

**Horace Kallen's Expanding Vision of Cultural Pluralism:
Nationality, Race, and Democracy on the World Stage, 1918–1939**

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From the early 1880s until the outbreak of the Great War, twenty million immigrants arrived in the United States. Most of them came from southern and eastern Europe rather than the northern and western European sources to which Americans were accustomed, and Jews made up a sizable portion of these new immigrants. Indeed, on the eve of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act that curtailed mass immigration for the next four decades, the sociologists Robert Park and Herbert Miller identified Jews (together with Italians and Poles) as one of the three largest groups of new immigrants in America.¹ While some Americans continued to conceive the country as a melting pot, an image popularized by the British-born Jewish playwright Israel Zangwill, other Americans called for the exclusion or coercive Americanization of immigrants they perceived as too dissimilar. Against these voices, a small minority of dissenting intellectuals argued that American identity should rest on an ideal of harmonious diversity rather than racial or cultural homogeneity. The American Jewish philosopher Horace Meyer Kallen (1882–1974) was the chief spokesman for this view, first expressed in his 1915 essay “Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot,” and to which he later gave the name cultural pluralism.

Scholarly interest in Kallen is longstanding, remains robust, and is concentrated in two main fields of study. On the one hand, scholars of American history have focused on Kallen’s contributions to debates about the meaning of Americanism or what it means to be an American.² Of central concern here are Kallen’s efforts to negotiate the antinomies of unity versus multiplicity, and consent versus descent, in American thought. On the other hand, scholars of American Jewish history have emphasized Kallen’s specifically Jewish concerns, including his

¹ Robert Ezra Park and Herbert A. Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted* (New York: Harper, 1921), 225.

² John Higham, “Ethnic Pluralism in Modern American Thought,” in *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975). Michael Walzer, “What Does It Mean to Be an ‘American’?” *Social Research* 57, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 591–614. David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). Jonathan M. Hansen, *The Lost Promise of Patriotism: Debating American Identity, 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Michael C. Steiner, *Horace M. Kallen in the Heartland: The Midwestern Roots of American Pluralism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2020).

role in debates among American Jews about how to define Jewishness, his involvement in the American Zionist movement and heterodox conception of Zionism, his formulation of a “Jewish cosmopolitanism” in response to anti-Jewish forms of cosmopolitanism and universalism, and his transformation from an antireligious thinker into a “*religious secularist Jew*.”³ Greene aptly summarizes the conventional view that results from these two streams of scholarship: Kallen’s cultural pluralism arose in the context of “a universal debate about the meaning of American identity and a particular debate about the proper expression of Jewish identity within America.”⁴

Scholarship in American history and American Jewish history has surely enriched our understanding of Kallen and his ideas, but both fields of study primarily situate him in a national context and tend to neglect his interest in and engagement with world affairs. Although this scholarship acknowledges Kallen’s international writings, it has rarely made them a primary focus. In this respect, it is out of step with broader historiographical trends. Looking beyond national boundaries, historians have shown how other American intellectuals (including those promoting racist ideologies that Kallen vigorously opposed) were linked to counterparts and political projects in other countries.⁵ The scholarship on European and American Jewish history has also taken a growing interest in social interconnections across national borders.⁶ This trend

³ Daniel Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism: The Menorah Association and American Diversity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011). Sarah Schmidt, *Horace M. Kallen: Prophet of American Zionism* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1995). Noam Pianko, “‘The True Liberalism of Zionism’: Horace Kallen, Jewish Nationalism, and the Limits of American Pluralism,” *American Jewish History* 94, no. 4 (Dec. 2008): 299–329. Noam Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken: Rawidowicz, Kaplan, Kohn* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010). Jakob Egholm Feldt, *Transnationalism and the Jews: Culture, History and Prophecy* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). Matthew J. Kaufman, *Horace Kallen Confronts America: Jewish Identity, Science, and Secularism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2019), 3.

⁴ Greene, *Jewish Origins*, 7.

⁵ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998). Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Benedict Anderson, *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (New York: Verso, 2013).

⁶ Moshe Rosman, “Jewish History across Borders,” in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, eds. Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), 15–29. Ava F. Kahn and Adam D. Mendelsohn, eds., *Transnational Traditions: New Perspectives on American Jewish History* (Detroit: Wayne State

suggests a need to approach Kallen's cultural pluralism in a similar way, placing it within a global and not merely national context. Recent and exceptional work by Pianko, Feldt, and Schmidt has already begun to move in this direction. Pianko describes Kallen as a transatlantic thinker and emphasizes the influence (via Alfred Zimmern) of British liberal internationalism on him; Feldt argues that Kallen presented Jews and Zionism as models of transnationalism; and Schmidt has drawn attention to Kallen's proposals for a new global order after 1918.⁷ Building on and extending this turn toward the global context of Kallen's thought, I argue that his cultural pluralism was one variant of a worldwide project of Jewish intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to integrate Jews into a wider civil and political order without relinquishing Jewish ethnicity or nationality. Furthermore, I argue that Kallen's cultural pluralism was global not only in its derivation but also in its application and scope. I show how Kallen transposed his pluralist vision from the United States to the world in writings about international affairs that have received relatively little attention.

One gain of reframing Kallen in a transnational perspective is that it provides a new vantage point from which to reassess claims persistently voiced by scholars of American history that Kallen held a fixed notion of ethnic identity and ignored nonwhites. Gleason described Kallen's views as a form of romantic racialism that attributed "the distinctive characteristics of

University Press, 2014). Eli Lederhendler, "Modern Historians and Jewish Transnational Perspectives," *American Jewish History* 101, no. 4 (Oct. 2017): 557–61. Tobias Metzler, "By the Sacred Ties of Humanity and Common Decent": The Transnationalization of Modern Jewish History and its Discontents," in *Transnational Struggles for Recognition: New Perspectives on Civil Society since the Twentieth Century*, eds. Dieter Gosewinkel and Dieter Rucht (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 103–32. Kahn and Mendelsohn write: "The transnational approach has made its deepest inroads in the field of American Jewish history among those who study the colonial period"; only "a handful of historians have productively applied comparative and transnational methodologies to analyze major themes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (3–4).

⁷ Pianko, "The True Liberalism of Zionism," 316–25. Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken*, 40–58. Feldt, *Transnationalism and the Jews*. Imanuel Clemens Schmidt, "Politische Gestaltung aus Quellen der Tradition: Horace Kallens Pluralismuskonzept und das Schlüsseljahr 1918," *Denkströme: Journal der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 21 (2019): 122–36.

peoples to inborn racial qualities.”⁸ Sollors maintained that Kallen considered “descent-based identifications eternal and static” and “completely naturalized ethnicity as an immutable category.”⁹ According to Hollinger, Kallen asserted “the primacy of primordial ethno-racial identities” and “resisted novelty” in favor of the perpetuation of “old-world clans.”¹⁰ Hansen argued that “Kallen subscribed to the romantic notion that cultures possessed essential natures,” “regarded cultural identity as indelible,” and “expected individuals to perpetuate rather than shape culture.”¹¹ Many of these same scholars have also faulted Kallen for neglecting people of color or non-European heritage. “The pluralist thesis from the outset was encapsulated in white ethnocentrism,” Higham wrote a year after Kallen’s death.¹² A decade later, Sollors asserted that Kallen and Randolph Bourne “make no mention at all of Afro-Americans in their transnational federal republics and orchestras.”¹³ In the 1990s, Hollinger reiterated that “cultural pluralism as developed by Kallen and his contemporaries was exclusively European in scope.”¹⁴ Hansen wrote that “Kallen ignored African Americans in ‘Democracy Versus the Melting Pot,’” and Steiner described Kallen’s “original image of cultural pluralism” as a “purely white-washed affair” and “Eurocentric perspective.”¹⁵ Scholars of American Jewish history have often accepted these criticisms while seeking to qualify them. For example, Pianko, Weinfeld, and Feldt have mitigated the charge of ethnic essentialism, though Pianko reintroduced the charge of white ethnocentrism in a new form when he criticized Kallen for complicity with European

⁸ Philip Gleason, “American Identity and Americanization,” in *Concepts of Ethnicity*, eds. William Petersen, Michael Novak, and Philip Gleason (Cambridge: Belknap, 1982), 99–100.

⁹ Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 31.

¹⁰ Hollinger, *Postethnic America*, 116, 161–62.

¹¹ Hansen, *Lost Promise*, 92–93, 108.

¹² Higham, “Ethnic Pluralism,” 208.

¹³ Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*, 186.

¹⁴ Hollinger, *Postethnic America*, 100.

¹⁵ Hansen, *Lost Promise*, 107. Steiner, *Kallen in the Heartland*, 70, 104.

imperialism and colonialism.¹⁶ Typically, scholars of American Jewish history have pointed out that Kallen abandoned ethnic essentialism and incorporated nonwhites into his pluralist vision by the 1950s.¹⁷

By recontextualizing Kallen's thought, I seek to revise previous assessments of it as essentialist and ethnocentric. While such assessments are not baseless, they are one-sided. In Kallen's early thinking about ethnic and national groups, primordialist elements co-existed alongside and in tension with a more dynamic conception of identity that became increasingly pronounced as Kallen engaged with world affairs. Furthermore, the extension of Kallen's pluralist vision to the global stage compelled him to consider the situation of nonwhites more fully than he had in his original formulation of cultural pluralism (subtitled "A Study of American Nationality") in 1915. My arguments thus build upon and confirm previous interpretations that stress the development of Kallen's thinking over time, but they also go beyond these interpretations in important ways. Resituating Kallen in the global context reveals that his views began to change during the First World War and the interwar period, earlier than typically assumed, and it was these developments that prepared the way for the less essentialist and more inclusive version of cultural pluralism that he propounded after the Second World War. Moreover, in contrast to earlier interpretations in which the development of Kallen's thinking is the result of his relationships with Alain Locke, Hera Morgan, and Milton Konvitz in the

¹⁶ Pianko, "The True Liberalism of Zionism," 301–13. Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken*, 43–48, 186. David Weinfeld, "What Difference Does the Difference Make? Horace Kallen, Alain Locke, and the Development of Cultural Pluralism in America" (PhD diss., New York University, 2014), 24–25, 123–24, 243–45, 270. David Weinfeld, *An American Friendship: Horace Kallen, Alain Locke, and the Development of Cultural Pluralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022), 13, 28, 34–35, 89–90, 127, 135, 167, 197–98. Feldt, *Transnationalism and the Jews*, 125–28. On Kallen's alleged complicity with European imperialism and colonialism, see Pianko, "The True Liberalism of Zionism," 316–25; Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken*, 48–59.

¹⁷ Greene, *Jewish Origins*, 73, 183. Weinfeld, "What Difference," 242, 265, 268. Weinfeld, *American Friendship*, 194–206. Kaufman, *Kallen Confronts America*, 66, 90, 179–80. Cf. Steiner, *Kallen in the Heartland*, 70–71, 92–94, 141–59.

American context, I argue that it was Kallen's interest in and engagement with world affairs that initially stimulated this development.¹⁸ Without denying the influence of Kallen's American friends, colleagues, and students, particularly in the national context created by the civil rights movement in the 1950s, I suggest that it was his earlier engagement with the global context that helped make him receptive to these influences.

These arguments are elaborated in three parts. First, I revisit Kallen's argument in "Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot." Although this text is already well known, a brief review is needed to introduce key themes and ideas and compare them to similar ideas propounded by Jewish contemporaries in the Russian, Austrian, and Ottoman empires. These Jewish intellectuals were not necessarily in direct contact with each other, but they converged on a pluralist political project in response to modern democratic and nationalist demands that created similar dilemmas for Jews across the world. Second, I show that Kallen's pluralist vision was global in another sense as well: it was not just a parochial vision for the United States alone but a universal vision for the whole world. In other words, cultural pluralism entailed more than the internal reconstruction of Kallen's own country; it also entailed the reconstruction of the global order within which all countries existed. Third, I argue that Kallen's engagement with world affairs reveals a more dynamic conception of ethnic identity than may be apparent in his earlier writings about American nationality, and it pushed him to give greater consideration to the problems of nonwhites than he did in his initial presentation of cultural pluralism before American entry into the First World War. The article concludes with a brief discussion of how this reinterpretation of Kallen contributes to a growing scholarship on the international projects, including Jewish projects, that shaped the Progressive Era in the United States.

¹⁸ On the influence of Locke, Morgan, and Konvitz, see Weinfeld, *American Friendship*; Steiner, *Kallen in the Heartland*, 141–59.

Kallen's Cultural Pluralism: From the National to the Global Context

Kallen's 1915 essay "Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot" was directed against two main ideas, both of which aimed to attenuate Jewish difference. The first was popularized in Zangwill's 1908 play *The Melting-Pot*, which involved a love affair between a Jewish immigrant and the daughter of an antisemitic Russian aristocrat. "America is God's Crucible," the play's Jewish protagonist declares, "the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming!" This "fusion of all races" will end Europe's "blood hatred and rivalries," he predicts, and produce "the real American," who "has not yet arrived."¹⁹ Kallen not only rejected this aspiration; his essay was also a rejoinder to his more senior and distinguished colleague at the University of Wisconsin, the sociologist Edward A. Ross. In Ross's view, the restriction of Jewish immigration was necessary to promote assimilation and "end the Jews as a distinct ethnic strain" in America. The alternative he presented was ominous: "If the Czar," Ross predicted, "by keeping up the pressure which has already rid him of two million undesired subjects, should succeed in driving the bulk of his six million Jews to the United States, we shall see the rise of a Jewish question here, perhaps riots and anti-Jewish legislation."²⁰

Kallen began his rejoinder by identifying two kinds of differences that set immigrants apart. External differences were a product of social environment. These differences, he noted, were rapidly disappearing among immigrants. As a consequence of social imitation, mass media, public schools, and other leveling forces in American society, the country's inhabitants adopted English as a common language and consumed the same standardized, mass-produced goods. But

¹⁹ Israel Zangwill, *The Melting-Pot: Drama in Four Acts* (New York: Macmillan, 1909).

²⁰ Edward Alsworth Ross, *The Old World in the New* (New York: Century, 1914), 165–66.

inward differences persisted beneath this veneer of sameness.²¹ A person's ancestors and relatives, Kallen wrote, "constitute his, literally, *natio*, the inwardness of his nativity," and "whatever else he changes, he cannot change his grandfather."²² Since "uniformity of conditions" did not lead to "uniformity of spirit," immigrants were unlikely to be *inwardly* Americanized or fused into a "new 'American' race."²³

Kallen suggested that immigrant groups not only maintained their inward differences; they became more self-conscious of them in America. To use a bit of Marxist jargon, the ethnic-group-in-itself tended to become an ethnic-group-for-itself. Among European immigrants, particularly those of peasant origin, cultural life was initially "spontaneous and instinctive," expressed and conserved in religion and language.²⁴ The prejudice, discrimination, and exploitation they encountered in America generated "group-consciousness."²⁵ The next step was a transvaluation of this group-consciousness. As immigrants became more prosperous and outwardly Americanized in economic and political matters, they developed "group self-respect" and began to take pride in their "national language and literature."²⁶ Kallen pointed to cultural developments among Scandinavian, German, Irish, and Jewish immigrants to support this argument. "On the whole," he concluded, "the automatic processes of Americanization have not repressed nationality. These processes have liberated nationality, and more or less gratified it."²⁷

If America was fertile soil for the development of inward, ethnonational differences, then the result was "many voices each singing a rather different tune." How, he asked, could one "get

²¹ Horace M. Kallen, "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot" (1915), in *Culture and Democracy in the United States* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), 114.

²² Kallen "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," 94.

²³ Kallen "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," 89, 97.

²⁴ Kallen "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," 103, 108.

²⁵ Kallen "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," 94–95, 102.

²⁶ Kallen "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," 106, 108, 115.

²⁷ Kallen "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," 114–15.

order into this cacophony”?²⁸ There were two starkly different alternatives. The first was to make the United States “a unison, singing the old British theme ‘America,’ the America of the New England School.” But unison could only be achieved with the repressive methods “used by Germany in Poland, in Schleswig-Holstein, and Alsace-Lorraine; by Russia in the Jewish Pale [of Settlement], in Poland, in Finland; by Austria among the Slavs; by Turkey among the Arabs, Armenians and Greeks.” These allusions to empires ruling ethnonational minorities signaled that unison was undemocratic and un-American.²⁹

The alternative that Kallen favored was to transform the cacophony of voices into a harmony, in which the British theme would become “one among many, not the only one.”³⁰ Taking his cue from America’s Declaration of Independence, he described government as an instrument for securing the rights to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. However, he gave this quintessentially liberal idea a communitarian interpretation, arguing that it is socially encumbered selves that individuals need liberty to realize, and it is their ethnicity that shapes the form of the happiness they pursue. Put differently, the individual is not free to pursue her particular conception of the good life unless the ethnic group to which she belongs is free to pursue the “cultural perfection” that is distinctive to it.³¹

Ethnic and cultural groups could only attain this perfection in the right kind of polity: “Its form would be that of the federal republic; its substance a democracy of nationalities, cooperating voluntarily and autonomously through common [economic and political] institutions

²⁸ Kallen “Democracy Versus the Melting Pot,” 104.

²⁹ Kallen “Democracy Versus the Melting Pot,” 118–19. Of course, the US was engaged in imperial projects of its own.

³⁰ Kallen “Democracy Versus the Melting Pot,” 118.

³¹ Kallen “Democracy Versus the Melting Pot,” 121; see also 123. A socially encumbered self is one that emerges out of and is constituted by social relations. Michael J. Sandel, “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self,” *Political Theory* 12, no. 1 (Feb. 1984): 81–96. Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

in the enterprise of self-realization through the perfection of men according to their kind.”³²

Federalism would thus acquire a new meaning: the United States would become “a federal state not merely as a union of geographical and administrative unities, but also as a cooperation of cultural diversities, as a federation or commonwealth of national cultures.”³³ Kallen famously used the musical metaphor of an orchestra to describe this arrangement.³⁴

“My ideas regarding cultural pluralism have a strictly American derivation,” Kallen told the historian Moses Rischin in December 1953.³⁵ Kallen had good reasons to say so at the height of Joseph McCarthy’s influence, and he may have even come to believe it. Nevertheless, contrary to Kallen’s self-presentation, his cultural pluralism may be better understood as one version of a global project of Jewish intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this time period, Jewish intellectuals in the multinational Russian and Austrian empires began to argue that the individual civil liberties promised and partly delivered to European Jews since the French Revolution were no longer sufficient, and that Jewish emancipation also required the preservation and development of Jewish group life. This aspiration expressed itself in what Loeffler calls the “tradition of Jewish collectivist liberalism,” which sought the civil incorporation of Jews without “the destruction of Jewish collective difference.”³⁶ But the aspiration to preserve and develop Jewish group life was not confined to liberalism; some Jewish nationalist intellectuals expressed it in a socialist idiom. Nor did this

³² Kallen “Democracy Versus the Melting Pot,” 124.

³³ Kallen “Democracy Versus the Melting Pot,” 116.

³⁴ Kallen “Democracy Versus the Melting Pot,” 124–25.

³⁵ Moses Rischin, “The Jews and Pluralism: Toward an American Freedom Symphony,” in *Jewish Life in America: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Gladys Rosen (New York: Ktav, 1978), 70, 88n15.

³⁶ James Loeffler, “‘A Certain Type of Liberalism’: Minority Rights in Jewish Liberal Discourse, 1848–1948,” in *Jews, Liberalism, Antisemitism: A Global History*, eds. Abigail Green and Simon Levis Sullam (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 369, 15. See also Pianko, “‘The True Liberalism of Zionism,’” 313–16; Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken*, 37–43; James Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans: Jews and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 3–31.

aspiration aim always and everywhere at political sovereignty. Many Jewish nationalist intellectuals demanded that Jews be “accorded national rights equally with other national groups” within existing multinational states.³⁷

Jewish agitation for national rights transcended the ideological division between diaspora nationalism and Zionism, and it spread across international borders, carried by Jewish immigrants. With the 1906 all-Russian conference of Zionists in Helsinki, the Zionist movement began to incorporate the demand for Jewish national rights in Europe into its program, and Zionist members of the Committee of Jewish Delegations at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference strongly backed the demand.³⁸ Additionally, “Zionism within the Ottoman Empire and post-1908 Turkey followed a similar model to many of the European Jewish people’s parties, employing Zionist discourse to make claims for Jewish autonomy in a reconstituted multinational empire. Diaspora nationalism, especially ... ideas about autonomy and self-rule, could be adapted even to Ottoman Palestine.”³⁹ Indeed, Kallen took precisely this position in a letter he wrote in September 1915 to Louis Brandeis, then leader of the American Zionist movement. The Zionist intention to establish a Jewish home in Palestine was not inimical to Turkish sovereignty, Kallen argued, for Turkey had a federal form of political organization, and it could “admit the Jewish nationality to [the] Ottoman federation of nationalities” if it remained in possession of Palestine after the war. In his view, it was imperative that “Jews receive equal rights as individuals and as

³⁷ Oscar I. Janowsky, *The Jews and Minority Rights (1898–1919)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), 385. See also Simon Rabinovitch, *Jewish Rights, National Rites: Nationalism and Autonomy in Late Imperial and Revolutionary Russia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

³⁸ David Vital, *A People Apart: A Political History of the Jews in Europe, 1789–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 616. Janowsky, *Jews and Minority Rights*, 388.

³⁹ Simon Rabinovitch, “Diaspora, Nation, and Messiah,” in *Jews and Diaspora Nationalism: Writings on Jewish Peoplehood in Europe and the United States*, ed. Simon Rabinovitch (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2012), xxxi. Cf. Rabinovitch, *Jewish Rights, National Rites*, 277–78.

a nationality” wherever they lived, whether in the Ottoman or the Russian empire.⁴⁰ The question of Jewish national rights was also raised in another federal state, the United States of America, in the first decade of the twentieth century. The most prominent advocate was the Russian-born Jewish socialist Chaim Zhitlowsky. Four or five years before Kallen’s arrival in the Midwest, Zhitlowsky gave a lecture on “The Future of Nationalities in America” at the University of Chicago, in which he called for rebuilding the United States “as a state embracing several nationalities, each with a considerable amount of autonomy.”⁴¹ Although many American Jews did not think autonomism necessary in the United States, Zhitlowsky could point to two things that the US had in common with eastern and central Europe: “the demographic concentration of Jews in those places,” and “the heterogeneous and multiethnic nature of these states.”⁴²

The demand for national autonomy was “a Jewish solution to the problem of integration in the modern world.”⁴³ This problem arose for Jews after the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century initiated their civil emancipation, a process that was not completed throughout Europe until well into the twentieth century. An early solution to the problem was to redefine Jewishness exclusively in religious terms and to locate it squarely in the private sphere.

⁴⁰ Kallen to Brandeis, September 24, 1915, box 41, folder 11, Horace M. Kallen Papers, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter cited as Kallen AJA). As late as 1929, Kallen noted that the Basle platform asked not for a Jewish state but a Jewish homeland in Palestine, “recognized as such among the nations and guaranteed as such by international law.” Kallen, *Frontiers of Hope*, 104.

⁴¹ Janowsky, *Jews and Minority Rights*, 144–45. On Zhitlowsky and Kallen, also see Abraham J. Karp “Ideology and Identity in Jewish Group Survival in America,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (June 1976): 310–34. “The danger to Jewish survival in the acceptance of the Melting Pot image of America was perceived by two secularist ideologists, Chaim Zhitlowsky and Horace M. Kallen” (324). “What Zhitlowsky was saying to his immigrant, Yiddish-speaking, European-oriented audiences, Kallen was advocating to his American Jewish reader in American context” (326). There is no evidence to my knowledge of direct communication between Kallen and Zhitlowsky, but Kallen was invited in 1925 to serve on a committee to honor Zhitlowsky on his sixtieth birthday, and Kallen represented the American Jewish Congress on a similar committee in 1935; see correspondence related to Zhitlowsky in folder 889, Horace Kallen Papers (RG 317), YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York (hereafter cited as Kallen YIVO).

⁴² Rabinovitch, “Diaspora, Nation, and Messiah,” xvi.

⁴³ Deborah Dash Moore, “David Emile Durkheim and the Jewish Response to Modernity,” *Modern Judaism* 6, no. 3 (Oct. 1986): 298–99. Moore makes this point about civil religion, but it applies to the demand for national autonomy as well.

As the eighteenth-century German-Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn recognized, monopolization of the legitimate use of physical force in the hands of the modern, secular state meant that Jews were no longer “subject to the governments of the rabbis.”⁴⁴ According to Mendelssohn, “this means that Judaism ... is not concerned with power and therefore does not conflict with the possibility of the Jewish integration into the modern nation-state.”⁴⁵ This solution did not satisfy twentieth-century intellectuals like Kallen who defined Jewishness in secular terms as a matter of nationality and culture. Nevertheless, they continued to share Mendelssohn’s concern: they, too, wanted to define Jewishness in a way that did not conflict with the possibility of Jewish integration into the modern state. Where Mendelssohn relied on the separation of religion from the modern state, they sought to separate nationality from the modern state. Rather than seek Jewish integration into a nation-state, they envisioned Jewish integration into a multinational, federal state with cultural autonomy for all the national groups in its borders. In this way, they aimed to make Jewish national autonomy compatible with citizenship in and loyalty to the states in which Jews found themselves.

Kallen’s Cultural Pluralism as a Project of Global Reconstruction

Kallen’s engagement with world affairs grew after American entry into the Great War in April 1917. He reportedly influenced the Balfour Declaration made in November 1917; he wrote *The Structure of Lasting Peace*, published in April 1918, which he hoped would influence President Woodrow Wilson’s plans for postwar reconstruction; and he co-authored the American

⁴⁴ Norbert M. Samuelson, “Emancipation and Its Consequences,” in *An Introduction to Modern Jewish Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 22.

⁴⁵ Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 19–20.

Zionist movement's Pittsburgh Platform of June 1918.⁴⁶ Kallen expected to join Wilson's delegation to Versailles on the basis of these achievements and resigned from the University of Wisconsin in December 1918. Although his hopes of going to Versailles were dashed, Kallen did serve as a member of the Committee on Labor of the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense, chaired by the labor leader Samuel Gompers, and "the Inquiry" into terms and conditions of peace, headed by the diplomat "Colonel" Edward M. House.⁴⁷ In late 1919, Kallen took an academic post at the newly established New School for Social Research. Nevertheless, he continued to display a strong interest in international affairs in publications that included "The Future of Africa and a League of Nations" (1919); *The League of Nations, Today and Tomorrow* (1919), which he sent in manuscript form to Wilson in January 1918; *Zionism and World Politics* (1921); and *Frontiers of Hope* (1929).⁴⁸ In these and other works, Kallen expanded the scope of his pluralist vision from the United States to the world.

The "principle of nationality," Kallen argued in the last year of the war, was the indispensable basis for creating "lasting peace" and "the organs of an international polity" to ensure it.⁴⁹ Nationality, he explained, "exists potentially wherever human beings are associated in durable groups, through natural, inward and spontaneously enduring media of association. It becomes actual whenever the members of the group become aware of the history and form, the cult and culture of this association, reverence its past and hope for its future."⁵⁰ The principle of nationality meant the "extension of the scope of democracy from single to group personalities." By democracy, he meant the equal right of different individuals to life, liberty, and the pursuit of

⁴⁶ Arthur A. Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 175. Steiner, *Kallen in the Heartland*, 124–25.

⁴⁷ Schmidt, *Horace M. Kallen*, 30.

⁴⁸ Kallen to Wilson, January 8, 1918, box 31, folder 16, Kallen AJA.

⁴⁹ Horace Meyer Kallen, *The Structure of Lasting Peace: An Inquiry into the Motives of War and Peace* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1918), 9–10.

⁵⁰ Kallen, *Structure of Lasting Peace*, 20–21.

happiness. “Democracy is the mind’s reverence of, and the heart’s sympathy for, individuality,” he wrote, but “individuality never occurs except in nationalate form. Men are always Englishmen, or Chinamen, or Frenchmen, or Germans, and so on; they are never merely men.”⁵¹ Reprising the argument he had made in “Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot,” Kallen argued that one can only be free to pursue life, liberty, and happiness if the nationality to which one belongs is granted an analogous freedom.⁵²

This vision of the postwar world order was directed against the Scylla of imperialism and the Charybdis of “political nationalism,” which strives to make political and ethnic boundaries coincide. Kallen, then, was not urging political sovereignty for all nationalities that sought it. To the contrary, he saw this demand as likely to foster military conflict and political instability. Instead, Kallen sought to separate the state from nationality, in the same way that the state had earlier been separated from religion.⁵³ This would prepare the way for a postwar order with three key elements. First, Kallen favored the integration of small nations into larger, democratized political and administrative unions or, as he described them, commonwealths of “politically equal nationalities.” He proposed the reconstruction of the multinational Austrian, Russian, and Ottoman empires along these lines. “The rights of minority nationalities” would be effectively guaranteed in these political unions by an “international authority” to which they could appeal and which had the power to “enforce its verdicts.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ Kallen, *Structure of Lasting Peace*, 68.

⁵² Kallen, *Structure of Lasting Peace*, 32. Cf. Horace M. Kallen, “Zionism and Liberalism” (1919), in *Judaism at Bay: Essays Toward the Adjustment of Judaism to Modernity* (New York: Bloch, 1932), 113; and Horace M. Kallen, *Utopians at Bay* (New York: Theodor Herzl Foundation, 1958), 21.

⁵³ Kallen, *Structure of Lasting Peace*, 70–74. On political nationalism, see 34–35. Kallen considered nationality to be “the basis and material of both states and nations” (20–21), but he insisted that it was not synonymous with either state or nation because nationalities did not necessarily possess political sovereignty, nor was political sovereignty the only way to ensure national autonomy.

⁵⁴ Kallen, *Structure of Lasting Peace*, 81–97.

This international authority was the second element of his vision. Just as he aspired in 1915 to recast the United States as a federation of national cultures, in 1918 he called for a global federation of nations. A year later, Kallen proposed a democratic process for drafting and adopting a league of nations protocol, and he laid out in detail his notion of what such a protocol might look like. For Kallen, the “principle of internationalism,” embodied in a federation of nations, was indispensable to secure the principle of nationality and “the only alternative to empire.”⁵⁵ It would secure freedom from imperial oppression within states by guaranteeing the rights of their minority nationalities and freedom among states by preventing military aggression. The democratic international organization that Kallen envisioned was strongly shaped by American pragmatism; it was at once the conductor that the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey had urged for Kallen’s cultural orchestra, working to harmonize the activities of its musicians; the Great Community that Dewey called for in his 1927 book *The Public and Its Problems*; and the analogue of the pragmatist philosopher George Herbert Mead’s generalized other, to whom individuals could appeal when their creativity and moral development was blocked by particular others.⁵⁶ However, the league that Kallen proposed in 1919 was not identical to the League of Nations that the victorious Allied powers established in January 1920. As a leading member of the League of Free Nations Association, he participated in the group’s internal debates about whether and how to support the League’s covenant, despite liberals’ disappointment with its deficiencies. In 1921, Kallen ruefully noted that the actually existing League “meets only in a

⁵⁵ Horace Meyer Kallen, *The League of Nations, Today and Tomorrow: A Discussion of International Organization, Present and to Come* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1919), xvi, 5; see also 28–29, 40. Cf. Kallen, *Structure of Lasting Peace*, 5: “The only alternative to empire, to the hegemony of one state over all, is federation. In the settlement of the present war imperialism will be confronted by internationalism, the rule of one by the cooperation of all.”

⁵⁶ Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 213–14, 247n24, 309. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (New York: Holt, 1927). George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

rudimentary way the liberal minimum for a League of Nations,” but he argued that “it makes a beginning, and in the right, and inevitable, direction.”⁵⁷

The third element of the postwar global order that Kallen envisioned, partly inspired by a proposal of the British Labour Party, was a system of international commissions for former colonies in central Africa and for undeveloped countries that were formerly under the control of another power. These international commissions were to be responsible to the democratic federation of nations he proposed to create. He intended the commissions to protect the peoples and lands entrusted to their care from colonial exploitation; promote education, sanitation, and other improvements to foster their development; and ultimately, through the establishment of democratic political institutions, prepare them for self-government.⁵⁸ This aspect of Kallen’s vision anticipated the mandate system under which the League of Nations authorized specific member nations to govern the former colonial possessions of the defeated German and Ottoman empires in Africa and Asia. In principle, the mandatory powers were responsible to the League’s Permanent Mandates Commission, and they were supposed to prepare the mandated territories for eventual independence.

What did the postwar global order envisioned by Kallen mean for the Jewish people? “The progress of democracy and the liberation of the Jewish people, their admission into the family of nations, are coincident,” Kallen wrote in 1919.⁵⁹ The First World War resulted in national independence for a “great collection of nationalities,” he noted ten years later, “while national minorities in such new nations gained ‘minority rights’ safeguarded under international

⁵⁷ Box 40, folder 11, Kallen AJA. Horace Meyer Kallen, “The Covenant of the League of Nations, American Foreign Policy and the Washington Conference,” *Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 2 (Oct. 1921): 277.

⁵⁸ Kallen, *League of Nations*, 106–27.

⁵⁹ Horace M. Kallen, *Constitutional Foundations of the New Zion* (New York: Zionist Organization of America, 1919), 4.

law by the League of Nations. The Jews figured both as nationality and as national minority.”⁶⁰ Looking back in the 1940s, Kallen wrote that the Palestine Mandate was supposed to fulfill “the Jewish national aspiration of creating in Palestine ‘a publicly recognized, legally assured’ homeland,” while “the minorities clauses of various treaties concluding the First World War” were meant to “establish the equality of Jews as Jews before the law in certain countries where otherwise that equality would be very doubtful indeed.”⁶¹ Jews were thus affected by all three elements of the world order that Kallen envisioned and which became a reality in the 1920s: the minority rights treaties, the League of Nations, and the mandate system. But none of these elements took the form that Kallen hoped. By the early 1930s, he was so disappointed with British obstruction and resistance to the development of a Jewish homeland in Palestine that he considered its establishment in the near future “extremely unlikely.”⁶² He also expressed bitter disappointment with the failure of the minority rights treaties in his book *Frontiers of Hope*, based on his travels to Palestine, Poland, and the Soviet Union in the late 1920s. Antisemitism was growing and the Jewish position was worsening in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Germany, Austria, and even Soviet Russia, which officially condemned antisemitism as counter-revolutionary.⁶³ In newly independent Poland, the chief target of postwar demands for national minority rights, Jews had empty “rights without power.”⁶⁴ Kallen was cautiously hopeful about the Soviet nationalities policy that allowed a form of Jewish autonomy to flourish in the 1920s, but he noted that the ambivalence of the Jewish Section of the Communist Party

⁶⁰ Horace M. Kallen, *Frontiers of Hope* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1929), 100

⁶¹ Horace M. Kallen, “Jewish Right, Christian Power” (1946), in *“Of Them Which Say They Are Jews” and Other Essays on the Jewish Struggle for Survival*, ed. Judah Pilch (New York: Bloch, 1954), 89.

⁶² Horace M. Kallen, “Retrospect and Prospect, 1932,” in *Judaism at Bay*, 250. On British obstruction and resistance, see Kallen, “Jewish Right, Christian Power,” 87–103.

⁶³ Kallen, *Judaism at Bay*, 252–53.

⁶⁴ Kallen, *Frontiers of Hope*, 158–63. Kallen was not the only one to conclude from the Jewish experience at the League of Nations that rights without power were meaningless; see Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans*, 114, 124.

constrained Jewish autonomy, and he did not foresee that this experiment would end in the 1930s with the Stalinist suppression of the Jewish Section and the murder of its leaders.⁶⁵

Kallen's Essentialism and White Ethnocentrism Reconsidered

How was Kallen's cultural pluralism modified by its transposition to the world stage? As we have seen, scholars of American history have repeatedly criticized Kallen for a fixed notion of ethnic identity based on ancestry or descent, frequently adducing his claim in "Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot" that one cannot change one's grandfather. However, he was already moving as early as 1918 toward a more dynamic conception of ethnic identity in his writings about international affairs. In *The Structure of Lasting Peace*, Kallen explicitly rejected "the idea that the basis of nationality is race, community of blood and ancestry," though in 1918 he did see nationality as more natural and ascriptive than other forms of association.⁶⁶ In a manuscript entitled "The International Mind," likely prepared in the spring of 1919, Kallen stressed the mutability of the human psyche. Much more decisive than inheritance were habituation and education, which gave "definition and ... form to an original plastic material."⁶⁷ This more malleable conception of self and identity became increasingly prominent as Kallen engaged with world affairs and is especially evident in his writings about Jewish identity.⁶⁸

During and after the First World War, Kallen found hope in progressive forces within the Jewish communities in Palestine, Europe, and the United States that were committed to social

⁶⁵ Kallen, *Frontiers of Hope*, 384–94. In a striking metaphor, Kallen wrote that the Yevsekzie was "at once the Jacob and the Esau of Russian Jewry. With one hand it has sold its birthright for a mess of pottage.... With the other it is preserving the tents of Israel" (393). Kallen continued to take an active interest in the affairs of Jews in Poland and the Soviet Union into the 1930s; see folders 21, 321, 503, 504, 505, Kallen YIVO.

⁶⁶ Kallen, *Structure of Lasting Peace*, 29.

⁶⁷ Kallen, "The International Mind: Its Character and Conditions," box 60, folder 2, Kallen AJA.

⁶⁸ This dynamic conception is already prefigured in Kallen's early discussion of Hebraism, which he associated with change, flux, and mutation. Greene, *Jewish Origins*, 29–34. Kaufman, *Kallen Confronts America*, 36, 48, 51, 63–64.

experimentation (a keyword for American pragmatists like Kallen) and modernist projects.

“Under the impetus of a profoundly democratic social ideal,” he wrote in 1915, Jews in Palestine were creating worldly “experiments in economic justice,” building garden-cities, establishing social settlements and workingmen’s clubs, and “giving the same rights and responsibilities to both sexes.”⁶⁹ Kallen offered similar praise for the “experiments” of the roughly 40,000 young Jews who came to Palestine in the Third Aliyah (1919–23), which he witnessed firsthand during a trip in the 1920s.⁷⁰ Visiting Poland in 1927, Kallen observed the reconstruction of the Jewish economy, the secularization and modernization of old Jewish traditions and institutions, and changes in Jewish mentality. Prevailing over rabbinical resistance, these innovations were “a revolution in the life of the Jewish communities of Poland” and a “transvaluation of the values of the traditional and the customary.”⁷¹ Traveling by train to the Soviet Union, Kallen witnessed more profound changes. He described the crumbling of the Jewish “ecclesiastical establishment,” the transformation of Jewish women in Russia, and the emergence of a “new kind of Jew,” especially among the young, a “new life” for the Jews in Russia, and “an analogous development . . . in the field of Jewish culture.”⁷² In the United States, too, Jews engaged in experiments “in employer-employee relations, in philanthropy, in education, in literature and in the arts,” and these experiments leavened American life more generally.⁷³ Kallen continued to maintain at the end of the 1920s that salvation for the “mass of Jewry” lay in the “vindication” rather than the “obliteration” of “their Jewishness.” But the old, “religious form no longer has a future,” he

⁶⁹ H. M. Kallen, “Zionism and the Struggle Towards Democracy,” *The Nation*, September 23, 1915, 379.

⁷⁰ Kallen, *Frontiers of Hope*, 91–92. Despite some criticisms, he hailed the new immigrants as “renewers” who brought “the spark of life” with them.

⁷¹ Kallen, *Frontiers of Hope*, 227, 234, 193. See part 2, chapter 3, especially 201, 219–20, 225, 234–56.

⁷² Kallen, *Frontiers of Hope*, 401, 408–9, 430–31.

⁷³ Kallen, “The National Being and the Jewish Community,” in *The American Jew: A Composite Portrait*, ed. Oscar I. Janowsky (New York: Harper, 1942), 283–84.

insisted; the “modern form of the Jewish integrity is social and cultural.”⁷⁴ Far from conceiving Jewishness as static, immutable, or unchanging, then, Kallen looked forward, like other Jewish nationalists, to a politically, economically, and culturally “new Jew.”⁷⁵

Kallen’s enthusiasm for the transvaluation of traditional Jewish values and the creation of a new Jew suggests that he, like some other Zionists, was influenced by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.⁷⁶ Previous scholarship has overlooked this influence, perhaps because it does not fit well with the habitual characterization of Kallen as a conservative ethnic essentialist, but the Nietzschean influence was apparently enduring. In the 1950s, he would describe the making of a new society in Israel as a utopian project involving the transvaluation of tradition and the creation of “*adam hadash*,” a new person.⁷⁷ To be sure, Kallen’s conception of transvaluation was less radical than that of some other Jewish Nietzscheans like Micah Joseph Berdichevsky. Kallen envisioned the new Jew as a creative renovation of the past rather than its negation; it did not entail cutting Jews off from “the old elements altogether,” but rather “an

⁷⁴ Kallen, *Frontiers of Hope*, 449. Cf. Kallen, “The Place of Judaism in the Jewish Problem” (1918), in *Judaism at Bay*, 102, 107–8. Secularization transformed an “antiquated” and “religious” form of Jewish nationality into a “more flexible, more resilient and stronger” form that expressed itself in modern Hebrew and Yiddish literatures, “the rise and growth of Jewish art and music,” and the reorganization of Jewish education and communal life.

⁷⁵ Victor Karady, *The Jews of Europe in the Modern Era* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 255.

⁷⁶ Jacob Golomb, *Nietzsche and Zion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). H. M. Kallen, “Nietzsche Without Prejudice,” *Dial*, September 20, 1919, 251–52. H. M. Kallen, review of *Nietzsche the Thinker* by William Mackintire Salter, *Harvard Theological Review* 13, no. 3 (July 1920): 306–10.

⁷⁷ Kallen, *Utopians at Bay*, 19, 35, 186–88. This Nietzschean vision was not limited to Jews; “the Utopian postulate is that every Israeli, non-Jew as well as Jew, is to become *adam hadash*” (129). Just as Kallen expected a revolution in Jewish life in the interwar years to create a new Jew, he later envisioned an analogous “revolution in the Arab way of life” in Israel producing a new Arab (130). Kallen’s notion of Arab identity was thus no more fixed than his notion of Jewish identity. Moreover, this parallel between the new Jew and the new Arab challenges the notion that Kallen drew an invidious “dichotomy between progressive Jews and uncivilized Arabs” (Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken*, 53). The line that Kallen drew between progressive and backward did not run between Jews and Arabs; it ran through these national groups. Although the revolution in Jewish life may have begun earlier, there were still “old” Jews in the 1950s, including ultra-religious Jews in Israel whom *Utopians at Bay* described as no less backward than the Arab fellah but for different reasons (161–89). Just as Kallen distinguished progressive and backward Jews, he also distinguished progressive and backward Arabs. Kallen identified the “old” Arab with a particular social class, the Arab peasantry, and it was this class (in the Middle East no less than in Europe) that Kallen described as backward, not Arabs as a whole. Indeed, Kallen was careful to stress the diversity of the Arab population in Palestine (107). In contrast to the backward and oppressed fellah, the new Arab whose emergence Kallen welcomed was no less civilized, autonomous, or progressive than the new Jew.

assimilation of the new elements to the old.”⁷⁸ Kallen’s conception of transvaluation was thus similar to and perhaps shaped by the Deweyan notion of growth, which Kallen later described as the process by which one “orchestrates” the future with one’s past.⁷⁹ At any rate, Kallen’s early and lasting emphasis on the transvaluation of traditional Jewish values and the creation of a new Jew shows that he expected individuals to shape and not merely perpetuate culture.

As we have seen, previous scholarship has faulted Kallen not only for a fixed notion of ethnic identity but also for ignoring people of color or non-European heritage. If one classifies Jews as people of European heritage—a debatable assumption given the migration of Jews to Europe and their complicated historical relation to it—then references to non-European peoples in America were indeed scant in Kallen’s original formulation of cultural pluralism in 1915. “Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot” made only three mentions of Asians and four remarks about Blacks. However, the extension of Kallen’s pluralist vision to the world stage during and after the First World War led him to consider the situation of non-Europeans more fully. This is most apparent in his discussion of the mandate system of the League of Nations, particularly as it was applied to Africa and Palestine.

On Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, the Black sociologist and social reformer W. E. B. Du Bois, a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the editor of its magazine *The Crisis*, presented a “Memorandum on the Future of Africa” at the organization’s Board of Directors meeting. Two months later, on January 6, 1919,

⁷⁸ Kallen, “The Place of Judaism in the Jewish Problem” (1918), in *Judaism at Bay*, 107–8. Cf. Kallen, “The Dynamics of the Jewish Center” (1930), in *Judaism at Bay*, 245–46: “The sameness of you isn’t a static identity. It is a process. And so long as that process goes on, eliminating what is unhealthy and dangerous to the organism, absorbing and assimilating the material of growth, you have a vital living individual.” Kallen continued to describe transvaluation in *Utopians at Bay* as a process in which “new ways suffuse and transform ... the old faith and old familiar ways of working and living” (136).

⁷⁹ Kallen added that Jewish immigrants to America “shaped a new life-style which orchestrated with the old to signalize an ongoing Jewish identity.” Kallen, “Cultural Pluralism, the Judaisms and the Jews,” unpublished talk, December 7, 1972, pp. 20, 25, box 51, folder 6, Kallen AJA.

the NAACP, working with other civil rights groups, held a mass meeting at Carnegie Hall in New York City on the future of Africa at which the memorandum of Du Bois was publicly endorsed. The speakers, who “all supported ... democracy and self-determination for black Africans,” included William Sheppard, “a black missionary jailed in the Congo for criticizing the regime of the Congo Free State”; James Weldon Johnson, the Black field secretary of the NAACP; and a 36-year-old Jewish philosophy professor named Horace Kallen.⁸⁰

Kallen began his address by tracing the origins of colonialism in Africa to European financiers and banking interests. He went on to argue that colonial exploitation of Africa was contrary to the interests of the European working masses, and therefore it was “to the advantage of the rank and file of mankind everywhere ... that Middle Africa shall be regarded as a trust, not in the hands of financiers, but in the hands of the representatives of the plain people of all the world.” He called for the delegation of this trust to an international commission and for the creation of a “League of Free Nations” that would “protect Middle Africa and the labor of the world from exploitation.”⁸¹ “In accordance with suggestions offered by Professor Kallen and others,” the NAACP’s mass meeting concluded with a cablegram sent to President Wilson in Paris and a resolution drawn up for the United States Senate, urging the creation of a “League of Free Nations” to oversee the protection and development of “the peoples of Middle Africa.”⁸²

Kallen’s analysis of the origins of colonialism echoed earlier accounts offered by the British liberal economist John Hobson in his 1902 study *Imperialism*; Du Bois in his 1915 article “The African Roots of War”; and the Bolshevik revolutionary Vladimir Lenin in his 1917 study,

⁸⁰ Clarence G. Contee, “Du Bois, the NAACP, and the Pan-African Congress of 1919,” *Journal of Negro History* 57, no. 1 (Jan. 1972): 15, 20.

⁸¹ Horace Meyer Kallen, “The Future of Africa and a League of Nations,” in *Africa and the World Democracy* (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1919), 7–11.

⁸² “Africa and the World Democracy: A Report,” *The Crisis* 17, no. 4 (February 1919), 173–76.

Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. More striking is the extent to which Kallen and Du Bois converged in their prescriptions. Du Bois's memorandum called for the German, Portuguese, and Belgian colonies in Africa to be placed "under the guidance of organized civilization," represented by a "Governing International Commission." Furthermore, it called for the convening of a Pan-African Congress in Paris during the Peace Conference.⁸³ "The African movement," Du Bois explained in a 1919 editorial for *The Crisis*, "means to us what the Zionist movement must mean to the Jews."⁸⁴ When the Pan-African Congress took place in Paris in February 1919, it too passed resolutions calling for the League of Nations to take direct control of the former German colonies in Africa.⁸⁵

Today we may be inclined to view the League of Nations mandate system with suspicion as "an internationally established system of tutelage" designed for peoples who were deemed to be still unfit for self-government.⁸⁶ From this perspective, Kallen's proposal to entrust former colonies to an international commission appears to confirm Pianko's criticism that Kallen was complicit in European imperialism and colonialism.⁸⁷ However, this would be a distortion of Kallen's intentions. Kallen clearly did not envision a system to be administered by whites for nonwhites. He explicitly stated that the members of an international commission for Africa must include "among its members men who are themselves of the same race, of the same blood, of the same color as the people of Africa."⁸⁸ Furthermore, he endorsed the mandate system for Jews in Palestine. Again leaving aside the vexed issue of how the racial identity of Jews and their

⁸³ W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Future of Africa: A Platform," in *Africa and the World Democracy*, 27–30.

⁸⁴ Du Bois quoted in Benjamin Sevitch, "W. E. B. Du Bois and Jews: A Lifetime of Opposing Anti-Semitism," *Journal of African American History* 87 (Summer 2002): 326.

⁸⁵ Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 104–5.

⁸⁶ Nathaniel Berman, "Shadows: Du Bois and the Colonial Prospect, 1925," *Villanova Law Review* 45, no. 5 (2000): 962.

⁸⁷ Pianko, "The True Liberalism of Zionism," 316–25; Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken*, 48–59.

⁸⁸ Kallen, "The Future of Africa and a League of Nations," 10.

relationship to whiteness and Europe was historically understood in 1919—an understanding that was by no means simple and straightforward—what is noteworthy here is that Kallen did not seek to exempt his own people from the mandate system on racial grounds.⁸⁹ While the mandate system may have proved in practice to be a liberal reformation rather than an abolition of colonialism, this was certainly not what Du Bois and Kallen had in mind. What the legal and religious studies scholar Nathaniel Berman concludes about that the resolutions of the Pan-African Congress must perforce apply to Kallen’s proposals as well: they were based on “a strategic evaluation of the political possibilities at the time” and “attempted to use the prevalent legal and political discourse ... to plausibly lobby the victorious powers to move the world away from colonialism’s most unbridled forms.”

Turning from Africa to Palestine, what did cultural pluralism mean for the 590,000 Arabs and 84,000 Jews who lived there in 1922? We can summarize Kallen’s answer in three main points. First, Kallen argued that “the exigencies of imperialism” imposed upon the Arabs and Jews of Palestine a “common political interest in the preservation of their corporate integrities” and “the enforcement of the mandatory principle.” Kallen believed that the mandatory principle contained “the essential repudiation of imperialism” insofar as the successful enforcement of its provisions would prevent the economic exploitation of “weaker peoples” and the “military collisions” that arose from it. But he was not naive to the possibility that the mandate system could itself become a “hypocritical cloak for imperialistic exploitation.” To avoid this outcome, he placed his hopes in political pressure from the peoples subjected to the mandates and,

⁸⁹ As late as 1946, Kallen argued that if the British wished to relinquish their responsibility for Palestine, its government “could be entrusted to an International Commission of our new world organization,” the United Nations, “until such a time as the Jewish Homeland and the Arab peoples can be admitted to the family of nations as self-governing societies all of whose institutions have been established in enduring forms of the democratic way of life.” Kallen, “Jewish Right, Christian Power,” 101.

secondarily, from the labor and socialist movements within the mandatory powers, which he regarded as allies. “The enforcement of the mandatory principle is hardly likely to arise out of the respect for it by the governments at present holding mandates,” he wrote in 1921. “It will be compelled only by the peoples who are the subjects of the mandates.” Whether it would be “carried out in good faith” in Palestine depended “upon the Jews and the Arabs.”⁹⁰ In essence, Kallen applied the socialist and Zionist notion of auto-emancipation to the mandate system.

Second, Kallen argued that the “validation of this common cause of Arab and Jew” required more than a common political interest; it also depended on cultural interchange and cooperation. Ultimately, Kallen envisioned “the assimilation to one another of Jew and Arab.”⁹¹ He did not mean the Jewish assimilation of Arabs, as Pianko misreads him.⁹² Rather, he was borrowing the language that Dewey used in response to “Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot.” “I never did care for the melting pot metaphor,” Dewey had written to Kallen in 1915, “but genuine assimilation *to one another*—not to Anglosaxondom—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.”⁹³ Kallen was implicitly acknowledging Dewey’s criticism of the original version of cultural pluralism and transposing Dewey’s more cosmopolitan version to Palestine. This approach would make Jews and Arabs co-workers in the kingdom of culture, to borrow Du Bois’s famous phrase.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 291–93.

⁹¹ Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 294. Kallen called for “cultural communion,” including the creation of a Department of Arabic Life and Letters at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the reciprocal opening of Jewish and Arab schools, as well as “economic cooperation” to “raise the standard of living of the Palestinian fellah,” provide him with educational opportunities, and free him from the “exploitation of the landlord and usurer.”

⁹² Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken*, 53–54.

⁹³ Dewey to Kallen, March 31 [1915] (emphasis in the original), box 7, folder 13, Kallen AJA.

⁹⁴ Kallen’s later remarks in *Utopians at Bay* are also hard to square with Pianko’s claim that he advocated the melting of Palestine’s Arab population into its Jewish population. To be sure, Kallen acknowledged that a dearth of support for binationalism among Jews and especially Arabs made it unrealistic (123–24). He also described Israeli Arabs as “candidates for, and forces in, the endeavors toward Israelization” (107), by which he meant “the formation

Third, Kallen was ready to accommodate Arab nationalist aspirations provided they were not a cloak for the reactionary politics and economic interests of feudal Arab landlords and they made room for the nationalist aspirations of other peoples in the region. He rejected pan-Arabism out of hand as an imperialistic ambition analogous to pan-Germanism.⁹⁵ However, he welcomed proposals for a multinational confederation in the region.⁹⁶ Shortly before the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Kallen noted, the British diplomat Sir Mark Sykes “conceived of an Arab-Armenian-Jewish confederation of the Near East, founded in mutual good will and creating together there through industry and righteousness a new civilization of culture and progress which should be a potent part of the commonwealth of nations he conceived the British Empire to be.”⁹⁷ This conception was more advantageous to Britain than the secret agreement for the postwar division of the Ottoman Empire that Sykes negotiated with his French counterpart, François Georges-Picot, in May 1916. The Sykes-Picot Agreement infuriated Arab nationalists when the Russian revolutionary government made it public in 1917, and Kallen too regarded it as a betrayal of “the principle of ‘nationality’ or ‘self-determination’” by “economic imperialism.”⁹⁸ In any event, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was “rendered ambiguous” by a subsequent secret agreement with Hussein bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca from 1908 to 1924.⁹⁹ Kallen favored Sykes’s conception of “a confederation of Jews, Arabs, and Armenians in a great league of Syria

of an Israeli people out of the global miscellany of Jews and non-Jews who make the State of Israel their country” (vi). However, Kallen did not describe Israelization in terms of assimilation or a melting pot. Instead, he described relations between Jews and Arabs in terms of “orchestration” (139, 160). “Like all societies, big or little, which sincerely endeavor to make and keep themselves free societies of free men,” he wrote, “Israel is a pluralistic society” (107). Despite his skepticism about the feasibility of binationalism, Kallen was a member of the binationalist American Friends of Ichud when *Utopians at Bay* was published; see box 36, folder 8, Kallen AJA.

⁹⁵ Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 249, 258–59.

⁹⁶ In 1918, Kallen called for Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Arabia to be placed under the protection of a league of nations. Kallen, *Structure of Lasting Peace*, xi.

⁹⁷ Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 169.

⁹⁸ Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 157–58; see also 160, 251, 289.

⁹⁹ Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 162–63.

and Asia Minor.”¹⁰⁰ The roots of this proposal also lay in “the needs of [British] imperialism,” he admitted, but in this instance “for once justice, internationalism, and imperialistic interests were in harmony.”¹⁰¹ In contrast to the demands of the Arab Nationalist Committee and the Arab Club at Damascus for an “imperial Arab state, under British protection, coextensive with Asia Minor,” an Arab-Armenian-Jewish confederation comported with his own vision of cultural pluralism.¹⁰²

Conclusion

Horace Kallen challenged and recast the understandings of democracy that prevailed in the United States in his time. Against his contemporaries who identified democracy with equality, and equality with sameness, Kallen insisted that “democracy sanctions and encourages differences” and “confirms the equal right” of different people “to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”¹⁰³ He frequently invoked the Declaration of Independence to legitimize this conception of democracy even as he infused new meaning into that document. But this conception of democracy did not have an exclusively American derivation. It was a variant of a

¹⁰⁰ Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 251.

¹⁰¹ Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 169. The view that Kallen expresses here about imperialism is similar to Dewey’s view of the war. If “the moving force of events is always too much for conscience,” Dewey argued in 1917, the remedy is “not to deplore the wickedness of those who manipulate events.... The remedy is to connect conscience with the forces that are moving in another direction.” Dewey quoted in Westbrook, *John Dewey*, 206.

¹⁰² Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 257. To summarize, cultural pluralism took the form of “the assimilation to one another of Jew and Arab” within Palestine and, outside of Palestine, “the realization of that confederation of the peoples of Asia Minor which Sir Mark Sykes dreamed of,” and to which the Sykes-Picot Agreement was “the most serious obstacle.” Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 295. In the 1940s, Kallen reaffirmed his support for the position taken at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference by the Amir Faisal, the Arab statesman, nationalist leader, and later king of Iraq (1921–33). “Agreeing with the proposals of the Zionist leaders as laid before the Peace Conference, Feisal declared: ‘We are working together for a revived and reformed Near East, and our two movements complement one another. The Jewish movement is national and not imperialist. There is room in Syria for us both. Indeed, I think that neither can be an actual success without the other.’” In Kallen’s view, the antisemitism of British colonial administrators and their tendency to side with Palestine’s “privileged classes” over its “plain people” led them to frustrate the “complementation and pooling of interests” that Faisal envisioned. Kallen nevertheless called on Jews to “fulfill their part of the conception of the community of interest formulated by Feisal.” Kallen, “Jewish Right, Christian Power,” 98–100. Cf. Kallen, *Zionism and World Politics*, 194–95.

¹⁰³ Horace M. Kallen, “Of Humanistic Sources of Democracy,” in *The Liberal Spirit: Essays on Problems of Freedom in the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1948), 175.

global project of Jewish intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to foster the civil and political incorporation of Jews without sacrificing Jewish collective difference or group life. Nor was this pluralist conception of democracy meant uniquely for the United States. From the end of the First World War into the interwar years, Kallen extended it far beyond the country's borders. In the process, he moved toward a more dynamic conception of ethnonational identity, and he was compelled to engage more fully and thoughtfully with the needs and aspirations of people of non-European heritage. This creative development of Kallen's ideas, stimulated by his engagement with the Great War and its aftermath, prepared him to reconsider the situation of racial minorities in the United States later in his career. Although Kallen's thinking about America undoubtedly shaped his global vision, it is thus also true that Kallen's thinking about the world reshaped how he thought about America.

The placing of Kallen's culturalism pluralism in a global context not only allows us to read him in new ways and reassess persistent but misleading criticisms; it also yields more general insights. The Jewish diaspora ironically made Jewish nationalism a transnational project, and Jewish nationalism was hardly unique in this respect. This should caution scholars against a facile opposition between nationalism and transnationalism. In addition, reconsidering Kallen's cultural pluralism from this perspective shows how transnational projects, including Jewish projects, shaped debates within the United States during the Progressive Era and the interwar years. Indeed, Kallen himself expressed in his correspondence a keen awareness of the mutual influences among organized immigrant groups in the US, European nationalists, and American public opinion and policy.¹⁰⁴ Insofar as Kallen's cultural pluralism was one expression of a worldwide project of Jewish intellectuals, past scholarship is right to trace its origins to Jewish

¹⁰⁴ Kallen to Louis Brandeis, May 25, 1916, box 4, folder 11, Kallen AJA. Kallen to James G. MacDonald, June 16, 1919, box 40, folder 11, Kallen AJA.

concerns. However, past scholarship errs when it suggests that Kallen's pluralist vision was limited because it was formulated to address concerns specific to American Jews.¹⁰⁵ For Kallen, the experience of Jews in the United States could not be understood apart from the experiences of Jews elsewhere, any more than the Jewish question could be separated from the general questions of the age. Through Kallen and others, a global project of Jewish nationalist intellectuals came to shape debates in the United States about what it meant to be an American, postwar reconstruction to safeguard world peace, the role of the United States in international affairs, the fate of colonized subjects in Africa and Asia, and the definition and protection of modern human rights.¹⁰⁶ Far from parochial in its orientation, then, Kallen's pluralist vision was expansive in its origins, the stimulus it furnished to his own intellectual growth, and the wide range of concerns on which it was brought to bear.

¹⁰⁵ Greene, *Jewish Origins*, 73–74.

¹⁰⁶ Previous scholarship has acknowledged Kallen's participation in these debates but generally not his connection to a transnational Jewish political project. Christopher McKnight Nichols, *Promise and Peril: America at the Dawn of a Global Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 152–54, 248. Alan Dawley, *Changing the World: American Progressives in War and Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 117, 368n14. Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans*, 90.