Biography of Arthur Schlesinger, adapted from britannica.com:

Schlesinger graduated from Harvard University in 1938 and achieved initial notice with his biography *Orestes A. Brownson: A Pilgrim’s Progress* (1939). After serving in the Office of War Information and the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, he became a professor of history at Harvard in 1946, teaching there until 1961. In 1946 his Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Age of Jackson* was published to widespread acclaim. In this book Schlesinger reinterpreted the American era of Jacksonian democracy in terms of its cultural, social, and economic aspects as well as its strictly political dimensions. Schlesinger’s major historical work was *The Age of Roosevelt*, whose three separate volumes were entitled *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919–1933* (1957), *The Coming of the New Deal* (1958), and *The Politics of Upheaval* (1960). In these books he described and narrated President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal from a sympathetic standpoint.


The article below originally appeared in *TIME Magazine*, and his 1992 book *The Disuniting of America* further develops its ideas and arguments.

**The Cult of Ethnicity, Good and Bad**

Monday, Jul. 08, 1991
“The Cult of Ethnicity, Good and Bad”
By ARTHUR SCHLESINGER JR.
link to article: http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,973355,00.html

The history of the world has been in great part the history of the mixing of peoples. Modern communication and transport accelerate mass migrations from one continent to another. Ethnic and racial diversity is more than ever a salient fact of the age.
But what happens when people of different origins, speaking different languages and professing different religions, inhabit the same locality and live under the same political sovereignty? Ethnic and racial conflict -- far more than ideological conflict -- is the explosive problem of our times.

On every side today, ethnicity is breaking up nations. The Soviet Union, India, Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, are all in crisis. Ethnic tensions disturb and divide Sri Lanka, Burma, Indonesia, Iraq, Cyprus, Nigeria, Angola, Lebanon, Guyana, Trinidad -- you name it. Even nations as stable and civilized as Britain and France, Belgium and Spain, face growing ethnic troubles. Is there any large multiethnic state that can be made to work?

The answer to that question has been, until recently, the United States. "No other nation," Margaret Thatcher has said, "has so successfully combined people of different races and nations within a single culture." How have Americans succeeded in pulling off this almost unprecedented trick?

We have always been a multiethnic country. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, who came from France in the 18th century, marveled at the astonishing diversity of the settlers -- "a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans and Swedes . . . this promiscuous breed." He propounded a famous question: "What then is the American, this new man?" And he gave a famous answer: "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men." E pluribus unum.
The U.S. escaped the divisiveness of a multiethnic society by a brilliant solution: the creation of a brand-new national identity. The point of America was not to preserve old cultures but to forge a new, American culture. "By an intermixture with our people," President George Washington told Vice President John Adams, immigrants will "get assimilated to our customs, measures and laws: in a word, soon become one people." This was the ideal that a century later Israel Zangwill crystallized in the title of his popular 1908 play The Melting Pot. And no institution was more potent in molding Crevecoeur's "promiscuous breed" into Washington's "one people" than the American public school.

The new American nationality was inescapably English in language, ideas and institutions. The pot did not melt everybody, not even all the white immigrants; deeply bred racism put black Americans, yellow Americans, red Americans and brown Americans well outside the pale. Still, the infusion of other stocks, even of nonwhite stocks, and the experience of the New World reconfigured the British legacy and made the U.S., as we all know, a very different country from Britain.

In the 20th century, new immigration laws altered the composition of the American people, and a cult of ethnicity erupted both among non-Anglo whites and among nonwhite minorities. This had many healthy consequences. The American culture at last began to give shamefully overdue recognition to the achievements of groups subordinated and spurned during the high noon of Anglo dominance, and it began to acknowledge the great swirling world
beyond Europe. Americans acquired a more complex and invigorating sense of their world -- and of themselves.

But, pressed too far, the cult of ethnicity has unhealthy consequences. It gives rise, for example, to the conception of the U.S. as a nation composed not of individuals making their own choices but of inviolable ethnic and racial groups. It rejects the historic American goals of assimilation and integration. And, in an excess of zeal, well-intentioned people seek to transform our system of education from a means of creating "one people" into a means of promoting, celebrating and perpetuating separate ethnic origins and identities. The balance is shifting from unum to pluribus.

That is the issue that lies behind the hullabaloo over "multiculturalism" and "political correctness," the attack on the "Eurocentric" curriculum and the rise of the notion that history and literature should be taught not as disciplines but as therapies whose function is to raise minority self-esteem. Group separatism crystallizes the differences, magnifies tensions, intensifies hostilities. Europe -- the unique source of the liberating ideas of democracy, civil liberties and human rights -- is portrayed as the root of all evil, and non-European cultures, their own many crimes deleted, are presented as the means of redemption.

I don't want to sound apocalyptic about these developments. Education is always in ferment, and a good thing too. The situation in our universities, I am confident, will soon right itself. But the impact of separatist pressures on
our public schools is more troubling. If a Kléagle of the Ku Klux Klan wanted
to use the schools to disable and handicap black Americans, he could hardly
come up with anything more effective than the "Afrocentric" curriculum. And
if separatist tendencies go unchecked, the result can only be the
fragmentation, resegregation and tribalization of American life.

I remain optimistic. My impression is that the historic forces driving
toward "one people" have not lost their power. The eruption of ethnicity is, I
believe, a rather superficial enthusiasm stirred by romantic ideologues on the
one hand and by unscrupulous con men on the other: self-appointed
spokesmen whose claim to represent their minority groups is carelessly
accepted by the media. Most American-born members of minority groups,
white or nonwhite, see themselves primarily as Americans rather than
primarily as members of one or another ethnic group. A notable indicator
today is the rate of intermarriage across ethnic lines, across religious lines,
even (increasingly) across racial lines. "We Americans," said Theodore
Roosevelt, "are children of the crucible."

The growing diversity of the American population makes the quest for
unifying ideals and a common culture all the more urgent. In a world savagely
rent by ethnic and racial antagonisms, the U.S. must continue as an example
of how a highly differentiated society holds itself together.
The Cult is the sixth studio album from English rock band, The Cult. It was released in October 1994 on Beggars Banquet Records and it is also the band's last album on Sire Records in the USA. It is also commonly referred to as the “Black Sheep” record, due to the image of a Manx Loaghtan black sheep on the front cover. The record also features one of the very rare times when Ian Astbury and Billy Duffy have shared songwriting credit with anyone: bassist Craig Adams is credited as co-author of We use cookies to offer you a better experience, personalize content, tailor advertising, provide social media features, and better understand the use of our services. To learn more or modify/prevent the use of cookies, see our Cookie Policy and Privacy Policy. Accept Cookies. top. This article examines the way in which three contemporary novelists have interpreted the proliferation of cults and other independent communities in the USA. Thomas Pynchon's Vineland is read as a critique of individualism that regrets the loss of collective identity and purpose. A subsequent reading of Katherine Dunn's Geek Love demonstrates the destructive consequences of individual submission that draws parallels between the dynamics of cult communities and mainstream society.