

Human beings are components of a larger system, the earth, as are cockroaches and the AIDS virus. But I am not advocating an ecocentrism. As a human being and as a relativist interested in the well-being of my species—and of all its members—I privilege the survival of individual human beings over the survival of the AIDS virus.

Although I believe that cultural holism is more conducive than traditional Western ideology to harmonious interaction among the diverse components of the world's human system, I did not mean to imply that cultural holism was a "magic elixir." My main intention in coining the term was to describe an emerging model of reality. Cultural holism is an umbrella concept that enables us to see relations between, for instance, environmentalism and multiculturalism. I suggest that we can explain many of the conflicts in the world today as a clash between a holistic understanding of reality and an atomistic, dualistic, and hierarchical one.

*Multiculturalism* is not a synonym for *cultural holism* but rather an aspect of it; nor is it a synonym for *ethnic separatism*. In calling attention to cultures that have been ignored, multiculturalists are promoting the appreciation of diversity, although not necessarily through "separate graduation ceremonies" and so forth. Ethnic separatism is related to multiculturalism in that it represents resistance to the United States' present model for integration, in which ethnic minorities are expected to adopt the customs and values of the majority and to suppress their cultural differences. Ethnic separatists want to intermingle but not to blend.

From the viewpoint of the globalist, ethnic separatists do have something in common with traditionalists, here and elsewhere: they are all striving to preserve their cultures' identities in a rapidly changing environment. However, because the social order that the American traditionalists wish to retain has historically entailed the subordination of minority ethnic groups to the majority, the aims of the separatists and the traditionalists are incompatible. Whereas the American traditionalists struggle to uphold a hierarchical order, which has well served upper- and middle-class whites, the ethnic separatists want a new, more egalitarian order, in which the uniqueness of each of their cultures can be respected. We should not be surprised that groups previously isolated and denigrated by the dominant culture are now exploring strategies to win the respect that members of the dominant culture have always enjoyed.

I am just as much opposed to curtailment of discussion from the Left as from the Right. Restriction of speech does not eliminate hostilities whose roots are

socioeconomic. The designers of the "anti-free-speech laws," otherwise known as antiharassment codes, are actually using an atomistic tactic to resolve a structural problem; they are punishing the individuals guilty of speech they deem inappropriate rather than modifying the system that inclines individuals toward racism and sexism. Authoritarianism, whether from the Left or from the Right, is inconsistent with cultural holism.

The controversial attempts to enforce respect for minority groups accompany the transition to the holistic model, in which cultural differences are freely respected and diversity is considered valuable to the health of the whole.

BETTY JEAN CRAIGE  
*University of Georgia*

### The Breening of America

To the Editor:

In his essay "The Breening of America" (106 [1991]: 432–45), Leonard J. Leff quotes from the first edition of my book *A History of Narrative Film* (New York: Norton, 1981) to imply that I am a "romantic auteurist" who writes film history according to a formulaic (and fictional) plot. Had Leff availed himself of the substantially revised second edition of *A History of Narrative Film*, published by Norton in April 1990, he would have discovered that the passage he quotes from no longer exists. Instead, there is a four-page analysis of the relation between the Payne Fund Studies, the Production Code, and industry practice during the Depression concluding that, among other things, the code "enabled the studios to streamline what had always been . . . the thorniest and yet most formative task in the production process—the creation of filmable continuity scripts" (300)—a thesis very similar to Leff's but clearly uninfluenced by it, since the second edition appeared in print some thirteen months before his essay. This kind of gaffe—inexcusable in other scholarly disciplines—has become increasingly common among revisionist film historians, whose purchase on the truth often depends on ignoring the work of others or willfully misreading it. Assuming Leff to be in the former category, I have asked Norton to send him an examination copy of the most recent edition of my book.

DAVID A. COOK  
*Emory University*

### Reply:

In September 1989, I submitted "The Breening of America" to *PMLA*. In March 1990, once both re-