

Continuing European and Emerging American Cultural Values, and their implications for Euro-American policies toward the American Indian: 1750s to the present.

ANTH 422/522 Plateau Indians

A. “**Americanism**” and the **Extinction of the Indian**, predicated on at least four distinct cultural strands:

1. **Spread of Civilization over Wildness.** Continuation of the Judaeo-Christian notion of spreading “civilization” and conquering the moral and physical wastelands of “wilderness” and all that which is within it, “wild savages.” (conceptualization expressed in Judaic and Christian theology; and thesis developed in such works as Nash *Wilderness and the American Mind* 1982). **Derivation:** divinely ordained

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness to rule the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all wild animals on earth, and all reptiles that crawl upon the land." So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea, the birds of heaven, and every living thing that moves upon the earth." God also said, "I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours for food." (Genesis 1:26-29)

Discovery Doctrine is a concept of public international law expounded by the United States Supreme Court in a series of decisions, most notably *Johnson v. M'Intosh* in 1823. Chief Justice John Marshall's justified the way in which colonial powers laid claim to lands belonging to sovereign indigenous nations during the Age of Discovery. Under it, title to lands lay with the government whose subjects explored and occupied a territory whose inhabitants were not subjects of a European Christian monarch. The doctrine has been primarily used to support decisions invalidating or ignoring aboriginal/indigenous possession of land in favor of colonial or post-colonial governments.

2. **Emerging American Values and their Antithesis - The Indian.** Solidifying newly emerging national cultural identity by creating and projecting an antithesis onto other humans, i.e., the Indian, as exemplified in the value of “self-reliant, autonomous individualism” (the uniqueness of the emerging American culture seen in such works as Benjamin Franklin *Poor Richard's Almanac* (1733-1758) and Alexis de Tocqueville *Democracy in America* 1835, 1840; and thesis developed in such works as Berkhofer *The White Man's Indian* 1978). And hence, as the “antithesis,” the Indian represents everything in opposition to being “American,” and thus must be either eliminated or assimilated. Paradoxically, as the “American” identity becomes more solidified, there is no need for an antithesis, and thus no need for an “Indian.” **Derivation:** societal/historic culture

The American:

- Individualism
- Future Oriented
- Save-Thrift Oriented
 (“save for a rainy day”
 and “penney saved is a penney earned”)
- Man Above, Owns and
 Has Right to Exploit
 the Environment

The Indian:

- Collectivism/ Communalism
- Past Oriented
- Give It All Away
- Man Runs Around as an Animal
 in the Wilderness

Examples of emerging American Values:

"Early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."

"God helps them that help themselves."

"Lost time is never found again."

"Plough deep while sluggards sleep, and you shall have corn to sell and keep, says Poor Dick."

"He that lives upon hope will die fasting."

"There are no gains without pains."

"If you would be wealthy, think of saving as well as of getting."

So wrote **Benjamin Franklin** (1706-1790) in *Poor Richard's Almanac* (1733-1758).

The Emerging Construct of Individualism:

"Individualism is a word recently coined to express a new idea."

"Individualism is a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into a circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself."

"There are more and more people who, though neither rich nor powerful enough to have much hold over others, have gained or kept enough wealth and enough understanding to look after their own needs. Such folk owe no man anything and hardly expect anything from anybody. They form the habit of thinking of themselves in isolation and imagine that their whole destiny is in their hands."

"Each man is forever thrown back on himself alone, and there is danger that he may be shut up in the solitude of his own heart," forgetting his ancestors, his descendants and isolating himself from his contemporaries.

"It is odd to watch with what feverish ardor Americans pursue prosperity, ever tormented by the shadowy suspicion that they may not have chosen the shortest route to get it. They cleave to the things of this world as if assured that they will never die, and yet rush to snatch any that come within their reach, as if they expected to stop living before they relished them. Death steps in, in the end, and stops them, before they have grown tired of this futile pursuit of that complete felicity which always escapes them."

So wrote the French social philosopher, **Alex de Tocqueville**, in *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville traveled throughout America of the 1830s, observing the emerging character of its people.

3. Landownership Equated with Freedom. American freedom equated with landownership, e.g., voting rights predicate upon owning land, and hence need to vast expansive land holding for an increasing “free” white male American population (conceptualization developed by America’s “founding fathers”). **Derivation:** societal/historic legal economic culture

4. Territorial Integrity, Capitalism and Survival of the Fittest. As with most any newly forming nation-state, there is a need for territorial, military, economic and political viability, and hence securing the land for the nationals and removing or confining non-nationals, i.e., the Indian. In the instance of the emerging American nation, it was the borrowed European “capitalistic form of economy,” the securing of a viable land-base was all the more essential given the need for expanding markets and diversified natural resources base, and the conceptualization of a world governed by “survival of the fittest” that were particularly emphasized in the emerging American identity. **Derivation:** societal/historical socio-political economic culture

It was **Adam Smith** (1723-1790), the Scottish political philosopher and economist, who laid out the fundamental principles of laissez-faire capitalism in his *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. Primary among these principles is his clarification of a basic human motivation. According to Smith, man is, by nature, acquisitive. People are driven by the desire to accumulate material wealth. And it is a demand that is never satisfied. It is a drive innate within all of humanity, a drive to maximize one's own gains and to minimize one's own losses; it is the drive for self-interest. In the ebbs and flows of the supply and demand market-place, this desire fuels the system and is measured in terms of profit. As such, capitalism is predicated on an ever-expanding economy; it is predicated on growth. Without this elementary human condition, capitalism would cease and collapse. Capitalism had not manifested itself as a significant economic system prior to the European Renaissance. It flourished after the Renaissance (ca. 1600-present).

The English philosopher **Herbert Spencer** (1820-1903) added still another clarification of human motivation. Borrowing loosely from the model of biological evolution as developed by Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Spencer applied an evolutionary model to human social institutions. Through time, human society evolves into more advanced states. Progress is endemic to human institutions and is inevitable. The mechanism for this advancement is what Spencer called “survival of the fittest.” Some individuals in society and some societies among various societies are better endowed than others to adapt to the rigors of competition. They have a natural right to initiate, direct and benefit from societal institutions. Progress depends upon their initiatives. The human condition is a

competitive condition. And a competitive individual is a strong and successful individual.

Expressive and Culminating Examples of Emerging American Culture: a. “Manifest Destiny” and “go west young man, go west,” b. aspects of treaties, c. the Dawes Act of 1887, d. Termination Policy of the 1950s, e. U.S. Supreme Court rulings such as *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* in 1831, *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* in 1903, and *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protection Association* in 1988.

B. “Children of God” and the Assimilation of the Indian

“Change the body to save the soul,” and establish and protect a Christian “Wilderness Kingdom of God” for the Indian. By molding the Indian into a white American, the soul of the Indian can be saved. (conceptualization best expressed in Protestant and Jesuit Catholic missionary policies; and thesis developed in such works as Nash *Wilderness and the American Mind* 1982). **Derivation:** divinely ordained

Expressive Examples: a. government and missionary run boarding schools, b. Christian missionary activities in general.

C. “United States Legitimacy” and the Sovereignty of the Indian

As a newly forming nation-state, the United States needs to convey an image to the established European states that it is law-biding and law-making, and hence worthy of the designation as a “legitimate government.” Thus, as the United States is a sovereign nation, so too are those it interacts with, i.e., the Indian nations. **Derivation:** societal/historical legal culture- “govern by consent of the people”

Expressive Examples: a. enter into treaty relations and acknowledgment of reserved rights, b. U.S. Supreme Court rulings such as *Worster v. Georgia* in 1832 and *United States v. Winans* in 1905.

D. “Noble Savage,” and American Pluralism as well as the Romanticization of the Indian

The American Indian represents pure human virtues, uncontaminated by “civilization,” and hence the idealized Indian has not only a right to exist, but Euro-Americans should emulate the Indian (conceptualization expressed in such works as Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1760s France; Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau in the 1830s - 1860s America; and thesis developed in such works as Nash *Wilderness and the American Mind* 1982). **Derivation:** literary and intellectual culture

Expressive Examples: a. motivations of John Collier and other idealists, b. in the popular venues of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, and Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves*.

Importantly, the coalescing of both C and D sets of values contributed significantly in such **federal policy expressions** as: a. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, b. Self Determination Act of 1975, c. American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, d. Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, e. Native American Free Exercise of Religion Act of 1993.

Frey last updated 24 January 2011