

## **New Futures, New Pasts**

Horace M. Kallen and the Contribution of Jewishness to the Future

Feldt, Jakob Egholm

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# New Futures, New Pasts: Horace M. Kallen and the Contribution of Jewishness to the Future

Jakob Egholm Feldt

## ***Abstract***

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American philosopher and educator Horace M. Kallen (1882-1974) constructed a cultural philosophy under the headline Cultural Pluralism. This philosophy was intended to have cosmopolitan effects in the sense that it had global ecumenical concerns for the social hope for all. Nevertheless, Kallen avoided the concept of cosmopolitanism because of the deep controversy over Jews and Jewishness entangled in the history of cosmopolitan thought since the Enlightenment. As an alternative, Kallen re-invented a new Jewish past to suit a future when Jewishness could be a model attitude for living in cosmopolis. This article shows how and why cosmopolitanism has been a problematic idea for Jewish thinkers such as Kallen, and it demonstrates how Kallen's early 20<sup>th</sup> century ideas of cultural pluralism in many ways constitute a postcolonial cosmopolitanism *avant la lettre*.

Keywords: Horace M. Kallen, cultural pluralism, cosmopolitanism, Jewishness, Hebraism

## **Introduction**

In this article, I will discuss how American philosopher and educator Horace M. Kallen (1882-1974) constructed a new Jewish past to promote a pragmatist vision of the future that included what he saw as a social hope for all.<sup>1</sup> Kallen developed a philosophy of cultural pluralism that was explicitly concerned with the future living-together of different nations, but he distinguished his thought from cosmopolitanism due to its Hellene and Kantian history. I will investigate how Kallen's pluralist thought of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century speaks to the contemporary plethora of cosmopolitanisms, and how Jewishness figured in his thought as a central resource for a future universe. My

unfolding of Kallen's pluralism will emphasise history as the pool of experiences, or *Erfahrungsraum* in the words of Reinhart Koselleck, from which futures grow.<sup>2</sup> So even if it might seem as though cosmopolitan thought from Kant until today is about the future, cosmopolitan thought is equally about the past. It is also about which histories and which experiences appear conducive for the future of cosmopolitanism.<sup>3</sup>

Before analysing Kallen's pluralism, I will begin by outlining a few distinctions in cosmopolitan thought with particular relevance for my study. It is by no means an exhaustive review of the rich and growing body of cosmopolitan literature but it still reflects significant divisions between types of cosmopolitanism in today's debates. For my purposes here, it is particularly interesting how different types of cosmopolitanism enlist Jews and Jewishness for the cosmopolitan cause, or the opposite. This controversy over the potentials of Jewishness for future civility has ensued at least since the Enlightenment. As we will see, Kallen and other Jewish thinkers contributed significantly to what many today would call cosmopolitan thought but as cosmopolitan critics of cosmopolitanism. To Kallen and other Jewish thinkers, the particulars inside cosmopolitanism were "Athens" and Christianity. When we seek to understand how and why cosmopolitanism has been a deeply problematic idea for Jews such as Kallen, on the one hand, and often outlined as a very Jewish idea on the other, it is necessary to go into some detail with these trajectories in cosmopolitan thought. In the recent blooming of cosmopolitan literature, this deep historical controversy of Jews and Jewishness vis-à-vis future global civility has largely been forgotten.<sup>4</sup>

### **Kantian Cosmopolitanism, History, and Jews**

As remarked by Robert Fine, it seems like the cosmopolitan vision is more about the future than it is about the past.<sup>5</sup> The past appears less important to cosmopolitan thought than it appears to nationalism. Nationalists might talk a lot about the past and cosmopolitans about the present and the future, but since the Enlightenment and the beginning of modern cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitans have nevertheless been intensely occupied with history. When interpreting Kant's two seminal texts on cosmopolitanism ("Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Perspective" (1784) and "To Perpetual Peace. A Philosophical Sketch" (1795))<sup>6</sup>, emphasis is often on how he envisioned that the global polis should be managed by international regulation, an international council, and anchored in a principle of hospitality and much less on what idea of history his visions rested on.<sup>7</sup> Kant could not see his cosmopolitan vision become true without a universal, progressive historical teleology. This means that Kantian cosmopolitanism is dependent on seeing the world as a unified time-space where it is possible to historically follow the evolution of the human spirit; the spirit of universal civility.<sup>8</sup> If we with Kant look at cosmopolitanism as the gradual progressive evolution of reason towards a universal, global common sense manifested in a priori givens such as "natural law" and "natural religion" then history's purpose is to rid us of historical burdens that are not compatible with universal civility.<sup>9</sup> Kant's cosmopolitanism is not a pluralist project. It is embroiled in a progressive, universal history by which men gradually develop their civilizational stages towards the end of history, which is a perpetual peace managed by an federation of free, republican states.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, Kantian cosmopolitanism knows the end goal of human history (which is a global civil society), it knows the tools, and it knows the distinctions between the civilized and the non-civilized; those on the right path and those on the

wrong. Kant did not think of his cosmopolitan vision as a pragmatic best practice way to handle existing and coming conditions of life but as a definite plan of nature.<sup>11</sup>

To Kant, cosmopolitanism is a duty because it corresponds with nature's purpose for man to develop over the generations towards more advanced stages of civilization. This purpose cannot be found in individual man, but in the species as a whole. Men are simply too short lived to envelop the grand purpose of the nature of humankind, but if a universal history is to be discernable, and indeed possible, at all, it must be organized along certain sets of propositions.<sup>12</sup> Among these propositions is that every creature's natural predispositions are destined to develop fully in accordance with their purpose. In Kant's words: "An organ that is not meant to be used, or an arrangement that does not achieve its purpose, is a contradiction to the teleological theory of nature".<sup>13</sup> If we do not accept this principle, we cannot understand history, says Kant. Then we are left with playing aimlessly and with a dismal reign of chance. When writing about Judaism, Kant was convinced that Judaism did not belong to the religion of reason. He did not believe that Judaism was such a useful organ in the world body included in the teleological theory of nature.<sup>14</sup> In Kant's view, Judaism was amoral and accordingly did not carry with it the potential of cosmopolitan duty. The amorality of Judaism derives from it being a polity more than a true religion. The Jews follow their god as a despot, as a set of statutory laws that leave no room for morality and freedom.<sup>15</sup>

Kant, Lessing, Dohm, and other prominent Enlighteners advocated equal civil rights for Jews across Europe but what Miriam Leonard calls "their Christian triumphalism" remained a problem for Jewish Enlighteners and reformers such as Moses Mendelssohn

and later for both Moses Hess and Horace M. Kallen.<sup>16</sup> In a nutshell, the problem was that Jews and Jewishness was irrelevant for this historical and future vision. Individual Jews would have a place equal to other citizens but the qualities of Judaism and Jewishness were considered particular and historical, and thus fundamentally a pollution of the envisioned civility.<sup>17</sup> The history of the civil spirit went from Athens to Rome, from Rome to Christianity, and from Christianity to universality leaving Judaism as relics of history and Jews as living fossils. Though the cosmopolitanism of Kant and other Enlightenment reformers included equality for the Jews it also included a wished for death of Judaism and Jewishness if perpetual peace was to be reached. The controversy for the Jewish enlighteners was not about laws, rights, and the international management of hospitality, but about the scheme of historical progression that scandalized Jewishness in the civil sphere; in cosmopolis.<sup>18</sup>

### **Sociological Cosmopolitanism and Diversity**

Jewishness lends itself more easily to cosmopolitan perspectives if we accept Yuri Slezkine's and others' "Jewishness equals nomadism and mercurianism" line of thought.<sup>19</sup> Jews are displaced, homeless, diasporic, at home in the world, real Europeans, true global citizens, ethnic minorities, ex-patriates, in exile, to name the most used epithets of what signals both Jewishness and the cosmopolitan condition: a world in which most people live with mobility, difference, border-crossing risks, border-crossing ethnoscares and mediascares, global products and fashions.<sup>20</sup> In this way, Slezkine can make the cosmopolitan condition "Jewish" in a way that is not much different from Breckenridge et al's "minoritarian modernity".<sup>21</sup> The cosmopolitan condition exists in the sociological perspective when the nation-state, the polity within

borders in which you live, cannot secure your rights, prosperity, and security without engaging in wars on the other side of the globe, without engaging in global environmental policies, or the global market economy. Under such conditions, cosmopolitanism is needed to make sense of this cacophony of mutually dependent associations and to secure the rights of individuals.<sup>22</sup>

In such perspectives cosmopolitanism cannot be defined as squarely as in the Kantian tradition. Cosmopolitanism is both structure and agency; something which can be studied, and should be studied, with a much more empirically sensitive attitude than through idealist notions of what cosmopolitanism a priori means.<sup>23</sup> Breckenridge et al goes as far as rejecting definitions: “Cosmopolitanism may instead be a project whose conceptual content and pragmatic character are not only as yet unspecified but also must always escape positive and definitive specification, precisely because specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitively is an unc cosmopolitan thing to do.”<sup>24</sup> Instead, we should search for cosmopolitan archives globally and historically to learn about the practise of cosmopolitanism as it has been and as it is.<sup>25</sup> Studying global cosmopolitan archives includes the provincialization of the European history of ideas. To assume that Kant’s philosophy is relevant for cosmopolitan practise in Asia or Africa is simply Eurocentric.<sup>26</sup> In this perspective, the Jews or Jewishness has a model value to the world as other trans-national minorities, it seems, such as suggested by the Boyarins, who in 1993 claimed that the Jewish contribution to the world is “diaspora” understood as the ability to maintain community and identity across time and territory without sovereignty and the suppressing of other peoples. Zionism is thus the real scandal in Jewish history.<sup>27</sup> In the Boyarins’ perspective, the cosmopolitan world could

learn from diasporic Jews that it is indeed possible to live in the world without a territory and without autochthony. Studying Jewish histories and cultures would then be lessons in and for the changing of the present and for the prospects of the future. It would be significant cosmopolitan archives to study.

The Jews and Jewishness is then a history, or histories, with potentials for the future, while the case is the opposite for philosophically oriented cosmopolitans of the Kantian orientation. In the perspective of the latter, the Jews are a minority who would benefit from being protected by hospitality, law, and rights, while in the former perspective the Jews and Jewishness are a combination of a model and a prophecy to fit present and future conditions. For these reasons, many Jewish intellectuals have been wary of the concept of cosmopolitanism. Many have in concordance with recent postcolonial perspectives seen the Jews and other minorities as cosmopolitan victims of cosmopolitanism/universalism.<sup>28</sup> Already in 1783 in his work “Jerusalem”, Mendelssohn tried to unlock the dilemmas of a “protected minority” by presenting an alternative universalism to counter the prevailing idea that Judaism was a historical burden for progress; Moses Hess called cosmopolitanism another word for “a pure German soul” (1862), which, as we will see, was paraphrased by Horace M. Kallen in the 1910s, while many modern Zionists understand cosmopolitanism as an indirect threat to Israel and the Jewish right to national self-assertion.<sup>29</sup> In the following, we will see how a “Jewish cosmopolitanism” unfolded in the work of American philosopher and educator Horace M. Kallen via a re-construction of the Jewish past. Read through Kallen’s American pragmatism, “the Jewish past” and “the Jewish experience” offer the future of the world a different and better platform than Kantian idealism.



## **The Changing Past**

“They are the people, the individuals who make and break the cultures they pass into and out of. They are the true subject matter of history when history is historical. Each is a span of time from birth to death, wherein his determined past works in his present to determine his undetermined future. His future is truly future in so far as it does not repeat his past and cannot be foretold from his past.”<sup>30</sup>

Horace M. Kallen was in most ways a future oriented thinker and educator. He was concerned with producing ideas and concepts for new and better ways of living that included increased freedom of creativity for the individual but always also included a social hope for all. As quoted above, “future” meant newness and originality to Kallen in opposition to the repetition of pasts, i.e. traditions. If we can foretell the future from the past, it is not really a future. Nevertheless, I will demonstrate how history in Kallen’s thought worked as reservoir of experiences that could and should be rewoven for the sake of a better future. It is exactly in his efforts to invent a new Jewish history; in his efforts to invest new meaning in old vocabularies; in seeking to dissolve dichotomies between the particular and the universal that Kallen’s work becomes an interesting cosmopolitan archive.

Kallen’s legacy mainly revolves around his philosophy of cultural pluralism. There is a strong tendency in the reception of cultural pluralism that reads it as a reactionary position based on hereditary culture and grounded in racial categories that stands in

opposition to a truly civil American culture. This reading is occupied with Kallen's use of categories such as "race" and "ethnic group" as the instruments of the symphony of civilisation more than the individual. Kallen's cultural pluralism is thus construed as a culturalist opposition to the melting-pot that also neglected colour differences: a pluralism within whiteness.<sup>31</sup> In Noam Pianko's words, this tendency claims that cultural pluralism "stands for the preservation of outmoded, primitive allegiances that are perceived as antithetical to cosmopolitan ideals."<sup>32</sup> Pianko takes this as a grave misreading that fails to understand Kallen's context and takes its cues from a few quotes from Kallen's "The Nation" article "Democracy and the Melting-Pot" from 1915.<sup>33</sup> Kallen's recent critics also overlook his attempts at investing a new pragmatist Jamesian meaning in old concepts such as history, culture, and race. The avant-gardism that I here credit Kallen with comes to light when we look to other places than his trademark quotes and go into detail with his cultural thought and his constructions of Jewish history. In my reading, Kallen's life and work is an exemplary non-idealist cosmopolitan archive that shows how Jewishness could become a model for an international or transnational future.

In Kallen's thought, the *Erfahrungsraum*, histories and experiences, are the key resources for new associations, new connections, nexuses, or links that can open up new or better futures for new and wider human unities that we desirefully can steer our imagination towards. History is thus a resource for making sense of the present for the purpose of actions towards the future. History is not true; it becomes true via its resourcefulness for our imagination. True ideas demonstrate their truth as a practical effect, as differences in action, accordingly readings of the past must prove themselves

strong by their persuasive power, by their re-weaving of historical threads that give meaning to new experiences from which will follow that the world looks a little different and new horizons come within sight. Clearly, Kallen's ideas of history were solidly grounded in a Jamesian radical empiricism and a pragmatist attitude always emphasizing "the last things"; the ways ideas are turned into differences of action. It is only when ideas are turned into action that we can know anything about the truth of an idea or its difference vis-à-vis other ideas. In Kallen's diagnosis, the modern world of mobility, industrial production, and consumerism demanded new ways of associating with cultures and histories. Histories needed to be rewritten.

### **Turning Jewishness into a model**

In his student days, Kallen discovered that the historical threads of 'Jewishness' could be rewoven in such a way that 'Jewishness' would turn out to be a productive attitude and resource for the future. According to his biographer Sarah Schmidt, Kallen was deeply dissatisfied with his father's religious understanding of Jewishness and considered that way of living a Jewish life parochial and narrow-minded.<sup>34</sup> The problem in particular was that this self-enclosed life style did not encourage interaction, associating, with society at large and with the general problems facing all Americans and even "the world". Like thousands of other new, young Americans, Kallen wanted to educate himself, integrate, and free himself towards future horizons and as a consequence he was very sensitive to the barriers and injustices that immigrants were met with both by their old cultures and by the melting pot. Kallen's discovery of a to him relevant Jewishness was inspired by his encounter with and growing awareness of how naturally and self-evidently old-stock Americans appropriated particular values and

particular pasts as true values of Americanism. As a student at Harvard, Kallen, and many other Jewish students, learned how the self-evident organisation of culture is guided by prepositions that give directions and compasses to historical progression and cultural development in such a way that some associations are natural and logical while others need to “melt” or clarify their unique contribution to natural order and historical logic.<sup>35</sup>

As Daniel Greene has shown, cultural pluralism became a philosophical and practical headline for Jewish student politics at universities across America. The Menorah Society and other organisations including Zionist organisations became nexuses for advancing cultural politics and variations of Jewishness that in many ways created what Kallen envisaged namely unities through differences and meeting places between work, education, leisure, traditional cultures and religions in a market place of associations.<sup>36</sup> Organisations such as the Menorah Society moulded themselves after other university societies and actively sought the support of chancellors, professors, and other distinguished personalities in order to receive a blueprint for the equality of the Jewish contribution to existing and eternal values of the university and society at large. Its leaders including Kallen were recruiting both Jews and non-Jews to the cause, which basically was to level true Jewish interests with true American interests thus dissolving conflicts between strong group loyalties, strong historicity, and the common good. The survival of this project obviously included a strong re-evaluation of the kind of Jewishness that Kallen found his father to represent. Most existing varieties of Jewish life were not representative of the ethos and ethics Kallen and other Hebraists had in mind, which made it necessary to re-invent Jewishness.<sup>37</sup>

Discussions of the character of Jewishness and its contributions to civilisation have a long and complex history but in the spirit of pluralism, Kallen wanted to find and promote its practical, living dimension as more than a set of religious and traditional life styles, and as more than a scholarly appreciation of Judaism's centrality for the modern understandings of monotheistic religion. Accordingly, he found it difficult to recognise the value of *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* (WdJ) despite its rebellion against Christological readings of Judaism and its struggle against the implicit and explicit anti-Semitism of the main currents of European theology.<sup>38</sup> The WdJ of Abraham Geiger and Reform Judaism led in Kallen's view not to the practical differences in life modes that would preserve the relevance of Jewishness for both Jews and the world because the WdJ and the reform ethos was intellectualistic and carried no binding to real life. In his conclusion, WdJ and Reform led to a Jewishness indistinguishable from the average Christian practise, and eventually modern Jewishness and modern Christianity would be the same no matter which idealist notions Jews or Christians could point to.<sup>39</sup>

Ultimately, Kallen rejected virtually all variations of Jewishness apart from Zionism. From today's perspective, this might seem somewhat peculiar, but it is important to bear in mind that Zionism did not spring from sources of *Völkish* nationalism. Most Zionist leaders were European, worldly intellectuals whose turn to Zionism had very little to do with a deep love for traditional Jewish life or with parochial European nationalisms. As Michael Stanislawski has shown, Zionism was in most ways an invention of Jewish cosmopolitans who at various paces drifted towards Zionism as the best possible answer for preserving their cosmopolitan outlook. Kallen himself was

despite disagreements much more in tune with the Jewishness of Herzl, Nordau, Ahad Ha'am and Jabotinsky than with all other Judaisms since he was of the same kind: a trans-national intellectual emotionally much closer to Western or Russian art, literature, philosophy and politics than to the Jewish canon. Stanislawski's ironic remark about *Jugendstil* turning *Judenstil* in the case of Zionism could be said for Kallen's and cultural pluralism's turning modernity into Jewishness.<sup>40</sup> Kallen wrote in his introduction to his collection of articles, "Judaism at Bay", that the kernel of Jewishness is its relation to modernity: "Judaism is no longer identical with Jewishness and Jewishness is no longer identical with Judaism – I prefer to say, Hebraism – is a focus of modernity. It is the Jewish way of life become necessarily secular, humanist, scientific, conditioned on the industrial economy, without having ceased to be livingly Jewish."<sup>41</sup>

### **Hebraism vs. Hellenism**

Kallen's preference for the term Hebraism was anchored in a wish for creating an equal, even a superior, model of inspiration for the future than Hellenism and Christianity. Judaism was in his view a religious practise and philosophy while Jewishness and Hebraism more or less synonymously represented wider models of attitudes to life relevant for all people. In 1869 Matthew Arnold, in his influential "Culture and Anarchy", opposed Hellenism and Judaism to each other as two distinct civilizational heritages that represented different cultural, historical and intellectual characters.<sup>42</sup> Not only did these –isms represent different cultural sign systems in a wider sense, they also constituted a particular way of thinking, imagining and practising life that manifested itself in the specific lives of Western Christians and Jews. Arnold claimed that more or

less everything creative in the West had its source in Hellenism, while Judaism represented a strict and a moralist culture counter-balancing both Hellenism and Christianity.<sup>43</sup> Kallen used Arnold's depiction of the roles of the great Western civilizational forces as the offset to promote his rethinking of the particular contribution of Hebraism to the World. In the article "Hebraism and Current Tendencies in Philosophy" from 1909, Kallen attacked "Hellenism" via Arnold's definitions and declared that to be Hellenic meant to explain all variations of the world as mere aspects or appearances of static and structural forces, and to define all mutations with identity to something else.<sup>44</sup> Kallen's argument was that Hellenism represented an un-modern worldview where everything is given in advance and accordingly all experiences, observations and functionalities must represent something we already know when looking at it from the "universal" perspective, from the perspective of structure and form. The deathblow to this way of thinking, accordingly to Kallen, came with Darwin and "The Origin of Species", which proved that: " – to give species an origin is to abandon the notion of the eternity of forms and of the structural order of the universe. It is to espouse the flux, to allow for the reality of individuals as against classes, to allow for genuine freedom and chance in the world, to insist on the concrete instance rather than on the general law – in a word, to give an overwhelming scientific background to the Hebraic as against the Hellenic visions of the nature of reality."<sup>45</sup>

Kallen simply appropriated Darwin for a pluralist cultural Darwinism that removed the lid on the possible variations of the future universe. Spontaneous generation counted for human cultural variation as well as for animal species at the Galapagos. Newness entered the world as mutation, an event, a happening, as a practical, unplanned, solution

to functional issues: how to survive, how to prosper. In the same way, survival of the fit could be enlisted for the pragmatist, pluralist cause by way of its fundamentally practical character. The fit were the individuals and the groups who managed to come up with solutions, mutate, relevantly vis-à-vis their environment. Thus, the pluralist variation of Darwinism did not emphasise strength as in masculine power, the dinosaur, but strength as adaptability, as the ability to function and prosper under continuously changing circumstances. And the Jews were the opposite of a dinosaur. They were the cultural group who were the most adaptable, the best at functioning and prospering under changing circumstances, and the best at mutating to function well in all environments, and accordingly true moderns.

### **From Hebraism to Pluralism**

To Kallen and his associates in the Menorah society and in Zionist circles, Hebraism was the inspirational source of central traits in Western civilisation such as its sense of history, justice and science to mention the most important of Hebraic influences.<sup>46</sup> Biblical narratives and law were, in the Hebraic perspective, seen as sources of historical trajectories stemming from a particular cultural genius that in the modern world is crucial for its very modern-ness.<sup>47</sup> While teaching at the university of Wisconsin, Kallen wrote a book entitled “The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy” to demonstrate his turn of the role and place of Jewishness in modern cultural thought.<sup>48</sup> The book was widely discussed in progressive Jewish circles in America, and both criticised and applauded, for its bold attempt to rethink Jewishness’ influence on modern Western culture.<sup>49</sup>



The concept of Hebraism promoted by Kallen and others did not in any way include an appraisal of traditional Jewish life as lived by poor immigrants from Eastern Europe or any sort of cultural conservatism that implied seclusion from other social groups or society at large. Rather, Hebraism was a summation of the progressive impulse in Jewishness, as Kallen saw it. Being Jewish was, in this line of thought, considered much more than a membership of a particular religious congregation. Jewishness implied being part of a great civilizational trajectory originating in the Biblical prophets who were both representatives and harbingers of the possibility of peaceful and constructive cooperation between nations.<sup>50</sup> The prophets' spirit of social justice, peace and international cooperation simply ran through the history of the West. Being Jewish was indeed a particular identity but this particular identity's attitude was Hebraism, which made a continuous, living contribution to the history of the West.

Loyal to Charles Sanders Peirce's pragmatic maxim, Kallen considered the life or death of cultures a matter of the practical bearings that these cultures are perceived to have in people's lives and in society at large.<sup>51</sup> If a culture is widely perceived "dead" or a negative influence on society, it must no matter the degree of toleration professed by any society be considered as a space for improvement, a living museum, or a potential danger for the continued progress of society. For the Hebraists, the implications of this line of thought was to demonstrate the contributions of Hebraism to history in a perspective of continuation and difference from Hellenism and Christianity but no less significant and constructive for the prosperity and cultural richness of the World. Culture had a plurality of sources countering each other and contributing each with their own uniqueness to the common historical, cultural and social imagination. Needless to

say, Hebraism was not by its proponents considered just any tree in the forest. In their view, Hebraism had invented and continuously developed defining aspects of modern Western civilisation such as “science”, “the nation” and “history”.<sup>52</sup>

In Kallen’s ancient Hebrew world, Man did not have a grand scheme showing him the true order of the cosmos.<sup>53</sup> The realm of God, of the universe, was unknown to Man, the world chaotic, changing, both good and evil happened and order was in the hands of Man’s self-reliance, his will to continue forward in the face of evil, disbelief, loss, and chaos. Biblical Man was loyal to Life, the life of his people, and insisted in believing in goodness, justice and hopes for the future despite the evils he encountered on his path through life. Kallen thought this to be the core ethic of Hebraism. The Hebraic insistence on Life and carrying on no matter the hardships was captured by Job: *In the outcome, the Jews isolated man in the universe; “I know that he will slay me,” says Job, “I have no hope. Yet I will maintain my integrity before him”*.<sup>54</sup> If you struggle to carry on, this struggle may eventually deter your destruction but you do not know that it will. This was true realism to Kallen. In the Hebrew world, change was the leitmotif as opposed to structure, and no man was above another or free from sin. Dynamism, practicality, and flexibility were essential qualities of Hebrew life, which made it functional and empirical leading to clear ideas of the real quality of things.<sup>55</sup> The ancient Hebrews *existed* in the world and improvised their way forward, which made them much more than an inspiration for a pluralist present and future than a static Hellene cosmos. Kallen wrote of the idea of the universal that he associated with Athens and cosmopolis: “What *exists* cannot be universal, in the Platonic sense of the word; and what is so universal cannot exist”.<sup>56</sup>

Hebraism was in Kallen's eyes pluralistic in its basic nature. The attitude to life of the Jews of the Hebrew Bible was not anchored in a clear and knowable structure but in a continuous flux. The ancient Hebrews lived in a plural universe in which other peoples and other gods existed. They fought for themselves against the wilderness and their enemies. They did not look at the world from a universalistic perspective but from a practical and particularistic: how will we survive? How will we prosper? To Kallen, this Hebraist ethic was basically pragmatic. Man must experiment his way forward. This particularist but pragmatic and experimental attitude to life gave the world at least three of the central tenets of Western civilisation: science, the nation, and pluralism. These contributions represented community (the nation), pluralism (other groups and gods exist), and experimentation (science).<sup>57</sup>

Particular cultural-historical legitimacy in the present as well as a living relevance for the future simply derived from an idea of contribution in Kallen's work. Each social group in history made a contribution to the symphony of civilisation, some playing more important instruments and others playing louder. This contribution discourse is inherently paradoxical because it is so clearly an active constructivist project that erects its historical buildings and monuments on ruins and with a view to its own deconstruction.<sup>58</sup> Jews had a right to participate equally in the symphony despite their difference but in a sense this right had to be earned through education and proofs of contributions. It had to make itself true. That is why Kallen, a philosopher and secularist, had to invent Hebraist interpretations of The Hebrew Bible. He had to demonstrate that these texts were active and present as an ethical literature, which

contribution was not historical in an antiquarian sense or the source of “obedience” and “narrow-mindedness” but a central tenet of our ideas of progress, freedom, and human worldliness. They were essentially Jewish texts but their significance could be a model for all people living in the modern world of change, mobility, and industrial production. They were cosmopolitan archives. Hebraism and Jewish history was living proof of change, adaptability, exchange and experimental openness towards the new.<sup>59</sup>

In Jewish journals in America such as *The Maccabean* and *The Menorah Journal* issues of how to promote Jewish causes were heatedly debated in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>60</sup> Hebraist leaning positions such as that of Kallen but also Henry Hurwitz, Leon Simon, Norman Bentwich and other prominent intellectuals struggled with the dilemma between integration (acceptance), promotion (collective self-assertion), and what they saw as a basic right to be different. These three positions were not easily converged each of them entailing an ontological problem for the other. Jewish self-assertion had to be true to authentic Jewishness. It had to demonstrate scientifically what Jewishness essentially is while at the same time erect a modern Jewish house adaptable to the present and future implicitly rejecting both Reform and Orthodoxy as constructive life styles. The Hebraists wanted to dissolve the dichotomy between the universal and the particular. To these American intellectuals, Jewish nationalism and a future Jewish state was an implication of Hebraism and indeed one of Hebraism’s major contributions to the world universally, namely that people are naturally organised in families, groups, and nations on the background of which they experience the world. This learning from the Jews and the Hebrew Bible is also a social ethic; it was by

Hebraists but also progressive intellectuals such as Randolph Bourne and John Dewey perceived as a potential for a trans-national solidarity between peoples.<sup>61</sup>

### **Cultural Pluralism**

Kallen wanted to preserve and raise Jewishness into the future, but as an important aspect of securing and improving the social hope for all of mankind. As a student at Harvard University, Kallen became closely involved with leading pragmatist thinkers such as William James and John Dewey. Pragmatism became Kallen's central matrix for understanding such seemingly diverse issues as Jewishness, education, international politics, social and cultural politics in America, Zionism, and consumer politics all of which he wrote extensively about. Out of these diverse interests, Kallen invented an elaborate cultural philosophy under the epithet Cultural Pluralism heavily influenced by William James' pragmatist pluralism as an intended alternative to the popular melting pot metaphor.

In 1915, Kallen wrote an article in "The Nation" entitled "Democracy versus the Melting-Pot" in which he severely attacked Israel Zangwill's popular headline about the American Melting-Pot, where immigrants were melted into Americans, if they were adequately willing.<sup>62</sup> To Kallen, the concept of the melting pot was nothing short of a blind for majority predominance and discriminatory behaviour towards the millions of new Americans to which he belonged himself. The popularity of the melting pot metaphor in the 1910s signalled to Kallen a deeply problematic attitude towards the newcomers grounded in a widespread perception that chronological time gave the right to forget that all Americans came from somewhere else. The few hundred years that

separated old Americans from new Americans did not give old Americans the right to produce discrimination based on time. Many old-stock Americans misunderstood history in Kallen's view. Their production of histories was not conducive for present or future purposes. A recently invented sedentarism would simply betray the social hope for all that America represented.

In "The Nation", Kallen gave the example of the Scandinavians coming to Minnesota to live more Norwegian lives than they did in Norway. His central argument was that people came to America to live as they wished in freedom and this wish most often led to Scandinavians living with Scandinavians, Jews with Jews, and Italians with Italians. Neighbourhoods and streets were not primarily divided into rich and poor but into national affiliations. Accordingly, the empirically observable American experience was not that people looked forward to being melted into Americans, but that they looked forward to re-constructing their lives most often in close cultural networks with their own kind. From this perspective followed that the melting pot was not really a democratic metaphor. The melting pot implied that the mould was already made; it included a heavy burden of a priori content defined by the former colonisers now autochthonous Americans. To the contrary, democracy, in Kallen's view, entailed a continuous reshaping of the mould via the empirical experience of peoples' practical lives. Implicitly, in Kallen's arguments we find a pluralist worldview where both groups and individuals navigate and utilize multiple temporalities and multiple ontologies in their continuous making sense of new experiences

Of all the people coming to America, the Jews have showed themselves to be the most eager to adapt to new circumstances. “They do not come to the United States from truly native lands, lands of their proper *natio* and culture. They come from lands of sojourn, where they have been for ages treated as foreigners, at most as semi-citizens, subject to disabilities and persecutions”, Kallen wrote of the Jews and continued: “Of all immigrants they have the oldest civilized tradition, they are longest accustomed to living under law, and are at the outset the most eager and the most successful in eliminating the external differences between themselves and their social environment. Even their religion is flexible and accommodating, as that of the Christian sectaries is not, for change involves not change of doctrine, only in mode of life.”<sup>63</sup> The Jews were already on the move and not dependent on “truly native lands” for their cohesion and group togetherness. This particular homeless trait of the Jews did not impede their home-feeling, their sentimental bonds, and their self-consciousness about being a particular group. The Jews are both perfectly amenable and perfectly parochially loyal, and accordingly, in Kallen’s words: “In sum, the most eagerly American of the immigrant groups are also the most autonomous and self-conscious in spirit and culture”.<sup>64</sup> This example of the Jews served Kallen’s core argument against the melting pot’s proponents namely:

“Thus “American Civilization” may come to mean the perfection of the cooperative harmonies of “European Civilization,” the waste, the squalor, and the distress of Europe being eliminated – a multiplicity in a unity, an orchestration of mankind. As in an orchestra, every type of instrument has its specific timbre and tonality, founded in its substance and form; as every type

has its appropriate theme and melody in the whole symphony of civilization, so in society each ethnic group is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are its theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all make the symphony of civilization, with this difference; a musical symphony is written before it is played; in the symphony of civilization the playing is the writing, so that there is nothing fixed and inevitable about its progression and in music, so that within the limits set by nature they may vary at will, and the range and variety of the harmonies may become wider and richer and more beautiful”.<sup>65</sup>

This lengthy quote serves to demonstrate how Kallen thought the fundamental difference between the melting pot and cultural pluralism. Difference is natural and curbing the natural instruments will lead to pain and suffering as evidenced by the European tragedy. Instead of following already written scripts, the instruments must improvise, co-create, listen, and experiment to find the harmonies, the futures, most open to the tone and timbre of all groups. Implicitly here, cultural pluralism reveals its significant differences from Kantian or rights oriented cosmopolitanisms in as much as rights oriented, progressive, cosmopolitanisms are exactly already written scripts of human progression.

Cultural pluralism was to Kallen something radically empirical, something verifiable by experience, in opposition to idealist and a priori constructions of good or bad cultural organization. Judgment over people's cultural associations should in Kallen's view not be made on the grounds of their group's language, gods, or food habits, whether they



were considered “backward” or not, but on their willingness to liberate themselves and their group into the multitudes of associations of general society. With the Jews as a model, the medium of this liberation is strong group loyalties, obedience towards the law, self-consciousness, and a strong wish for a better future. In fact, Kallen claimed that exactly these “Jewish” qualities were “the medium” to dissolve the conflict between particular and the universal. In the pluralist perspective, people are always members of various particular communities; people are always historical; everything that appears universal is particular if we look closely enough. What Kallen wished to demonstrate was that the most historical of all people, the Jews, were also the people who were the most eager to integrate, and who were the most adaptable to all sorts of circumstances. In a sense, adaptability, strong historicity and collective self-consciousness become functions of each other.<sup>66</sup>

### **A Jewish Cosmopolitanism**

In many ways, cultural pluralism resembles what Breckenridge et al calls “minoritarian modernity” in its pragmatist rejection of idealist cosmopolitanism.<sup>67</sup> Kallen constructed Jewish archives that served as models for improvising the practical complexity of living together in a global world. His *Job* and his *Hebraism* was meant to outline a pluralist attitude and an alternative pragmatist variation of living together in and out of multiple associations of cultures and histories. Pragmatically, Kallen did not evaluate the Jewish archives he constructed in connection to their distance or proximity to the present or in relation to standard philology and Bible science. He read them like a pragmatist asking questions such as: how do they work, what do they do, what are their potentials? In this perspective, histories are always histories of effects, and the history of effects of

Enlightenment cosmopolitanism towards the Jews was not a future to desirefully steer towards. As we have seen, the idea of cosmopolitanism in the Enlightenment tradition includes a deep controversy over Jews and Jewishness, which is invariably related to the idea of a unified historical progression and the development of global civility. Accordingly, global civility could not have a script to Kallen, and a singular history in one *tempus* must be rejected if Jews and other minorities truly had the right to be different. Despite its pragmatic character, Kallen's pluralism nevertheless included normative delimitations to what is the right pluralist attitude and what is not. As pointed out by Holton, the problem with the minoritarian modernity, what we could also call postcolonial cosmopolitanism, perspective is that nothing qualifies cosmopolitanism making it nothing or everything.<sup>68</sup> Holton argues that cosmopolitans need to have "ecumenical concerns beyond the locality".<sup>69</sup> In Kallen's pluralist thought, this equals the necessity of a social hope for all for attitudes to be truly pluralistic. In relation to today's plethora of cosmopolitan thought, Kallen's cultural pluralism would be a variation of cosmopolitanism that reminds us of the troubled historical effects of discourses of universalism, natural law, and civility. In Jeffrey Alexander's words: "Because of the vagaries of time, space, and function, civil capacities from the outset are primordialized, and the ability to perform adequately in civil society is understood as being restricted to those who possess the particular qualities of core groups."<sup>70</sup> These restrictions to admission into the polis run as a red thread through modern Jewish history. Despite his blatant Eurocentrism and synonymous use of the West and civilisation as concepts often meaning the world, Kallen's thought nevertheless invokes many of the same themes as minoritarian modernity and postcolonial cosmopolitanism.

*Avant la lettre*, Kallen's "Jewish cosmopolitanism" insisted that true cosmopolitanism must be pragmatic, postcolonial, and experimental.

Kallen clearly saw his cultural pluralism as a conditioned by the modern American world of migration, industrial production, urbanism, consumerism, democracy, and science. America in many ways meant "the modern world" while Europe and its nationalist struggles represented the world of yesterday. The social and cultural diagnoses of "America" by pragmatist scholars such as Kallen, John Dewey, William James, but also public intellectuals like Randolph Bourne correspond closely with what cosmopolitan theorists today take as reality. In David T. Hansen's words about John Dewey's cosmopolitanism, pragmatism is about the experimental space of learning in-between the self-that-was and the self-that-is; between the community-that-was, and the community-that-is; between the point of view-that-was, and the new point of view.<sup>71</sup> This repeats Kallen's words: "the present is the past changing". Kallen found the pragmatist attitude incarnated in Hebraism, while Hellenism represented an obsolete pre-Darwinian point of view. Jewishness grew qua new experiences into a model and a prophecy, but not just because the Jews were nomads. The Jews, not as Judaism but as Jewishness/Hebraism, promulgated and promoted the stream in human civilization that will come into its own with modernity and even more so in the global future. Kallen's idiosyncratic Jewish cosmopolitanism sought the parochially loyal, the interested openness towards the world, and a cosmopolitan responsibility for the social hope for all in a blend where a new Jewish past was the medium, but the future was the goal.

## Endnotes:

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- <sup>1</sup> Kallen, "Democracy versus the Melting-Pot II", 217-218
- <sup>2</sup> Koselleck, "'Erfahrungsraum' und 'Erwartungshorizont' – zwei historische Kategorien", 349-375
- <sup>3</sup> See as an example Pollock's essay on Sanskrit culture: Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History", 15-53
- <sup>4</sup> As also remarked by Miller and Ury: "Cosmopolitanism: the end of Jewishness?", 344
- <sup>5</sup> Fine, *Cosmopolitanism*, 17-18
- <sup>6</sup> I have used the collection of Kant's texts by Kleingeld et al, *Toward Perpetual Peace and other Writing on Politics, Peace, and History*
- <sup>7</sup> Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*; Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*; Fine, *Cosmopolitanism*; Miller and Ury, "Cosmopolitanism: the end of Jewishness".
- <sup>8</sup> Kant in Kleingeld et al, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Perspective", 8
- <sup>9</sup> Leonard, *Socrates and the Jews*, 56
- <sup>10</sup> Kant in Kleingeld et al, "Toward Perpetual Peace", 78
- <sup>11</sup> Kant in Kleingeld et al, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective", 4
- <sup>12</sup> Kant in Kleingeld, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective"
- <sup>13</sup> *ibid*, 4
- <sup>14</sup> Munk, "Mendelssohn and Kant on Judaism", 217-218
- <sup>15</sup> *ibid*, 219
- <sup>16</sup> Leonard, *Socrates and the Jews*, 53
- <sup>17</sup> Alexander, *The Civil Sphere*, 463
- <sup>18</sup> See also Goetschel, *Spinoza's Modernity*, and Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew*
- <sup>19</sup> Slezkine, *The Jewish Century*
- <sup>20</sup> See Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, 1-14
- <sup>21</sup> Breckenridge et al, *Cosmopolitanism*, 6
- <sup>22</sup> See Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision*, 78
- <sup>23</sup> As advocated by Holton, *Cosmopolitanisms*, 1-25
- <sup>24</sup> Breckenridge et al, *Cosmopolitanism*, 1
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 10
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 10. Obviously, the perspective in Breckenridge draws on well-established post-colonial and cultural studies critiques of Western universalism.
- <sup>27</sup> Boyarin and Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity", 712, 723
- <sup>28</sup> Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew*. See also Boyarin and Boyarin, "Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity". In these perspectives, universalism is a camouflaged kind of racism.
- <sup>29</sup> Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*; Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 57. It is difficult to point to one specific place in Mendelssohn because *Jerusalem* is a long argument for an alternative universalism. But see for example his version of the plundering of the

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Temple on p. 114, which describes how universalists see the world with the eyes of barbarians.

<sup>30</sup> Kallen, *Cultural Pluralism and the American Idea*, 54

<sup>31</sup> See Obenzinger, "Naturalizing Cultural Pluralism" and Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*

<sup>32</sup> Pianko, "The True Liberalism of Zionism": Horace Kallen, Jewish Nationalism, and the Limits of American Pluralism", 300. Pianko further unfolds the positions in the reception of cultural pluralism.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 300

<sup>34</sup> Schmidt, "Horace M Kallen and the "Americanization" of Zionism", 61

<sup>35</sup> Schmidt, *Horace M Kallen. Prophet of American Zionism*; Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism*, 14-35.

<sup>36</sup> Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism*, 35-62.

<sup>37</sup> Kallen, *Judaism at Bay*, 4

<sup>38</sup> See Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism* and Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*

<sup>39</sup> Kallen, "On the Import of "Universal Judaism"" (1910); Kallen, "Judaism by Proxy" (1916). Both in *Judaism at Bay*

<sup>40</sup> Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle*, 98

<sup>41</sup> Kallen, *Judaism at Bay*, 4-5

<sup>42</sup> Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*

<sup>43</sup> ibid, 147

<sup>44</sup> Kallen, *Judaism at Bay*, 10.

<sup>45</sup> ibid, p. 11

<sup>46</sup> Kallen, "Judaism and the Modern Point of View" (1911) in *Judaism at Bay*, 42-56; Konvitz, "H.M. Kallen and the Hebraic Idea", 215-226

<sup>47</sup> See also Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* who elaborates on this theme.

<sup>48</sup> Kallen, *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy*.

<sup>49</sup> Fried, "Creating Hebraism, Confronting Hellenism: The Menorah Journal and its Struggle for the Jewish Imagination", 153.

<sup>50</sup> Kallen. *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy*, 55

<sup>51</sup> Kallen, "Democracy versus the Melting Pot. A Study of American Nationality I, II"

<sup>52</sup> Hebraists ranged from secularists such as Kallen, to religious reformers, scholars and Zionists such as Ahad Ha'am, who with different accents considered Judaism to be only an aspect of a wider cultural trajectory originating with the people who gave rise to the Hebrew Bible and the Prophets in particular. Kallen's varied expositions of Hebraism in articles and lectures led to heated debates in the Menorah Journal over the character of Hebraism, which points to the crucial nature of this debate vis-à-vis the place of Jews and Judaism in America early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century see Fried, "Creating Hebraism, Confronting Hellenism: The Menorah Journal and its Struggle for the Jewish Imagination", 146-174

<sup>53</sup> Kallen. *The Book of Job*, 10-11.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>55</sup> See also Konvitz, "H.M. Kallen and his Hebraic Idea".

<sup>56</sup> Kallen, "On the Import of "Universal Judaism", in *Judaism at Bay*, 19

<sup>57</sup> Kallen. *The Book of Job*, 78.

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- <sup>58</sup> See Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History* for an interesting discussion of historical contribution discourses.
- <sup>59</sup> Kallen, "Judaism and the Modern Point of View", in *Judaism at Bay*, 53-56
- <sup>60</sup> Fried, Fried, "Creating Hebraism, Confronting Hellenism: The Menorah Journal and its Struggle for the Jewish Imagination", 146-174
- <sup>61</sup> Kronish, "John Dewey and Horace M. Kallen on Cultural Pluralism: Their Impact on Jewish Education", 135-148.
- <sup>62</sup> Zangwill, *The Melting Pot. A Drama in Four Acts*
- <sup>63</sup> Kallen, "Democracy versus the Melting-Pot II", 218
- <sup>64</sup> *ibid*, 218
- <sup>65</sup> *ibid*, 219
- <sup>66</sup> *ibid*, 218
- <sup>67</sup> Breckenridge et al, *Cosmopolitanism*, 6
- <sup>68</sup> Holton, *Cosmopolitanisms*, 17
- <sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 18
- <sup>70</sup> Alexander, *The Civil Sphere*, 460.
- <sup>71</sup> Hansen, "Dewey and Cosmopolitanism", 128

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