Eastern Europe” per year “without any marked growth of race prejudice” (Ross 1914, 165). Beyond that number, he warned, “there will be trouble” (Ross 1914, 165). He concluded by holding open the possibility that America, “the strongest solvent Jewish separatism has ever encountered,” could work its melting pot magic and, through mixed marriages, “end the Jews as a distinctive ethnic strain” (Ross 1914, 165–66). Aside from one passing comment imputing “race prejudice” to Ross, Kallen did not directly address his antisemitic slander, possibly because he desired his article to be read as a call for social change and not merely as a defense of Jews (Kallen 1915a, 193).

Kallen attacked Ross’s claim of American racial homogeneity and challenged his conclusion that, were the immigration of Eastern European Jews sufficiently curtailed, the “distinctive ethnic strain” of Jews would likely dissolve in the melting pot of America. Ross’s focus upon the natural and heritable physical, mental, and behavioral characteristics of races placed these groups squarely in the natural world, subject to the driving force of competitive selection. Kallen, although he acknowledged the role of competitive natural selection in the natural world, believed more fundamentally in the affirmation of diversity implied by natural selection and in the importance that cooperation plays in evolution. In this respect, he approached Darwin’s views in *Descent of Man* concerning the importance of “social instinct” and “sympathy” in evolution (Darwin 1871).

Although it is unclear if Kallen had read Darwin, it is clear that Harvard philosopher Ralph Barton Perry’s *The Moral Economy* made a significant impression on him (Perry 1909). Kallen’s review of Perry’s book, published in the *Boston Transcript* in 1909, focuses on how Perry’s view of morality, rooted in the Jamesian pragmatist school of thought, was derived from the Darwinian evolutionary view that morality is at root a natural social instinct and part of the evolutionary process. Morality, understood as a process rather than a concrete set of ideas, and characterized by coordinated group cooperation, had the effect of bringing different, even competing

interests together in a cooperative fashion. Kallen was particularly interested in the connection Perry drew between the moral economy and the proper functioning of democracy (Kallen 1909a). Perry likely gave him the conceptual framework to connect ethics and democracy to his program of cultural pluralism, founded upon a platform of philosophical pragmatism and a post-Darwinian worldview. Cooperative morality, expressed as federative democracy, was, for Kallen, a natural extension and consequence of life because it ultimately supported the further growth and diversification of life. Survival, Kallen wrote in more than one place, is not enough. He had asserted as early as 1906 that a group's existence had to be morally justified (Kallen 1906). Judgment concerning the adequate moral justification for survival hinged upon the extent to which the survival of one contributed to the continued flourishing of diversity. In this light, cooperation, rather than competition, ultimately supported the natural process of life's continual diversification.

Kallen's primary interest in Darwinism lay in what he perceived to be its philosophical application. For him, natural selection's social significance rested in what it teaches rather than in what it does. From the basic observation that diversity is a fundamental fact of nature and that cooperation and interdependency facilitate further diversification, a social principle of cooperative morality expressed in federative democracy followed. This idea he called "philosophical Darwinism." It validated the contributions made by distinct ethno-racial groups to society, and, moreover, justified Jewish group survival. During the decade prior to publishing "Democracy versus the Melting-Pot," Kallen developed the idea that the "Hebraic" worldview had discovered its scientific affirmation in the post-Darwinian world. That worldview, he believed, contrasted with the pre-modern "Hellenic" worldview by affirming diversity and flux, and embracing the reality of contingency and change (Kallen 1909b). He argued that Judaism was fundamentally compatible with modernity because of its "naturalism" and "moralism," which terms refer to what he took to be Judaism's empiricism, its self-awareness as an ever-evolving entity, and its view of morality as rooted in the natural order and not given over to otherworldly salvation (Kallen 1913, 1932). Furthermore, Kallen argued, Zionism was the paradigmatic political expression of the Hebraic spirit in the modern world because, in the spirit of Perry's *The Moral Economy*, it sought to embody the moral point of view. The Jews would demonstrate their ethical right to exist by demonstrating that, by its very nature, Zionism is "contributory to the values of culture and civilization," and that "by remaining their unaltered selves, by perfecting their natural and distinctive group functions [Jews] must contribute to the welfare of nations and serve international comity" (Kallen 1910, 182). Thus, in his view, Jews would participate in the "moral economy" by contributing their uniqueness to the cause of civilization, which was built upon "international comity."

EVOLUTION AND RHETORIC

To strengthen his argument, Kallen had first to dismantle the scientific premises supporting Ross's claims. Ross worried that native white American stock might be driven to extinction as a result of inter-racial marriage. Two drivers of Darwinian evolution—population pressure and sexual selection—would destroy American Anglo-Saxon stock and replace it with a new and inferior hybrid American race. Kallen discredited Ross's argument from natural selection on several fronts. First, he argued that there was no such thing as biological American stock. Second, he dismissed the alarms raised by Ross concerning population pressure, which, in the natural world, helps to drive natural selection. Finally, he addressed the issue of sexual selection, which drove the hopes of Americanizers who looked forward to the creation of a new American race, and drove the fears of nativists who feared the weakening of American stock. He concluded that both groups were misguided, and that their attachment to the "melting pot" ideal had blinded them to the heterogeneous reality of America. Instead, he urged the recognition of the emergence of a new democratic order of a cooperative federation of "nationalities" (or, in today's parlance, ethno-racial groups), joined together by their common commitment to American ideals. The strength of his rhetoric rested upon the cultural authority of evolutionary discourse, and, specifically, in his ability to wrest the discourse of natural selection from the cause of nativists like Ross.

Kallen attacked Ross's claim that the core and essential American identity is rooted in Anglo-Saxon racial homogeneity, ostensibly threatened by the immigrant invasion. He wrote that Ross presumed that only Americans of British descent like himself were native white American stock, but that history shows that America grew out of a plurality of nationalities (read, ethnicities), each imbued with like-mindedness and self-consciousness, and each of which had long ago become American: "Frenchmen and Germans, in Louisiana and in Pennsylvania, regarded themselves as the cultural peers of the British, and because of their own common ancestry, their like-mindedness and self-consciousness, they have retained a large measure of their individuality and spiritual autonomy to this day, after generations of unrestricted and mobile contact and a century of political union with the dominant British populations" (Kallen 1915a, 191). American civilization, he argued, merely designates the aggregate product of a plurality of distinct ethnicities. Ross's America, a nation born from homogenous Anglo-Saxon stock, was a fantasy. Ross's fear that natural selection would wreak dysgenic havoc on American Anglo-Saxon stock was little more than a chimera.

Having discredited the notion of ethno-racial homogeneity in the nation's history, Kallen turned his attention to the question of American homogeneity in the future. Focusing his attention on the notion of "Americanization," he observed that the term connotes "the fusion of the various

bloods, and a transmutation by 'the miracle of assimilation' of Jews, Slavs, Poles, Frenchmen, Germans, Hindus, Scandinavians into beings similar in background, tradition, outlook, and spirit to the descendants of the British colonists" (Kallen 1915a, 192). The goal, he clarified, was to absorb that Americanism whose "spiritual expression" is found in the "New England school" (Kallen 1915a, 192). Proponents of this ideal, he explained, believe the goal of assimilation would be attained through education, and, more importantly, through intermarriage, which would blend "all the European stocks" into a new "American race" (Kallen 1915a, 193).

Both racist nativists and optimistic Americanizers believed in the future evolution of a new American race, albeit with different understandings of its significance. For Ross and his ilk, it was something to fear. For liberal proponents of the melting pot, it pointed to "a newer and better being whose qualities and ideals shall be the qualities and ideals of the contemporary American of British ancestry" (Kallen 1915a, 193). Both the hopes and the fears attached to this future development, Kallen asserted, were groundless. There would be no new American race. Noting the prevalence of ethnic stratification in the country as a whole, he remarked that "the likelihood of a new 'American' race is remote enough, and the fear of it unnecessary. But equally remote also is the possibility of a universalization of the inwardness of the old American life. Only the externals succeed in passing over" (Kallen 1915a, 194).

Moreover, Kallen argued, the intrinsic and ineradicable qualities that attach to ethnicity will, in the end, assert themselves no matter how one might try to deny them. Those who appear to be Americanized, like Mary Antin and Israel Zangwill, he wrote, "protest too much." They tout it "like an achievement, a tour de force," but nevertheless reveal in their writing "a dualism and the strain to overcome it" (Kallen 1915a, 193). Even Ross's anxiety regarding American Anglo-Saxon civilization, he wrote, is a case in point of the inevitability of "ethnic nationality returned to consciousness" (Kallen 1915a, 194). The non-British elements in American society have provoked a reawakening of his ethnic self-consciousness.

The hopes and fears pinned to the coming of a new "American race," Kallen argued, ignore a basic fact of nature. Ethnicity is heritable and an inalienable quality within every individual: "Behind him in time and tremendously in him in quality are his ancestors; around him in space are his relatives and kin, looking back with him to a remoter common ancestry. In all these he lives and moves and has his being. They constitute his, literally, *natio*" (Kallen 1915a, 194). The term "American," by way of contrast, functions simply as "an adjective of similarity." "Similar environments, similar occupations, do, of course, generate similarities: 'American' is an adjective of similarity applied to Anglo-Saxons, Irish, Jews, Germans, Italians, and so on. But the similarity is one of place and institution, acquired, not inherited, and hence not transmitted. Each generation has, in

fact, to become 'Americanized' afresh, and, withal, inherited nature has a way of redirecting nurture" (Kallen 1915a, 193). American identity, in other words, takes on cultural shape only in the hyphenate form, prefixed by the ethnic group of origin (thus, e.g., Irish-American, Jewish-American, German-American). "Inherited nature," or what he called the "psychophysical inheritance" of ethnicity, inevitably asserts itself (Kallen 1915a, 194). American racial homogeneity, then, neither existed in the past nor will it exist in the future. Ross's claims for the past and fears for the future, Kallen asserted, were both without basis in fact.

ON POPULATION PRESSURE

Ross wrote with alarm about the "undue growth of cities," which was exponentially increasing the demographic pressures on "American stock" (Ross 1914, 239). In his estimation, "American stock" in the cities had been steadily diminishing, while "foreign stock" had come to constitute three-fourths of the cities' populations (Ross 1914, 239). He provided statistics from the 1910 Census on the relative distribution of "native white stock," "foreign stock," and "foreign-born." American urban life, as Ross saw it, was infested with foreign stock, and was now a tale of "congestion, misliving, segregation, corruption, and confusion" (Ross 1914, 240). This, however, was only true of the urban crush created by immigrants in "motley groups like Pittsburgh." He opined that in cities like Indianapolis, a "native center" where American stock still prevailed, such social issues did not exist (Ross 1914, 240). However, he feared that the "motley" trend was only getting worse. Native white stock was being literally crowded out of its natural environment, and supplanted by a morally degenerate alternative. He believed that the general mixing of people together in concentrated urban areas had seeded the growth of cultural disintegration. The urban melting pot created a kind of internal rot that was beginning to become manifest in public life.

Although Kallen granted that the massive influx of immigrants in recent decades had wrought a demographic transformation in America, he could not have disagreed more with Ross's pessimistic observations. In an address he had recently given to the Joint Meeting of the American and Western Philosophical Associations, Kallen had observed that the American urban environment was patently not a melting pot. In both urban and rural populations, he argued, ethnic groups were stratified "first of all geographically, the layers of the races of Europe following the streams of migration westward; then, industrially; different nationalities follow different employment, and, finally, socially, the upper classes being in the long run identical with the earlier comers" (quoted in Bush 1915, 95). In "Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot," Kallen reiterated this claim, asserting that the different ethnicities that immigrated to America tended to stick

together in their own groups, not as ideological separatists or isolationists, but naturally, as their “psychophysical inheritance” asserted itself (Kallen 1915b, 220).

The qualities of city life that so alarmed Ross reflected no deep internal, cultural rot. These had only external and superficial significance: “The *common* city life, which depends upon like-mindedness, is not inward, corporate, and inevitable,” Kallen explained, “but external, inarticulate, and incidental, a reaction to the need of amusement and the need of protection, not the expression of a unity of heritage, mentality, and interest” (Kallen 1915a, 192). City life was not a proving ground of one native, settled race facing persistent demographic pressures on that environment. It yielded no single unity of mind that could support this charge. The city was an environment in which different ethnic groups negotiated their own needs and interests in relation to each other, in the political and educational spaces they shared. Concessions to “the Irish vote,” “the Jewish vote,” “the German vote” were a feature of political life, as was the existence of compromise among school committees that represented different ethnic groups. The city, Kallen believed, could in fact be a model of cooperative democracy in action, not a hostile environment in which natural selection, operating through the forces of population pressure, would threaten the life of native white stock.

ON SEXUAL SELECTION

Another alarming aspect about the melting pot for Ross was dysgenic sexual selection. He warned of the general diminishment of the good looks of Americans through miscegenation: “It is reasonable to expect an early falling off in the frequency of good looks in the American people,” Ross wrote. “It is unthinkable that so many persons with crooked faces, coarse mouths, bad noses, heavy jaws, and low foreheads can mingle their heredity with ours without making personal beauty yet more rare among us than it actually is” (Ross 1914, 287). He noted with particular concern the natural physical weakness of Jews: “On the physical side the Hebrews are the polar opposite of our pioneer breed. Not only are they undersized and weak-muscled, but they shun bodily activity and are exceedingly sensitive to pain” (Ross 1914, 289). He contrasted them with American stock: “Natural selection, frontier life, and the example of the red man produced in America a type of great physical self-control, gritty, uncomplaining, merciless to the body through fear of becoming ‘soft.’ To this roaming, hunting, exploring, adventurous breed what greater contrast is there than the denizens of the Ghetto?” (Ross 1914, 290). American stature, physique, vitality, and morality were therefore going to suffer from the admixture of immigrant blood. He believed that “the competition of low-standard immigrants is the root cause of the mysterious ‘sterility’ of Americans.”

American fecundity suffered, he argued, chiefly where immigrants arrived (Ross 1914, 300). Every race, he opined, after it has become Americanized, is attacked by “fatal sterility” (Ross 1914, 304). Ross concluded that the forces of sexual selection were contributing to race suicide: “A people that has no more respect for its ancestors and no more pride of race than this deserves the extinction that surely awaits it” (Ross 1914, 304).

Kallen’s rebuttal to this consisted of two parts. First, he argued that incidences of mixed marriage were statistically insignificant: “[I]n the mass, neither he [the immigrant] nor his children nor his children’s children lose their ethnic individuality. For marriage is determined by sexual selection and by propinquity, and the larger the town, the lesser the likelihood of mixed marriage” (Kallen 1915a, 194). Ethnic groups naturally preferred endogamy, he believed. Second, he appealed to history to make the point that mixed breeding had never been a factor in the development of ethnic groups:

The notion that the [Americanization] programme might be realized by radical and even enforced miscegenation, by the creation of the melting-pot by law, and thus by the development of the new “American race,” is, as Mr. Ross points out, as mystically optimistic as it is ignorant. In historic times, so far as we know, no new ethnic types have originated, and what we know of breeding gives us no assurance of the disappearance of the old types in favor of the new, only the addition of a new type, if it succeeds in surviving, to the already existing older ones. Biologically, life does not unify; biologically, life diversifies; and it is sheer ignorance to apply social analogies to biological processes. (Kallen 1915b, 219)

He accepted a primordialist view of ethnicity, meaning that ethnic groups have existed since before the dawn of civilization, and are a permanent fact of human social life. Theoretically, he allowed, a new ethnic type could arise through mixed breeding, but this was not likely to happen. He contended that the Americanization program would not lead to “a unison of ethnic types” (Kallen 1915b, 219). Rather, it would at most lead to “a unison of social and historic interests,” but even this would come at a great cost. It would be “established by the complete cutting-off of the ancestral memories of our populations” (Kallen 1915b, 219). It required, in his view, enforced homogenization, which would only result in what he had described as a dysfunctional “dualism and the strain to overcome it.”

Having argued that natural selection processes did not play a role in the creation or development of ethnicity, Kallen presented his alternative vision. He believed that his solution to the problem of creating social cohesion affirmed the biological impulse towards diversity. He felt that the time had passed that the New England Brahmins could claim to represent the American type: “At the present time,” he wrote, “there is no dominant American mind” (Kallen 1915b, 217). The reality with which America had not yet come to grips was that ethno-racial groups were “the fundamental

fact of American life” (Kallen 1915b, 217). America was *de facto* composed of a plurality of such groups, and it must therefore adopt a prospective rather than a retrospective stance with respect to its cultural cohesion. He took the Jews to be the paradigmatic example of ethnicity asserting itself despite the outward appearance of assimilation: “[O]nce the wolf is driven from the door and the Jewish immigrant takes his place in our society a free man and an American, he tends to become all the more a Jew. The cultural unity of his race, history, and background is only continued by the new life under the new conditions. . . . In sum, the most eagerly American of the immigrant groups are also the most autonomous and self-conscious in spirit and culture” (Kallen 1915b, 218). The social experiment of enforcing Americanization, which had been self-imposed by the Jews themselves, had resulted only in an even greater sense of autonomy and self-consciousness.

Thus, Kallen arrived at his fundamental thesis: “Starting with our existing ethnic and cultural groups,” he wrote, America as a nation should free and strengthen “the strong forces actually in operation.” It should “seek to provide conditions under which each [ethnicity] may attain the perfection that is proper to its kind.” What troubled Ross and so many others, he wrote, “is not really inequality; what troubles them is *difference*” (Kallen 1915b, 219). America, he countered, must embrace diversity. Diversity, he insisted, was guaranteed by evolutionary fiat.

He identified “psychophysical inheritance” as the natural and determining feature of the ethno-racial group. For Kallen, the phrase captured a complex hybrid notion of inheritance. Influenced by Lamarckian ethnopsychology, he believed that the socio cultural “environment,” the mindset, created by the historic ethno-racial group had imposed some determining hereditary influence upon the psyche and personality of individuals born into that group. He also maintained that ethnic heredity asserted itself by virtue of a putative racial purity guaranteed by endogamy, thus aligning his ideas with Mendelism. This evolutionary hybridity and ambiguity was not entirely new; it was embedded within the term as psychologist James Mark Baldwin had employed it in the previous decade (Green 2014). “[W]hatever else he [the immigrant] changes,” Kallen added with a dramatic flourish, “he cannot change his grandfather” (Kallen 1915a, 194). This assertion, however, was only tenuously tied to a biological process. Kallen’s primary purpose was to distinguish between temporal and spatial social settings, and to assert the salience of memory in the formation of an individual’s and a group’s identity.

Although Kallen did not elaborate on this point here, he did so at length elsewhere. In “Eugenic Aspects of the Jewish Problem,” he wrote:

I have been accustomed to phrase [the social fact of individuality] in the formula that, although you can change everything about you, . . . although

you can change almost any connection which you establish with your environment, there is one connection that you do not establish and you can not change: you can not change your grandfathers. Now this melodramatic way of phrasing the fact of heredity implies simply, that human individuality, that, indeed, the individuality of any living thing is a special kind of social fact. And, as a social fact, the individuality of any living thing can not be detached from a social setting in time, even if it can be detached from a social setting in space. . . . Heredity is only the foundation of personality. Memory is its generation and achievement. A man is his biography. Individuality itself, as that begins from the day of birth to the present moment, is a thing which is to be defined by its temporal relationships. What you were not only determines what you are, but is what you are. Your past is present in you, and if your past should not be present in you, if it be not active in you, you would not be you. . . . When a group forgets its history it has lost its social memory, it has lost its individuality. When an individual loses his personality, his memory, the contents of his biography, he has lost his self-hood; he is merely a body without a mind. (Kallen 1918, 558–59)

Biological heredity, the subject of Ross's concern in *The Old World in the New*, was only the "foundation of personality" for Kallen. Ross, as we have seen, ultimately placed humanity at the mercy of the mechanistic and impersonal forces of natural selection. In such a universe, one's past, one's memory, had no defining role to play. There was little to no role for the personality; there was only a determining racial typology. Kallen, however, insisted that we transcend our biologically determined selves through the faculty of memory. Memory is the defining feature of individuality, whether considered for the group or for a single individual person.

This is what was implied by ancestral endowment, and this is what Kallen pointed to in the conclusion to "Democracy versus the Melting-Pot:"

What is inalienable in the life of mankind is its intrinsic positive quality—its psychophysical inheritance. Men may change their clothes, their politics, their wives, their religions, their philosophies, to a greater or lesser extent: they cannot change their grandfathers. Jews or Poles or Anglo-Saxons, in order to cease being Jews or Poles or Anglo-Saxons, would have to cease to be. The selfhood which is inalienable in them, and for the realization of which they require "inalienable" liberty, is ancestrally determined, and the happiness which they pursue has its form implied in ancestral endowment. This is what, actually, democracy in operation assumes. There are human capacities which it is the function of the state to liberate and to protect. (Kallen 1915b, 220)

Democracy, then, by taking into consideration the value of difference, the prevalence of diversity, and the intrinsically positive role that "psychophysical inheritance" played in the life of people, would promote a government characterized by cooperation rather than competition. Kallen believed that democracy, once properly aligned with biological processes, had the potential to usher in a new moral economy that would value diversity without itself descending into the competitive natural order of Ross's

universe, of Lord Alfred Tennyson's famous phrase "nature, red in tooth and claw," of the war of all against all.

CONCLUSION

Evolutionary theory gave Horace Kallen a scientific basis to articulate the grounds for full and equal Jewish group participation in civic life. He developed his understanding of the salience of social cooperation in natural selection, coupled with his belief in ethnic psychophysical inheritance, into a scientific justification for his construction of Jewish identity and of American democracy. It became the scientific underpinning that supported his theory of cultural pluralism. Using the language of evolutionary theory, Kallen sought to carve out a space for Jews in the United States by highlighting the survival value of cooperation and the necessity of fostering it. He then drew a connection to the values of American democracy, thus aligning the ideals of the nation with the processes of nature.

Kallen's Jewish readers, as refracted through the *American Israelite* and the *American Hebrew*, read him as a defender against antisemitism and as a critic of the assimilationist agenda of Americanization. Although Kallen's stand against racism and his affirmation of Jewish identity were of interest to Jewish readers, his use of evolutionary theory to support his views remained in certain respects his own idiosyncratic formulation. Nevertheless, his voice should be considered as one in a chorus that articulated an evolutionary paradigm for Jewish identity. Having been featured in the prominent *Nation* and then discussed in nationally circulating American Jewish periodicals, Kallen's unique construction of Jewish identity helped to drive the developing discourse that led to the perception of ethnicity as a defining feature of American Jewish identity.

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