

## [In Defense of Regional Cultures](http://bonald.wordpress.com/in-defense-of-culture/)

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Conservatives generally oppose large-scale mixing between cultures. People often find this hard to understand. Do we regard other cultures as inferior? Do we actually hate them? Multiculturalists think so. They claim that cultural loyalties are actually constituted by their hatred of a posited “other”. They use their control of the schools and media to discourage attachment to one’s own people—which they call “racism”—and piety towards one’s fatherland—which they call “nationalism”. In the western world, school history lessons consist almost entirely of the demonization of our own ancestors.

In fact, this suspicion of natural loyalties is quite unfounded; my love for my own country is no more based on hatred of other countries than my love for my own wife is based on antipathy towards other women. Nor is patriotism based on an idea that one’s country is “superior” in some way to others, any more than my piety towards my parents is based on a belief that they are superior to other people by some objective standard. So, if other cultures are just as good as ours, why doesn’t a conservative want to “enrich” his society by filling it with many different cultures? The short answer is that that’s not how culture works. If you mix two cultures, you don’t get twice as much culture; you destroy both of them.

### **The function of shared culture**

A culture consists of a people’s shared customs, memories, stories, and beliefs. It is not a thing possessed only by the elite—normal and easy interaction between two people is impossible without some shared culture. With a person of my own culture, I know what greetings and compliments are appropriate, what sensitive topics should be avoided, what requests are acceptable, what words and actions are offensive. When I encounter an alien, on the other hand, I become apprehensive; I no longer know the rules of the game. This apprehension doesn’t mean that I hate the alien, even unconsciously. Common culture simply makes possible a level of comfort which is not possible in its absence. The discomfort of not knowing what to expect from others is so intolerable that a common culture will form automatically if a people live together long enough. This benevolent process can be thwarted in only two ways. The first is a continual movement of population, so that people never settle long enough to form communities. The second is a coercive act of the government to prevent the formation of an established culture, generally in the name of “multiculturalism” or “making outsiders feel welcome”. (The only way for the outsider to feel as welcome as everyone else is to make everyone else feel as alienated as the outsider.) Unfortunately, both of these things are prevalent in today’s world.

Common culture also indicates shared loyalties and beliefs. If I say in the company of other Americans that the USA is a great country and that she has been abundantly blessed by God, I can expect most of them to approve both the beliefs and the sentiments. If I say this around European atheists, the statements would be contentious, even dubious, and I would be expected to defend them. Now, it is good for beliefs and customs to be sometimes subjected to criticism, but it is unhealthy for them to be criticized all the time. A belief must have some respite from attack for internal development, just as a religion should cultivate not only apologetics (its response to attack) but also theology, in which a community of believers takes the truths of their faith for granted and considers their implications. A belief must also have some respite to be lived: the Mass is no place to debate the Real Presence, and a 4th of July celebration is no place to debate America's alleged wickedness. Even liberals grant this point when they insist that minorities be given an affirming, supportive atmosphere. Majorities need this too.

Another great benefit of people living in a community with shared beliefs is the pressure to conform. Concern for status is a universal human trait; it can either be given a productive function in a community's moral standards, or it will manifest itself in unproductive ways such as the pursuit of wealth and in conspicuous consumption. Men are often better restrained from wickedness by fear of lost reputation than by fear of the police. Also, communal censure can proscribe acts—such as public rudeness, gossiping, insulting the dead, or flirting with married women—that disrupt the community but which it would be unwise to actually outlaw.

In order to function, a culture must establish itself over some region. If only a few separated people follow a custom, this is not culture but personal eccentricity. To function as culture, a custom or belief must be sufficiently widespread to be taken for granted. A few oddballs won't hurt anything, but once a fifth or so of the population repudiates a custom, it can no longer function as cultural. When a culture establishes itself over the lives of a people, this will naturally be reflected in their laws. The best way to ensure cultural health and diversity is to promote local government. Allow each region, in some cases even each neighborhood, to establish its own laws regulating education, holidays, pornography, and blasphemy. These will naturally reflect and protect the culture of the locals. Since the established culture is local, those who don't like living in it don't have to move far to find more agreeable company. Members of incompatible cultures will naturally separate over a few generations. Call this "segregation" if you like, but it's the only way to have multiple healthy cultures in the world.

### **Wedge minorities**

Being cosmopolitans, liberals hate culture and seek out ways to attack it. This is usually done with the use of wedge minorities. The wedge minority can be any outsider to the established culture, so the liberal can attack this culture on the grounds that it "excludes" the minority. Blacks, Mexicans, Muslims, homosexuals,

and Jews are the most notable wedge minorities today. Where no usable wedge minority exists, liberals will attempt to import one by promoting immigration. This strategy leads the liberals to an apparent inconsistency: in order to serve its purpose, the minority must maintain its cohesion, so it must be allowed to keep its own beliefs and customs, the very things the liberals are working to eradicate in the majority. Thus, blacks are allowed to be loyal to each other and to celebrate their heritage, but whites can have no ethnic loyalty and must despise their ancestors. In the end, though, liberals will the destruction of all cultures. Minorities will only be allowed to keep their cultures so long as this serves the larger goal by undermining the majority culture. In the short term, being a wedge minority brings undeniable privileges. In the long term, blacks, Mexicans, and Muslims should remember that the friend of the conqueror is only the last to be conquered.