

Immigration and Human Nature

MARTIN WITKERK

This is an abridged and revised edition of a book of the same title originally published in 2010. The new version focuses on the United States, condensing the first edition's material on Europe into a single short chapter near the end. Information has been updated, chapter divisions added, and the prose edited for concision.

The author is Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Dowling College. A graduate of Rutgers University and the New School for Social Research (Ph.D.), Professor Roth is a recognized authority on political psychology who has contributed articles to leading journals of scholarship and opinion, including *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *The Public Interest*, *Academic Questions*, and *Encounter*.

THE PRESENT CRISIS

The past several decades have witnessed unprecedented growth in world population. This explosive growth has been concentrated in some of the poorest regions of the world, while birth rates in affluent Europe and North America have sunk to replacement level or below. At the same time, travel and migration have become cheaper, allowing millions from poor regions to improve their lot by simply moving to the West.

Among the Western host population, this has produced winners and losers. The winners have included the left-wing political elites who enjoy the support of new arrivals, right-wing business elites who profit from an increased supply of inexpensive labor, and those who control large institutions of all sorts who benefit from the growth of their client base. The losers have been ordinary Europeans—working men who have seen their wages decline, taxpayers who have seen their taxes rise to pay for government services destined for immigrants, and the many victims of increased crime in urban areas.

Martin Witkerk writes from the mid-Atlantic region and has a Ph.D. in philosophy from Tulane University.

In short, the immigration debate among the host populations has opposed socio-economic elites to the majority of the population. The consistency with which the elites have so far won the resulting political battles has been enough to call into question the democratic character of Western nations. The author cites an American academic study which

PERILS OF DIVERSITY

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Byron M. Roth

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found that “economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence.” Put another way, groups such as the National Association of Manufacturers, the Chamber of Congress, and the major oil companies, to name only a few, and those with incomes at the top of the income hierarchy, greatly influence policy; while highly visible organizations with large numbers of supporters, such as the National Rifle Association, the American Legion, and the American Association of Retired People, had very limited influence and the average citizen had almost none. When the general public and elites disagree, elites get what they want from government. The authors concluded, “In the United States, our findings indicate, the majority does not rule—at least in the causal sense of actually determining policy outcomes.”

The common people of the West are not unusual

in their opposition to mass immigration, which is rarely looked upon with favor by any people anywhere:

A poll conducted by the Pew Foundation in 47 countries involving interviews with more than 45,000 people found overwhelming majorities in favor of further restrictions and controls over immigration. These opinions are not limited to people in the West, but are just as strong, and in many cases stronger, in the countries of Asia, Africa, South America, and the Middle East as they are in Europe and North America.

Contrary to pro-immigration propaganda, opposition to mass immigration is not usually motivated by “hatred” of foreigners:

Significant majorities of the citizens of England and France, for instance, express positive attitudes toward immigrants from Third World countries. Similarly, in Canada and the United States, majorities of citizens express positive attitudes toward immigrants from Latin America and Asia. Nevertheless, citizens of these countries favor further restrictions on immigration by majorities of 75 percent in England, 68 percent in France, 62 percent in Canada, and 75 percent in the United States. These results suggest that concern with immigration is not, as is so often charged, based in xenophobia, but rather a concern that the pace of immigration poses a threat to native folkways.

Public debate on immigration usually opposes “multiculturalists” to “assimilationists.” Multiculturalists believe immigrants should not be required to adapt to the cultural norms of their host nation, as this would demean their native cultures and hence the immigrants themselves. Roth notes that this fashionable ideology is a close cousin of an earlier failed utopia:

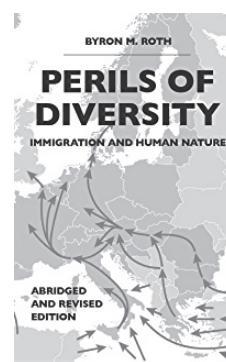
Multiculturalism is clearly an outgrowth of Marxist thinking, with ethnic groups replacing economic classes as the primary actors in the conflict that defines modern societies. Whites of European stock are the oppressor class, and the various less fortunate racial and ethnic groups are the exploited classes. Another important product of Marxist thinking is its disparagement of nationalism and its promotion of global internationalism. [This] explains the left’s embrace of large-scale Third World immigration to the industrial democracies, which serves to dilute White European influence and to reduce distinctions among nation states.

Assimilationists, on the other hand, believe immigrants should learn European languages and cultural habits as quickly as possible in order to achieve economic success and minimize conflict with the host population.

Roth notes that both of these positions involve questionable assumptions. Multiculturalists assume that divergent cultures can live side by side within the same territory without conflict, something of which there is no example in history. The assimilationist position assumes immigrants *are able* to adopt the ways of their host nation. A look at the divergent evolutionary history of the races of mankind offers powerful reasons to doubt this as well.

THE EVOLUTIONARY BACKGROUND

For most of our time on earth, men have lived in hunter-gatherer bands of between fifty and a hundred closely related persons. Such bands practice a dual morality of altruism toward those within and suspicion or hostility toward those without. As recounted in Lawrence A. Keeley’s blood-curdling study, *War Before Civilization*, wars between primitive bands tended to be both more frequent and deadlier (in proportion to the total population) than wars between civilized societies.



In fact, kin preference is normal among the lower animals—and even, apparently, some plants. It runs deep in our evolutionary history, and we have become strongly adapted to it. Most conflict in the world both today and historically has been ethnic in character. In short, human nature is tribal, and the multicultural ideal of distinct societies living side by side in harmony is clearly utopian.

Two forms of differential recent evolution are important for understanding the problems of mass immigration. One distinguishes those who have evolved for several tens of thousands of years in colder climates vs. those who have never left the tropics. The other distinguishes those who have practiced agriculture for several thousand years from those whose hunter-gatherer past is more recent.

Tropical lands offer an abundant food supply at all times of the year, yet are infested with diseases whose causes were not understood for most of human history, leaving them unpredictable. Under these conditions, success in passing on one’s genes was likely to go to the most fertile. Early humans wandering north out of Africa encountered winters with no easy supply of food, but with little danger from disease. In other words, the first Eurasians had exchanged unpredictable dangers for predictable ones that could be avoided with intelligence,

advance planning, and an ability to delay gratification. Under the new conditions it also became more important to raise one's children carefully than to have as many of them as possible. Northern populations were, accordingly, subjected to selective pressure for these traits, while those left behind in the tropics were not. Most *Social Contract* readers are probably already familiar with this material.

Less commonly appreciated are the differences that have emerged between human populations in the ten or twelve thousand years since the discovery of agriculture. As Roth writes, agriculture allowed

for a dramatic increase in population densities that were the crucial ingredient for the rise of the earliest civilizations. Once a society masters the agricultural way of life, its greater population gives it a clear advantage in contests with smaller, less developed communities. It is therefore likely to spread fairly quickly by conquest.

Sedentary food production also radically alters social organization. Life in hunter-gatherer bands is largely democratic and lacking in coercion. Leadership in such societies is usually rewarded honorifically. The agricultural revolution created permanent social stratification, and different temperaments begin to distinguish the social classes. The traits which make for success among the elite remain similar to those which had made for success among hunter-gatherer bands: in Roth's words, "martial temperament and military prowess, including a certain fearlessness and the sort of bravado likely to attract followers and, not least, brutality in dealing with enemies." On the other hand, "the survival of men in lower classes required submission to authority and the need to resist the impulse to strike out at those who treated them unfairly." The same heroic qualities which made for success in the martial aristocracy "would be lethal in the laboring masses."

Over time, the more complex division of labor which emerges in agricultural societies allowed the smartest and most prudent of the laboring class to rise to form a middle class

where sheer necessity tended to promote prudence and foresight in those men for whom it was possible to acquire a wife and children. This is especially the case where skills and talents took years of training before they could be used to acquire rewarding employment. The well-known features of middle-class morality, which stress a conservative prudence and the postponement of gratification, may well have their genetic corollaries in the temperamental characteristics of the individuals in an emerging middle class. In

addition, the sexual and marital mores associated with the middle class may have their origins in the shortage of potential wives in societies in which elite males take more than one wife or consorts. When women are in short supply, men are more likely to put great value on them and devote greater effort to their maintenance and that of their children.

More prudent women might well begin to prefer husbands of this type. The children of such couples inherited their parents' fitness-enhancing traits, making them good at following orders, postponing gratification, cooperating with non-kin, and focusing on long-term goals.

These changed evolutionary pressures have continued to operate into modern times. According to economic historian Gregory Clark:

the industrial revolution that began around 1750 in England was the result of demographic changes that had taken place during the previous centuries, "economic success translated powerfully into reproductive success, with the richest individuals having more than twice the number of surviving children at death as the poorest." Members of this rising class were also more reproductively successful than the aristocratic, martial types who often wasted their wealth in military pursuits and often died in battle. The social consequence was that English society became more and more populated by the descendants of people who had been successful in the stable agrarian society that had evolved during the previous 5 or 6 centuries. Violence declined and middle-class orientations became more common. "Thrift, prudence, negotiation, and hard work were becoming values for communities that previously had been spendthrift, impulsive, violent, and leisure loving." In short, Clark surmises that "it is plausible that through the long agrarian passage leading up to the industrial revolution man was becoming biologically better adapted to the modern economic world."

But this "domestication of men," as Roth calls it, requires a great deal of time. The men who inhabit early agricultural societies are not yet very different from hunter-gatherer bands; they are merely organized into larger and more stratified societies. Anthropologist Laura Betzig studied many such states in Africa and elsewhere, and

found that such societies, unlike hunter-gatherers, were consistently despotic, with

rulers treating their subjects with contempt, and demanding an extraordinary degree of obeisance from them, one in which the rulers “kill subjects for trivial or no cause with impunity.” In all but the simplest of these societies, rulers had that right and exercised it regularly, murdering and brutally punishing and torturing anyone who displeased them. This despotic behavioral pattern is consistent with the above hypothetical description of the emergence of these societies in the conquest of weaker and unrelated strangers. Unlike in hunter-gatherer groups, where male slaves were of no use to the victors, in these agricultural kingdoms requiring extensive manual labor, captives could be put to work as slaves. It is reasonable to assume that these conquered men were held in contempt by their captors, and in all likelihood, spared immediate slaughter with the understanding that their lives were held hostage to the whims of their captors.

Agriculture also developed much later in the Americas than in Eurasia, so American Indians remain, like Sub-Saharan Africans, much closer to their hunter-gatherer past than White Europeans. Behavior which would be considered criminal or even psychopathic in modern societies of the European type may remain fitness-enhancing and normal among these populations.

This is of obvious relevance for predicting the consequences of mass Black or Amerindian immigration into European-derived societies, but the information is under a kind of ideological quarantine. Even intelligent observers remain mystified as to why young Hispanics in the United States drop out of school and join gangs instead of pursuing higher education to prepare themselves for higher-paying jobs. The simple reason is that they have not been prepared by their evolutionary background to be patient, long-term planners. Forming kinship-based in-groups to fight over territory and women is what comes naturally to them, so it is what they continue to do—even after migrating to American cities. For this reason, assimilationism may be just as utopian as the multicultural vision of distinct cultures living harmoniously within the same territory. The great strength of Roth’s book is to have made this clear.

FROM THE RESTRICTION OF 1924 TO THE OPENING OF THE FLOODGATES

Roth summarizes the history of immigration to America up to 1965 in four chapters. Much of this material will be familiar to *Social Contract* readers. He devotes several pages to refuting the charge, widespread in Jewish circles, that the 1924 Immigration Act repre-

sented “American complicity in the Holocaust.” He also points out that had the restrictive 1924 act not been adopted, the impact of the Depression on working men would have been far worse.

The forty-one year pause in mass immigration between 1924 and 1965

created conditions that allowed for the amalgamation of distinct nationalities and ethnicities into what was, in effect, a new American people. With reduced immigration, [ethnic] enclaves ceased to grow. Connections to home countries were attenuated and there was a gradual erosion of ethnic identity as younger people began moving into the larger society. World War II hastened this process by throwing together millions of young men of widely varying background who could not help feeling a kinship with others in that enormous national struggle.

The Immigration Act of 1965 was in some ways a by-product of the civil rights movement, extending modern liberalism’s non-discrimination principle to the nation’s immigration law. The key provision of the Act was the abandonment of the national origins system. Signing the bill into law, President Lyndon Johnson claimed that it repaired a

deep and painful flaw in the fabric of American justice. It corrects a cruel and enduring wrong in the conduct of the American Nation. The [former] system violated the basic principle of American democracy—the principle that values and rewards each man on the basis of his merit as a man. It has been un-American in the highest sense, because it has been untrue to the faith that brought thousands to these shores even before we were a country.

Johnson’s moral preening and *ad hominem* attacks on opponents have remained fixtures of pro-immigration rhetoric to this day. By his standard, most Americans of 1965 were cruel and un-American, for they declared themselves “strongly opposed to easing of immigration law” by a margin of 58 percent to 24 percent. Many lawmakers agreed: Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia, e.g., pointed out that “every other country that is attractive to immigrants practices selectivity (in favor of their founding nationalities) without apology,” and expressed surprise at America’s “guilt complex.”

One reason the public acquiesced in this unpopular act was that its sponsors claimed its significance was largely symbolic. Sen. Edward Kennedy assured the public that under the new law “the present level of immigration remains substantially the same [and] the

ethnic mix of this country will not be upset.” But as Roth demonstrates,

the lawmakers who passed the bill were completely wrong in their estimates of its effect. Had any sound demographic modeling been done, this outcome could have been anticipated. As it was, the lawmakers voted in almost total ignorance of the consequences of their actions, and by any standard were grossly, even wantonly, irresponsible. It is undeniable that the general public, who did not wish to see increased immigration, and did not desire these massive changes, were treated shabbily by their elected representatives.

Among the most imprudent aspects of the new law was its provisions for family reunification, which included even adult parents and siblings. Under the new rules, a single immigrant might bring in as many as eighteen relatives within ten years. Such “chain migration” has been the main driving force behind our current demographic crisis. In 2013, for example, 44 percent of immigrants arrived as immediate relatives and another 21 percent under family preferences, for a total of 65 percent of all immigrants. Roth also notes that

the bias in favor of family members explains, in large measure, why the majority of immigrants come from less developed countries. People from industrialized countries generally have small families and relatively few siblings, while people from third-world countries often have very large families and many siblings.

Mass immigration is making America’s future prosperity less certain. Before 1965 our population was comparable to most advanced European countries. By 2060, if current trends continue, it won’t be. At the same time, the information economy will call for a more intelligent and better trained workforce, while opportunities for the unskilled will shrink. Under these circumstances, says Roth, “America is likely to come to resemble South American oligarchies, in which there are extremely successful elites, relatively small middle classes, and large masses of people whose main work is to provide services for the more successful members of society, if they are capable of work at all.”

There will be little political loyalty in such a country. Even a homogeneous nation state requires encouraging human affective bonds to extend beyond their natural limitations of kinship and face-to-face relations. As a country becomes larger and more diverse, such bonds become weaker. Often, force must be applied to maintain them. Before 1965, however, America had integrated more successfully than might have been pre-

dicted a wide variety of immigrants from many European countries without becoming overly despotic.

States which conquers territory become empires whose subject peoples have no sense of ethnic kinship with their rulers. Loyalty becomes difficult to maintain, and usually requires that the imperial government provide physical and economic security. Post-1965 immigration can be seen as a lazy form of imperialism, whereby the American ruling elite has increased its client base, and hence its power, by enticing alien peoples with the prospect of greater material well-being rather than going out and conquering them. This has already led to a dangerous decline in social trust in many parts of America, as Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam has discovered:

The effect of diversity is worse than had been imagined. The more people of different races living in the same community, the greater the loss of trust. Inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbors, regardless of the color of their skin, to withdraw even from close friends, to expect the worst from their community and its leaders.

Roth comments:

This loss of trust is a symptom of a breakdown in social cohesion and is surely a forerunner of the sort of ethnic conflict that is always likely to break out if allowed to do so. This is undoubtedly the reason why multicultural nation states are forever promoting tolerance and ever more punitive sanctions for the expression of ethnic hostility. Currently these measures are directed at the host population, but this will surely change as it becomes ever more obvious that it is the presence of competing ethnic groups that is creating the tension and not the expressed reservations of the majority population.

As America comes increasingly to resemble the Latin American nations most of our immigrants are fleeing, the promise of economic improvement is likely to prove illusory for an increasing share of them. Once America loses the ability to deliver material security, the bonds of kinship can be expected to tear it apart in a reversion to a more primitive social structure. This process may get very ugly. As historian Niall Ferguson has noted, “the most intense and brutal violence in recent history involved ethnic clashes among groups that were part of empires in the midst of disintegration and decline.” Whether America can avoid such a fate depends crucially on political decisions which will have to be made in the very near future. ■