Immigration (Reference Entry)

Harry van der Linden

Butler University, hvanderl@butler.edu

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these concepts, health care will be called upon to mitigate every problem society has, not only the enormous number it is traditionally expected to solve.

Margaret Hawthorne

FURTHER READING


SEE ALSO: Diagnosis; Health care allocation; Holistic medicine; Medical ethics; Medical insurance; Mental illness; Physician-patient relationship.

Immigration

DEFINITION: Flow into countries of people seeking to change their nationalities

TYPE OF ETHICS: Politico-economic ethics

SIGNIFICANCE: Governments regulate by force who may leave their territories and especially who may settle within their borders. Border controls designed to exclude unwanted immigrants may be viewed as legitimate forms of collective or communal self-determination, but critics argue that they often violate the individual right to freedom of movement and the ideal of equal economic opportunity for all.

During the 1990's, the U.S. government took unprecedented and costly measures to prevent migrants in search of greater economic opportunities from illegally crossing its long border with Mexico. The federal Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) almost tripled its budget, doubled the size of its Border Patrol, and created a border of fences, cameras, and policing by helicopters. Concerns with security eventually led to further steps to close the border. Nations in the European Union have taken similar measures. However, it is unclear how effective various efforts at border control have been.

Although millions of illegal migrants were arrested throughout the world and returned to their countries of origin, there were still at least six million illegal immigrants in the United States and more than three million in Western Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The cost in human suffering is also high. Every year, hundreds of migrants die trying to enter what critics of strict border controls call "fortress Europe and America." The moral question raised is what justifies governments' effort to exclude ordinary people who seek to improve their lives.

THE COMMUNAL RIGHT TO EXCLUDE

The communitarian philosopher Michael Walzer argues that communities have a right to determine the rules governing their cooperation and with whom to exchange the goods of their cooperation, including membership. He compares political communities to clubs, noting that within clubs existing members choose the new members and that no one has a right to join a club. Another aspect of the analogy is that people have the right to leave their clubs and so they have a right to emigrate. Walzer adds that political communities are also similar to families. The children of citizens are automatically citizens, and states typically give preference to would-be immigrants who are genetically related to its existing citizens. For Walzer, the right to exclude is not absolute: He argues that all states should take in some political refugees since every person has the right to belong to some political community.

There are many reasons that citizens may have for...
Immigration

wishing to exclude other people from entering their countries. Walzer stresses the danger of immigrants undermining a national culture and a shared way of life. Other grounds for exclusion are limiting population growth, protecting the environment and resources, shielding native workers from wage depression and increased competition for scarce jobs, and preventing an overburdening of welfare programs, public education, and other social services.

Critics of restrictive border policies contest the view that admitting many immigrants with different cultural backgrounds threatens national unity. They point out that cultural blending is common and that, at any rate, a multicultural society enriches the lives of its citizens. This latter view was challenged in the United States after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, heightened public fears of Muslims living in the country.

On their account, national unity can be based on respect for individual rights and need not include a deep sharing of specific cultural values. They also argue that immigration contributes to economic growth and that many immigrants take jobs that natives find undesirable. A final perceived benefit of immigration is that it counteracts the shrinking or graying of the native populations of many Western nations.

Arguments for Open Borders

Proponents of open borders typically argue that even if more immigration does not benefit the receiving country, this does not necessarily warrant exclusion. Some utilitarian moral philosophers argue that the state must impartially balance the interests of its citizens against the interests of immigrants. Liberal human rights theorists maintain that individuals have a right to freedom of movement, arguing that just as people should be able to move from one city in the United States to another—whether or not their movement benefits the communities—so they should be able to move across borders. Egalitarian liberals hold

European immigrants sailing to the United States in 1906. (Library of Congress)
Public Opinion on U.S. Immigration Levels in 2004

In January, 2004, a CBS News/New York Times poll asked a cross-section of Americans whether legal immigration into the United States should be kept at its current level, increased, or decreased.

- Current level: 34%
- Increased: 16%
- Decreased: 45%
- Other: 5%


that closing borders to immigrants from the developing world is unjust because mere location of birth should not determine one’s chances for economic success. As the liberal philosopher Joseph Carens puts it, keeping economic immigrants out by force makes citizenship in Western democracies a modern variant of feudal privilege.

IMMIGRATION POLICY STANDARDS

During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the United States placed few restrictions on immigration other than excluding the seriously ill, the criminally convicted, and certain non-Western populations. National origin quotas were adopted in 1921 and the Border Patrol emerged in 1924. Congress abolished this quota system in 1965 with the understanding that it was racist and replaced it by a system of preferences for relatives of citizens and permanent residents. Congress also reserved immigration slots for professional workers, a preference that has become more extensive in recent years.

The active recruitment of immigrants with valuable professional skills has led to a “brain drain” from some developing countries to Western societies. Some countries of the developing world have lost anywhere from 25 percent to 75 percent of their highly skilled workers, including engineers, scientists, and physicians. It is generally held that professionals from these nations should not be denied the right to emigrate from their home countries; however, some ethicists have also argued that it would be appropriate to impose exit taxes to be paid by the hiring agencies to compensate for the economic loss to the sending countries and to reimburse them for their educational costs. Increasingly, professional immigrants view it as their duty to establish networks with professionals in their countries of origin and to promote local businesses and educational developments.

Harry van der Linden

FURTHER READING


SEE ALSO: Citizenship; Communitarianism; Diversity; Immigration Reform and Control Act; Population Connection; Population control; Refugees and stateless people; Rorty, Richard; Zero-base ethics.
KANT, IMMANUEL

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

After the first destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem, and particularly after its second destruction, the scriptures served as a focus for the religious devotion of the Jews. Their state no longer existed; their culture had been destroyed. All that remained was their belief in God and his word. If the Jewish religion were to endure, it seemed necessary that not only the content of revelation but also even its physical form should be considered inviolate and unchangeable. The level on which mystics interpreted revelation to serve their purpose was highly symbolic. To make this interpretation possible, the Kabbalists developed letter and number symbolism of great variety, complexity, and obscurity.

THE DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION

The Kabbalists maintained and even intensified the traditional Jewish view of redemption. In the Kabbalistic view, salvation of the individual was of little significance. It entered only as a means to the greater end of the salvation of humankind. This would come about through the agency of a messiah and the Davidic line, who would lead the Jews in triumph to the Holy Land and inaugurate a reign of truth, justice, and mercy. Other elements clouded this doctrine at various times in the history of mystical messianism. In general, however, the Kabbalistic view of redemption was an extreme form of traditional messianism. Attempts to calculate the exact date of the coming of the messiah were widespread. The coincidence of various calculations in fixing on dates close to each other inspired a wave of messianic movements.

FURTHER READING


SEE ALSO: Hasidism; Jewish ethics; Messianism; Talmud; Torah.

KANT, IMMANUEL

IDENTIFICATION: German philosopher
BORN: April 22, 1724, Königsberg, Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia)
DIED: February 12, 1804, Königsberg, Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia)
TYPE OF ETHICS: Enlightenment history
SIGNIFICANCE: In Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, 1785), The Metaphysics of Morals (1797), and especially the Three Critiques (1781-1790), Kant synthesized rationalism and empiricism into a single philosophical system that stood as the culmination of Enlightenment thought. He argued for the existence of a universal and objective moral law, the categorical imperative, which had the form of law as such and therefore transcended any individual human concern or value.

Late in his life, after his revolutionary work in epistemology, Kant first presented his mature moral philosophy in Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals. Here, Kant developed his influential idea that human beings as rational agents are "autonomous," or have the capacity for moral self-government. For Kant, autonomy means that, as rational beings, people set their own standards of conduct, as distinct from the demands made by their desires, and are able to decide and act on these standards. On the basis of a complex argument, Kant concluded that autonomy is possible only if the will is guided by a supreme principle of morality that he called the "categorical imperative." Kant viewed this imperative as the product of reason.