

THE ROLE OF GERMAN-AMERICAN SOCIAL GROUPS IN THE ASSIMILATION OF GERMAN IMMIGRANTS

In reviewing the second edition of his epoch-making book, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*,¹ Oscar Handlin adds a chapter which reviews his initial difficulties in assessing the impact of immigration on the average individual as well as the critical reception of his ideas since their first articulation. As he notes, it is problematic at best to attempt a divination of the reactions of a non-literary class of people. Moreover, the scholarly community resists any tendency to generalize — to approximate an average experience out of a broad spectrum of specific instances. Yet any understanding of persons with little time or inclination to chronicle their lives must be drawn from indirect reports.

Handlin's observations certainly hold for the German-American experience. German immigration into the United States — especially during the nineteenth century — is difficult to define. Many of its distinguishing characteristics are necessarily defined by the reactions of the individuals involved, and any attempt to delineate accurately the nature of the phenomenon must gauge and equitably distill thousands of uniquely personal experiences into an adequate representation of what the German-American immigration "was." Such an undertaking is continually frustrated by the elusiveness of the evidence, by its unwillingness to conform to a well-defined pattern.

Immigration to the United States from Germany during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shows little consistency of character. It was by nature emphatically complex. Large numbers of people came, and as a whole, they were a motley throng — considerably more heterogenous than their predecessors. Although members of a family frequently traveled together, at least early in the period, the individual family was not likely to be a part of a larger, group movement. The

thirties and forties were rife with plans for mass immigration and colonization, but despite the publicity surrounding such ventures, they generally elicited little favorable popular response and had almost no practical effect on the nature of immigration.² The move to America during this era of greatest influx was for its entire duration largely a personal act. The individual, joined at times by members of his immediate family, reached his conclusion to emigrate privately and set off on his journey alone.

Naturally many external forces occasioned such a decision. Economic exigencies were almost inevitably a factor in the desire to relocate, and whether or not one elected to depart for America was doubtless determined in part by his attitude toward that distant land. Although there seems to be no solid evidence to point up one specific image of America and its possible relationship to an individual's decision to emigrate, the European conception of the distant American continent seems to have played a definite role in influencing many a potential emigrant.³ Which one of the several available concepts of America might have proven most attractive to an individual emigrant is often impossible to determine. As the decision to emigrate was largely a personal one, it is likely that separate elements of the popular image may well have appealed to different individuals in varying degrees. Other causes contributed as well to the migratory urge. But in the end, emigration was a profoundly personal reaction to a specific set of outside influences, and for the majority of the individuals and families involved, it was a lonely undertaking. Many times travelers had friends in America whom they hoped to contact and from whom they thought to receive some aid in adjusting to the strange situation. Yet increasingly Germans were settling in the West, and the journey from a port of entry to an acquaintance and potential assistance was

itself a lengthy and toilsome, cross-country or upriver trek. In all, the difficult, and often frightening, task of relocation had to be accomplished alone.

A more sanguine view of the American continent, improved physical conditions, reduced hardships, and cheaper, more efficient intra-European and transatlantic transportation combined to increase the flow of travelers westward across the ocean. In the course of the century millions entered as immigrants. Eighteen fifty-four and 1882 were the peak years of German immigration, and in each of those years alone about a quarter of a million emigrants from German-speaking countries entered the United States.⁴ They were more numerous, they arrived with greater frequency, and they traveled more independently than their predecessors. Moreover, increasingly throughout the period, immigrants were drawn from a broader geographical area. In a politically atomized region such as the Germany of the time, this necessarily meant an intensification of the diversified character of German immigration which was already apparent in the growing tendency to emigrate as individuals or in very intimate and discreet family units. And precisely because Germans leaving home for America in the nineteenth century were no longer inclined toward group endeavor as their counterparts in previous centuries had been, they encountered in immigration psychological adversity despite an improving material situation.

Because he traveled essentially alone, the nineteenth-century immigrant did not bring with him an effective sense of group identity. Consequently deprived of a familiar social and cultural context in which to function, he usually experienced feelings of isolation and alienation. He had no fellows with whom to commiserate, few colleagues in his efforts to adjust, and little real sense of personal or communal identity.

In his book, *Germany and the Emigration, 1816-1885?* Mack Walker has determined that those who left home came largely from the middle class, an extremely vulnerable class economically and a group keenly sensitive to

the feelings of inevitable change in the air in nineteenth-century Europe. Although an individual's conscious motives were invariably dependent upon many only vaguely scrollable factors, those who emigrated in general did so in the hope of maintaining their customary way of life. The act may have been extreme⁶ — certainly not an option chosen by everyone in similar circumstances — but the motivation behind it was decidedly conservative. Emigrants were an anxious group, disturbed by the uncertainty and insecurity of the age.⁷ They felt threatened by new land policies and the movement toward a money economy, both public and private.⁸ For the peasant these developments meant more taxes, less acreage, and the loss of his sons' labor through conscription; the artisan saw the forbidding omens of change in a shrinking clientele. Both sought in emigration a means of escaping an uncertain future and ensuring the continued integrity of life as they knew it.

It remained for the nineteenth-century immigrant to realize his vision of a secure future, and America seemed to offer the immigrant a haven from abrupt and unwelcome fluctuations in the normal pattern of life.⁹ Yet in working toward that end he was suddenly confronted with the fact of his solitude. His mental and physical welfare demanded a sense of identity and a sense of purpose in a community of his fellows.¹⁰ Thus the nineteenth-century German immigrant, having most likely made the transatlantic crossing by himself or with his immediate family, actively sought companionship and association with others upon disembarkation in order to achieve the community of interests essential to the preservation of his personal and psychological well-being and to recreate the familiar institutions that had constituted the context within which he had formerly functioned from day to day.

The broad geographical base and individualistic character of emigration during the period did not, however, produce the religious affinities and natural compatibility which had been such distinct features of the previous era of emigration. A common language and vaguely similar national origins, as

well as the need for group identity, often provided the only basis for the cultivation of a potential relationship among German immigrants during the nineteenth century.¹¹ Rowland Berthoff depicts the situation in many localities: "The strongest bond among the members of a local ethnic group was the consciousness of what they were not. Surrounded by other kinds of people, the Irishman, Norwegian, or Yankee began to turn what had been a neutral circumstance, the customary common culture which everyone in his own community had taken for granted, into an exclusive principle of self-identification."¹²

Thus it happened that German-Americans living in loose-knit, rather random enclaves quickly gained a heightened awareness of their common ethnic and cultural heritage. The atomization of nineteenth-century American life, which frequently disturbed even the native-born,¹³ ran very much counter to the expectations of most immigrants. Although he desired the freedom to pursue his livelihood as he saw fit, the individual emigrant continued to define his social identity and moral worth in terms of his membership in a group.¹⁴ In his adopted country he sought the right to sustain his association with a group which would provide the framework within which he might realize his first goal in emigration — the preservation of a former way of life. As it developed, then, German-American society was a product of the interaction between the physical and emotional requirements of the immigrant and prevailing social conditions in the United States.

In Europe the life of an individual had been whole and integrated,¹⁵ and the church had often been the nucleus about which most community life had revolved. Soon after arrival most immigrants, regardless of faith, routinely acted to restore the traditional nature of their denomination in the hope that it might remain a compelling force for personal discipline and doctrinal conviction among the faithful. The majority saw in the perpetuation of familiar religious forms a very attractive and highly serviceable vehicle for the re-establishment of group life and, subsequently, a sense of group identity. Conserva-

tism, the maintenance of the status quo and the perpetuation of standing institutions with no precipitous innovations, was a guiding principle for almost every immigrant, and its essence ruled each of his communal endeavors.

A number of investigators have remarked upon the conservatism of most German-Americans as well as the provincial nature of the society they built.¹⁶ Yet very few have taken sufficient notice of this, rather distinctive characteristic of German-American society and fewer still have undertaken to explain its existence. The following quotations are two examples of the incomplete attempts to find an adequate explanation of German-American conservatism:

Because the Germans were unable to respect or, sometimes, to understand the social habits and standards of culture of their American neighbors, particularly in the newly developed regions, they sought to preserve as much as possible their old world habits and culture (Hawgood, p.41).

Considerations of language, the physical concentration of the urban community, and a natural submission to their political and religious leaders led these Europeans to reproduce the domestic, religious, and educational practices of the Fatherland in the New World (Still, p. 80).

In a short time the church again became the center of community life. In fact, it ultimately played a vital part in supplying many of the non-religious needs of its members, for there grew up about each German-American congregation a considerable number of lay organization which provided the population with a wide variety of services. From mutual aid societies, volunteer fire companies, and cooperative insurance agencies to glee clubs, *Turnvereine* [gymnastic unions], and secret lodges, the broad range of immigrant associations always drew attention to the clannishness of the newcomer, particularly the German-American.¹⁷ To the immigrant, however, membership in such groups provided fellowship in a time of stress. Emigration interrupted the regularity of life, and the strange American environment seemed to militate against the full restoration of the conventional order. Union with one's comrades

— be it serious and practical or frivolous and fraternal — was an attempt to duplicate the sense of community the immigrant had known at home. In the midst of the apparent chaos of American life, the ethnic group provided a person with standards of behavior and moral sanctions imported from the homeland as it simultaneously established a well-defined position for him in his adopted society.

Inspection shows that there was not, in fact, an irreconcilable disparity between the more moderate views of the majority of the German-American public and the liberal tendencies of a decidedly smaller segment of the population. Undeniably, a very vocal and highly visible radical or lunatic fringe did exist. Indeed the actions of a few shortsighted, potential world reformers at the Chicago Haymarket bombing and subsequent riot in 1886 did much to politicize and finally discredit the activities of progressive thinkers of all persuasions, but the predominant majority of those German-Americans who called themselves free-thinkers or even socialists rarely espoused principles more radical than the three-part motto of the French Revolution: liberty; equality; and brotherhood.¹⁸ Organizations, such as the *North American Turner Union* which were founded directly after the abortive revolutions of 1848 by expatriates who were anxious to realize the aims of those European uprisings on American soil, did profess ideals which might be considered vaguely socialistic even today. William Kamman, says simply: "Many of the principles advocated by the North American Gymnastic Union are now generally considered socialistic. They oppose, for example, the extreme concentration of wealth, and political power in the hands of a few, the exploitation of labor by capital, and they defend the rights of the individual" (*Socialism in German-American Literature*, 63, c.f. note 3). Of course, many of the ideas considered progressive or even radical at the time are today all but self-understood. G. A. Hoehn lists a number of the changes demanded by the *North American Turner Union*. Among them are: an eight-hour day; governmental inspec-

tion of factories; children under fourteen cannot work, no more sales of public lands to individuals or corporations, except under very special conditions for improvement of the land; and mandatory and free public education.¹⁹

Some organizations, however, did call for changes which might be considered suspiciously socialistic by many even today. The "Platform of the Radicals",²⁰ which was drawn up at a meeting of radical thinkers in Philadelphia in 1876, included many of the demands listed by Hoehn, but it incorporated as well calls for the elimination of all indirect taxes, the dismantling of all monopolies, and the introduction of progressive income and inheritance taxes with no taxes on income at or below a level necessary for adequate support of a family. but even in the first flush of enthusiasm prior to 1860 the goals of many groups which styled themselves socialistic, communistic, or atheistic frequently revealed nothing more dangerous or radical than a deep belief and trust in man and nature and the characteristic freedom inherent in both. Amidst the many specific demands incorporated into the platforms and constitutions of the various liberal organizations there seems always to be an undertone which betrays a general striving towards a type of *Humanitätsideal*. Heinrich Metzner²² records the goals of the Gymnastic Union formulated more or less specifically with the statement: "'social, political, and religious reform' are the watchwords of our organization." Yet the group eschews any specific recommendations and seeks to be a clearinghouse for all liberal ideas. The guiding philosophy behind all its actions is then revealed a few paragraphs later (p. 203):

We have learned to separate the natural laws in their purity from those artificial laws so offensive to reason through which hypocritical priests and blind fanatics defame the good name of morality.... We believe in that profoundly beautiful, truly human philosophy of life, according to which body and spirit contribute equally to the quest for perfection in human endeavor and true humanity consists in the harmony of body and spirit, in the complementary interaction of a spirituality which seeks the sublime and a healthy but

restrained sensuality governed by moderation.²²

Socialism seems in any case to have meant different things to different people. In practice, the various groups frequently stood for whatever ideas were thought to be progressive at a given time, and there was confusion in the minds of many as to the principles for which each faction stood. Indeed, the ideals espoused by one organization usually overlapped with those defended by yet another, resulting in a confusing array of goals and aims, the majority of which were shared by all. The confusion was exacerbated by the constant attempts of the leaders of many factions to vie for the support of the members of other factions. Wilhelm Weitling, whose own brand of *Handwerkerkommunismus* [communism for the laborer] never held much appeal for men like Karl Heinzen who were more aristocratically and theoretically inclined, gives a most incisive and memorable description of the situation as it existed in 1850:

Everyone wants to publish a newspaper, everyone wants to preside over a club or found a mutual aid society, everyone wants to set off on his own to be a spokesperson for some faction or another. This one mixes decentralization with socialism, this one atheism with rationalism, yet a third is a socialistic gymnast, the fourth is active in progressive affairs. One of them wants to form an organization for the development of the spirit, the next one for humanity, the third for the people, the fourth for the working class, one wants to bring singers into a group, another wants tailors, another refugees, etc. And hundreds of others want the same thing, but with a slight variation.²³

After the Civil War much of the ardor which had been born of the dream of actualizing freedom from oppression in Europe was channelled into more directly American concerns, such as homesteading and naturalization,²⁴ and socialistic rhetoric receded into the background. Many of the members of organizations which called themselves liberal were small businessmen, more concerned about making productive business contacts than refashioning the political system.²⁵ The groups would meet, usually on a weekly basis, to listen to a lecturer whose purpose it was to educate the assembly spiritually and intellec-

tually with an edifying talk on the latest scientific discoveries, taxing the rich, the moral character of a life patterned after nature rather than religion, or perhaps the beauty of literature and the arts. The primary concern of any speaker's audience was, however, more likely to be the liquid and solid refreshments which were scheduled to conclude the evening's festivities rather than the speech itself. Many of the buildings in which such meetings took place were mortgaged to brewery owners who extracted the privilege of maintaining a public house of the premises. Indeed the frequent complaints of the really serious adherents of liberal philosophies lead one to conclude that for many the appeal of an evening at the *Turnverein* or *Free Thought Society* was more of a social than of a scholarly nature.

A 1908 article in a Detroit newspaper²⁶ illustrates the popularity of beer in many German-American endeavors. In reviewing the first years of a German theater group which had prospered in the city in the third quarter of the previous century. This the article informs its readers that:

At first it was a small affair, the stage being located at the end of the bar room. This proximity of mental and physical refreshment proved a happy combination — The refreshment privilege constituted an important item in these early German theaters, John Deville, who owned the ground on which the Thalia society erected the theater, retaining the right to supply the wants of the inner man and profiting materially thereby.

That similar arrangements were common in other German-American cultural endeavors seems confirmed by the fact that Karl Knortz finds it necessary to include in his very accurate summary of the decline of the *Turnvereine* toward the end of the last century²⁷ the complaint that:

... In addition there was the unfortunate circumstance that most of the organizations had established permanent taverns on their premises and, as the tavern business constituted the major source of income, the leadership tended to devote its attention primarily to that activity. Consequently, the bonds which had been issued to build the organization's hall soon came into the possession of rich beer brewers, who naturally insisted that the gymnastic unions do things their way.

Knortz' complaint indicates the seriousness of the problem, and the scattered comments of various speakers, reviewers, and historians dealing with freethought and other liberally-oriented groups indicate that the membership was not always made up of persons whose primary interest was the serious pursuit of the ideas professed at such meetings. In fact, the lack of seriousness on the part of some supporters is frequently cited as the reason for the limited success of such groups.

Thus even organizations which bore the word "socialistic" in their name, as well as many other German-American groups dubbed liberal by the public at large, probably served a much more broadly cultural function than

has usually been assumed.²⁸ The measure of cohesiveness which such a union of individuals provided was probably more than anything else responsible for the popularity and variety of German-American societies, for like the church, the middle-class lay organizations became a sort of German-American cultural phenomenon, providing a sense of identity and a source of companionship amidst the rather unsettling struggle every immigrant endured in his attempt to preserve a semblance of the life he had left behind as he established himself in his adopted homeland.

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NOTES

¹ *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*, second edition, rev. (Boston: Little, Brown, Co., 1973).

² Marcus Hansen [*The Atlantic Migration 1607-1860* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard Univ. Press, 1940)] continually stresses the individualistic nature of nineteenth-century immigration. Yet he seems unwilling to dismiss completely arguments which credit group attempts at colonization with some degree of success. However, Hansen's, and particularly John Hawgood's, [*The Tragedy of German-America: The Germans in the United States of America during the Nineteenth Century — and After* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1940)] efforts to ascribe a measure of success to group attempts at colonization seem largely overdrawn.

³ The variety of points of view on the character of America is perhaps most evident in Harold Jantz' very thorough article, "Amerika in deutschen Dichten und Denken," in *Deutsche Philologie im Aufriß*, ed. Wolfgang Stammeler, 2nd ed., III (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1962), 309-72. Moreover Paul Weber, *America in Imaginative German Literature in the First Half of the 19th Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926), also discusses the question solely from the perspective of the imaginative literature of the day.

⁴ Statistics on the subject of emigration or immigration are difficult to determine. Frequently records are incomplete, at times the method of reporting changes, distorting the statistical basis for all previous estimates, and German and American figures often differ substantially. Moreover, statistics of this kind were at times biased because it was politically expedient to either over- or underestimate the number of persons entering or leaving a specific country at a specific time. Most researchers feel, however, that 1854 and 1882 are the peak years of German immigration. Walker, as usual the most cautious and very likely the most reliable investigator, estimates about a quarter of a million German immigrants in each of

those years. Albert Faust, *The German Element in the United States* (New York: Steuben Society of America, 1927), 1,588, puts the number at 215,009 for 1854 and marks 1882 as a banner year with 250,630 (p. 586). William Kamman, *Socialism in German-American Literature* (Philadelphia: Americana Germanica Press, 1917), p. 10, also finds 1882 the high water mark with a figure of 250,630, but his figure might well have been taken from Faust, who cites no source for his information.

⁵ *Germany and the Emigration: 1816-1885* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964).

⁶ Walker describes a scene on the roads in southern Germany in 1832 where "travelers to Hambach mingled with growing numbers of Auswanderer [emigrants] going beyond, to America. They differed in one important way: the Auswanderer had no faith in Germany's future, or at least no faith in their places in it. Those who journeyed to Hambach did have plans or hopes for Germany's future and saw themselves as part of it. But taxes and princes, dislocation and frustration lay behind both; very often they were the same taxes and the same princes" (*Germany and the Emigration*, p. 65).

⁷ In seeking the external factors which influenced emigration, Walker examines vital statistics and finds: "Once more it is insecurity, instability, and violence of statistical ups and downs, rather than constant low or high position, that accompany the Auswanderung [emigration]. Vital statistics reflect basic parts of the patterns of human lives, and their violent fluctuation reflects disruptions of the patterns" (*Germany and the Emigration*, p. 57).

⁸ Walker (*Germany and the Emigration*, p. 157) lists the "long term stimuli to Auswanderung [emigration]" as: "land fragmentation, the decline of the handicrafts, and the movement to a money economy, public and private."

⁹ The present study cannot offer an appropriate forum for detailed discussion of the social structure of nineteenth-century German-America. Historians have only in recent decades begun a reassessment of the sig-

nificance of social history as a key to the deeper understanding of past events, and the implications of this new perspective have yet to be fully explored. Recognition of the pertinence of social history to a consideration of immigrant communities can, however, help sweep away some of the more antiquated and unsatisfactory explanations of the substance of German-American society and establish the importance of the solitary nature of nineteenth-century German immigration as a formative influence upon that phenomenon. Rowland Berthoff has done much to elucidate the relevance of the progressively unsettled structure of American social institutions to growing feelings of anxiety and uncertainty which lay at the base of many political movements after 1820. His book, *An Unsettled People: Social Order and Disorder in American History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), attempts to authenticate the social interpretation of history as a necessary complement to political and economic expositions of the subject. However, a great deal of preliminary work would have to be done before an adequate analysis of the social institutions of the Germans in the United States could be undertaken. Perhaps an investigation of various German immigrant communities similar to Mack Walker's *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648-1871* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971) would yield significant results. Certainly there are many questions still to be answered by such a study. For instance, Marcus Hansen undertook (*The Emigrant*, pp. 23-4) an examination of three relatively similar German settlements in Rio de Janeiro, New South Wales, and Missouri which seemed to show that the German immigrants in Missouri were more readily assimilated into the native society than their countrymen elsewhere. Hansen could find no apparent reason for the difference, and even today there is no satisfactory explanation of the situation. As the field is already cluttered with apologetic accounts of the German immigrant experience and chauvinistic renditions of basically political events which highlight only the exploits of the successful and the notorious, the task is considerably more involved than it might be were a competent political and economic history of German-America already in existence.

¹⁰Robert E. Park and Herbert A. Miller discuss many of the problems of immigration in *Old World Traits Transplanted* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1921). The authors treat at length the potential for demoralization inherent in the process of relocation and state that if the individual immigrant is unable to adopt new habits and standards to meet the situation, he will become depressed (p. 61). They suggest that "it is only in an organized group __ where he is a power and an influence, in some region where he has status and represents something that man can maintain a stable personality" (p. 287).

¹¹Maldwyn Jones, *American Immigration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 134-35, says: "The persistence of feelings of alienation and isolation could not but stimulate in each ethnic group an awareness of its identity. The strange and often hostile environment in which they found themselves sharpened the nostalgia of

immigrants for their homelands, led them to cherish old loyalties, and drove them in upon themselves. The most obvious expression of immigrant yearnings for the familiar was the tendency to congregate in distinct areas... What determined the nature of immigrant groupings was not national feeling, for in Europe immigrants had been hardly aware of their nationality. To most, local and regional affiliation were more important." In practice, an immigrant would most likely seek out friends or relatives already in the country. Letters home from successful settlers frequently urged others to follow; perhaps the new arrival could prevail upon the hospitality of an old acquaintance until he was acclimated to the new land. Failing that, most immigrants were usually informed as to the location of settlements of their compatriots, where they could solicit the aid of those already established in making the initial adjustments.

¹²*An Unsettled People*, p. 225.

¹³Rowland Berthoff notes (*An Unsettled People*, p. 372) that despite the fact that most Americans had an inbred sense of respect for the much-vaunted principle of self-reliance, many nonetheless felt "caught in a modern web of rapid economic growth, social individualism and instability, and anxious reaction" (x) and that it would seem that "the anxieties which historians have recently detected at the root of various political movements after 1820 evidently had something to do with the uncertainty of a society which lacked an accepted pattern of reciprocal rights and duties among well-founded classes. They also had something to do with the dissolution of other old social patterns — the functionally integrated family, community, and parish church of an earlier day—which Americans had not specifically intended to discard along with the old class distinctions" (xii).

¹⁴The community life an individual had known in Europe had been characterized by a fixed configuration of reciprocal privileges and obligations. As Oscar Handlin describes the situation on page 221 of "Historical Perspectives on the American Ethnic Group," *Daedalus* 90 (Spring 1961), 220-32: "The communities the emigrants left had been whole and integrated, and had comprehended the total life of their members . . . , and the individual was therefore located in a precise place that defined the whole range of his associations." Many times, in fact, it was true that the immigrant to the United States had left his homeland precisely because established patterns of behavior were being altered by changing social and economic conditions. Yet America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a country where, as Handlin sees it (p. 222), "uninterrupted territorial expansion was the most consequential element in the situation" and "... almost everywhere the concomitant was a spatial and social mobility that exerted a continued strain upon existing organizations and habitual modes of behavior." The newly-arrived immigrant was often confused and disheartened, for, as Rowland Berthoff explains (*An Unsettled People*, p. 371), "whatever he had heard of American freedom and opportunity, he (the immigrant) had not anticipated that so many familiar elements of old-country society would be missing. In an American city he

could preserve only fragments of the sort of parish, village, or family life that he was used to. . . . His ethnic neighborhood' had little more cohesion or tradition than could be mustered by fraternal lodges and other voluntary associations on the American plan. . . . But these struggling versions of old-country social institutions could at least do what they had been doing ever since the 1820's: reassure the individual of his social identity and moral worth as a member of some collective entity more coherent and less confusing than the atomistic society at large."

¹⁵In addition to the "spatial and social mobility" (see note 14 above) which Oscar Handlin finds so characteristic of nineteenth-century America, he also lists ("Historical Perspectives," p. 222 ff.) a number of further reasons for the inability of most European immigrants to reestablish the type of integrated community life they had known at home. Among these are the looseness of American institutional forms and the heterogeneity of the American population. In an attempt to locate himself in his new situation, an immigrant of any nationality customarily engaged in some form of associationalism. For a more detailed discussion of this topic see Arthur M. Schlesinger, "Biography of a Nation of Joiners," *American Historical Review* 50, No. 1 (October 1944), 1-25. As the need for association with a group usually had physical as well as psychological aspects, one must ultimately look to the entire complex of associations in which the immigrant was involved, but chief among the affiliations which continued to determine one's social context was the church. Frequently community and congregation were synonymous, and the church was a decisive influence in many facets of existence extending far beyond the realm of basic religious beliefs. In most cases it provided a focal point for almost all community activity.

¹⁶Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America: The Germans in the United States of America during the Nineteenth Century — and After* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1940), p. 41; Jones, *American Immigration*, p. 230; Carl Wittke, *We Who Built America: The Saga of the Immigrant*, 2nd ed. (Cleveland, Ohio: Press of Western Reserve University, 1964), pp. 284-85; Bayrd Still, *Milwaukee, the History of a City* (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1948), p. 80; Hansen, *The Emigrant*, p. 140; and Emil Meynen, *Bibliography on German Settlements in Colonial North America, Especially on the Pennsylvania Germans and their Descendants 1683-1933* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1937), xii.

¹⁷Of course, immigrant associations were a phenomenon in every ethnic group, for such organizations were often an important part of an individual's adjustment to his adopted country. However, the Germans seem many times to have been at least more conspicuous in their clannishness. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, p. 258, documents at least one situation, in St. Louis, where the Germans were thought to be making "improper attempts" at cultural isolation. Forster blames the *Vereinsmeierei* [clannishness] of the group for much of its trouble: "The Germans were joiners and everywhere dis-

played a tendency to band into societies, preferably with bombastic or lurid names or with a military flair."

¹⁸In 1876 Roben Reitzel delivered the keynote speech to an assemblage of free thinkers gathered in Philadelphia to celebrate the anniversary of the Independent Congregation of Philadelphia. In his remarks, he himself uses the words quoted to express the goals of the organization (*Geschichtliche Mittheilungen über die deutschen Freien Gemeinden von Nordamerika* p. 71.): "Die Befreiung von der Religion... ist allerdings die Grundlage und der wichtige Factor alles Fortschritts, unser Endziel aber ist der Culturstaat, d.h., die wahre Republik, in der sich endlich einmal das goldene Motto der französischen Revolution: 'Freiheit, Gleichheit und Brüderlichkeit' verwirklichen soll."

¹⁹*Der Nordamerikanische Turnerbund und seine Stellung zur Arbeiter-Bewegung* (St. Louis, Missouri: 1892), 4.

²⁰discussed by C. F. Huch in "Die Konventionen der Freigesinnten im Jahre 1876," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Pionier-Vereins von Philadelphia*, 23 (1911), p. 9 ff.

²¹*Jahrbücher der deutsch-amerikanischen Turnerei* (New York: 1892-94), p. 202.

²²Karl Knortz in a pamphlet on the necessity for organizing liberal-minded men entitled *Die Notwendigkeit einer Organization der Freidenker* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Verlag des Bundes-Vororts, 1910), p. 5, continues in a similar vein on the duty of every free thinker: "In diesem Sinne [Ciceros] ist nun ein religiöser jeder Freidenker ein Mensch: seine Gottliebe ist, wie Feuerbach sagt, Menschenliebe, und er hält daher die Morallehre für die erhabenste und edelste, welche die übelwollenden, egoistischen Neigungen beschränke und das Wohl der Allgemeinheit befördert."

Finally, Carl Friedrich Huch sums up the deliberations and activities of a convention of freethinkers in 1876 with the words ("Die Konventionen der Freigesinnten im Jahre 1876," p. 4): "Das Buch der Natur und Geschichte ist die alleinige Quelle, aus welcher die Vernunft alles notwendige und nützliche und das Menschenleben veredelnde und verschönernde Wissen und Können, alle Sitten- und Staatsgesetze und gesellschaftlichen Einrichtungen schöpft... Das allseitige liebliche, geistliche and gemüthliche Wohlbefinden, die irdische Glückseligkeit ist unser höchstes Gut."

²³"Republik der Arbeiter," 1850, p. 180 ff., as quoted by Kamman, *Socialism in German-American Literature*, p. 20. [translation my own]

²⁴The fundamental principles of the Arbeiterkongreß [workers' union] formulated in convention in 1850 included even then: "Freigebung der öffentlichen Ländereien in bestimmten Quantitäten an wirkliche Bebauer; Sicherung der Heimstätte gegen erzwungenen Verkauf; die Erlangung des Bürgerrechtes für Einwanderer darf von keiner Zeitbestimmung abhängig gemacht werden; Beschränkung des Bodenbesitzes; hohe Besteuerung aller verkauften, jedoch unbebaut liegenden Ländereien; Schutz der Einwanderer gegen Prellereremien durch Spekulanten und Makler" [as quoted in: C. F. Huch, "Die Anfänge der Arbeiterbewegung unter den Deutschamerikanern," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Pionier-*

Vereins von Philadelphia, 17 (1910), p. 49.] The majority of immigrants tended to emphasize these and other specifically American concerns even more during the period following the Civil War.

²⁵In his keynote address at the Philadelphia convention of free congregation (*Geschichtliche Mittheilungen über die deutschen Freien Gemeinden von Nordamerika*, p. 97) Reitzel himself warns: "Natürlich, wer zu uns kommt, um einen Tummelplatz seiner persönlichen Eitelkeit zu finden, wer zu uns kommt, um materielle Vortheile für sein Geschäft dabei zu finden, wer zu uns kommt um des gesellschaftlichen Vergnügens willen, der wird auch bald wieder gehen. Although expressed negatively, as that which is undesirable, the sentiments make it obvious that there were at least sufficient numbers drawn to free religion for precisely such reasons that Reitzel found it necessary to mention the problem. One's suspicions are confirmed upon reading Heinrich Hoehn's remarks in *Der Nordamerikanische Turnerbund und seine Stellung zur Arbeiter-Bewegung*, p. 1, about those who "erblicken im Turnverein einen gewöhnlichen Vergnügungs-Club" and those members who are "Produkte unseres kapitalistischen Wirtschafts-Systems." He explains: "Ich meine jene Leute, welche sich nur einem Dutzend Vereinen oder Vereinen anschließen, in der Hoffnung, sich dabei Kunden zu erwerben resp. einen Vor-

theil für ihr Geschäftchen zu erringen." Others sources too, particularly Kamman, reveal the problem in maintaining truly socialistic principles which resulted from the increasingly large proportion of members who were businessmen ardor for socialistic and communistic ideals had cooled considerably.

²⁶"Early German Drama in Detroit," *Detroit Free Press*, 16 February 1908, pt. 4, p. 3, cols. 1-8.

²⁷"Das Deutschtum in Vereinigten Staaten," in *Sammlung gemeinverständlicher wissenschaftlicher Vorträge*, ed. Rudolph Virchow, NS12, Hfte. 281/2, 58.

²⁸Hermann Schlüter in *Die Anfänge der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung in Amerika* (Stuttgart: J. H. N. Dietz Nachfolger, 1907), p. 214, discusses the confusion within the Gymnastic Union concerning the meaning or significance of word "sozialistisch," which appeared in early versions of the group's name: "Der Sozialismus des amerikanischen Turnerbundes war mehr ein Name, als eine Vertretung wirklich sozialistischer Prinzipien. Eine proletarische Organization ist diese Vereinigung nie gewesen, und was in ihr als Sozialismus zum Ausdruck kam, war ein Gemisch von bürgerlichem Radikalismus und unklarem sozialistischem Streben, das mehr im Gefühl, als in Einsicht und Erkenntnis seinen Ursprung hatte."

