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# Review of *The New Americans: How the Melting Pot Can Work Again*, by Michael Barone

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autonomous private organizations as a check on the government and as a means of discovering new social and political ideas, the answer should be obvious.

*Civil Rights and Public Accommodations* provides a sound, if not especially exciting, description of the constitutional litigation over the federal government's initial foray into the regulation of public accommodations. But if the reader wants to understand the continuing controversy over the effects of that foray, he will have to look elsewhere. □

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## The New Americans: How the Melting Pot Can Work Again

by Michael Barone

Regnery Publishing • 2001 • 338 pages • \$27.95

*Reviewed by Fred Foldvary*

**D**uring the past decade there has been a large inflow of immigrants into the United States, especially from Latin America and Asia, raising fears that the new immigrants may not merge as easily or swiftly into the American culture and economy as previous waves of immigrants. There have also been concerns that the black migrants from the south during and after World War II have not been sufficiently advancing economically.

Michael Barone's study reveals startling similarities between the old and new ethnic waves. Barone pairs the Irish with the blacks, Italians with Latinos, and Jews with Asians to demonstrate that "we've been here before." Recent immigration is a *déjà vu* of the earlier folks who came to America, repeating previous cultural and economic patterns. While acknowledging differences between the linked pairs and variation within groups such as Latinos, there are nevertheless common patterns of culture and history.

*The New Americans* has a chapter for each ethnic group, all structured similarly.

Barone applies his extensive experience as a political historian, senior writer at *U.S. News & World Report*, and coauthor of the biannual *Almanac of American Politics* to describe the old country, journey to America, life in the new country, work patterns, family orientation, religious practice, education, prevalence of crime, political participation, distinctiveness as a group, emergence in sports and entertainment, and convergence into the American mainstream for each group.

Describing the Irish, Barone depicts the massive discrimination that they faced, their initial poverty and lack of entrepreneurship, the high degree of fatherless families, the importance of religion, and high rates of crime. These largely forgotten characteristics are surprisingly similar to those associated with black Americans. While we think of Irish today as no different in appearance from other Caucasians, Barone shows that attitudes 100 to 150 years ago were much like prejudices against blacks recently and presently. The Irish were regarded by many Americans as an inferior race. Some Irish rose to prominence in sports and entertainment, just as blacks did later. Both looked to government to obtain power and employment opportunities. But now the Irish have converged into America, although many have retained their ethnic identity.

Like the Irish, black Americans had an "old country," the old South, where most still resided until the 1930s. Like the Irish, blacks have had a lower rate of married couples, but they too made economic gains. Barone notes a key difference in government policy: racial quotas and preferences for blacks, which reduce their incentive to high achievement. Still, Barone observes that the racial divide is fading rapidly, just as ethnic divisions did for earlier immigrants. It took 120 years for the Irish to become fully assimilated, and Barone thinks it may not take as long for blacks, whose mass migration began 60 years ago.

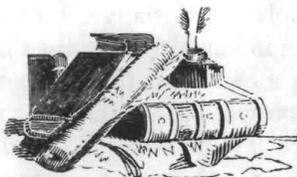
The "uncanny resemblance," as Barone puts it, between Italian immigrants and the current wave of Latino newcomers shows that the Spanish-speaking arrivals too will

merge into mainstream America. Neither initially placed much value in education, but both were diligent workers and family-oriented, and both largely shunned welfare-state aid and, initially, politics. Just as Italians became interwoven into American life after being clustered in ethnic enclaves, so too do later generations of Latinos learn English and make economic advances. As with blacks, Latinos face a policy difference, especially with bilingual education, which in practice has often been Spanish-based. Its failures are now evident, and there is movement back to English-based instruction.

In contrast to Italians and Latinos, both Jews and East Asians traditionally valued schooling, and they have achieved higher levels of education than native-born Americans. Jews and Asians have strong family ties and low crime rates. Jews have become prominent in the professions and in the entertainment industry, and prejudice has receded as Jews have converged and intermarried to such a high degree there is fear in the Jewish community that it has become too assimilated and may lose its identity. Inter-marriage is becoming high also with Asians as anti-Asian discrimination has vanished.

Barone not only paints a hopeful picture of the assimilation of immigrants into the America they came to for freedom and economic opportunity, but also shows that the American spirit has overcome prejudices. This is an excellent book both for information on the sociology of immigrants and for the policy implication that we need not fear any loss of American cohesion even with large amounts of immigration. □

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## Ethics as Social Science: The Moral Philosophy of Social Cooperation

by Leland Yeager

Edward Elgar • 2001 • 352 pages • \$160.00

Reviewed by Gene Callahan

Professor Leland Yeager has had a long and distinguished career as an economist. The focus of his economic research has been on monetary issues, but regular readers of his work will know of his wide range of interests and not be surprised to see him taking on a topic like ethics.

Yeager is to be congratulated for the modesty of his central claim, as demonstrated in the title: *Ethics as Social Science*, rather than *Ethics Is Social Science*. It is an important distinction, the significance of which Yeager highlights early on, when he tells us that his approach “recognizes that fact and logic alone cannot recommend private actions and public policies; ethical judgments must also enter in.” Nevertheless, “[k]nowing that ‘good intentions are not enough,’ social science insists on comparing how alternative sets of institutions and rules are likely to work.” Yeager is not attempting to produce a “system” that, when fed an ethical dilemma, will spit out a correct course of action. Rather, he is offering a distinctive vantage point on ethical problems, an angle that may yield a newly illuminative view.

In fact Yeager, following in the footsteps of Karl Popper and William Bartley, explicitly rejects the search for absolutely justified beliefs, in ethics as in other fields. Instead, he endorses Bartley’s *pancritical rationalism*, holding that our beliefs only should be required to stand up to the best blows that rational criticism can deliver. The search for absolute justification is a snark hunt.

Yeager, as he acknowledges, is following in the footsteps of Ludwig von Mises and Henry Hazlitt in putting forward a utilitarian basis for ethics. He praises Hazlitt’s *The Foundations of Morality* as the “best single book on ethics that I know of.” Yeager’s book, in fact, “echoes Hazlitt’s ideas” in light of subsequent work in ethical theory.