No Free Lunch: Assimilation over Multiculturalism

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

***Resolved: Culture ought to value assimilation over multiculturalism.”***

Case Summary: Immigrants have historically come to this country under an implicit contract. They receive the benefits of the opportunities, freedoms and citizenship in America. In return, they are expected to assimilate, which means adopting 3 key values: 1) learn English; 2) accept America’s democratic values; 3) work hard and be self-sufficient (a.k.a. “the Protestant work ethic”). Multiculturalism breaks that contract by seeming to offer immigrants what they want (acceptance and opportunities in America) without fulfilling their end of the contract (assimilation, giving up their old ways in favor of American values). Breaking the contract harms society and immigrants both. It harms society by making unassimilated immigrants parasites, taking but giving nothing back. It harms immigrants by making them permanently unable to achieve all the benefits, rights and opportunities society has to offer because their separatism keeps them out of the corridors of power.

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Everyone wants something for nothing, but the world doesn’t work that way. Those who want to enjoy a benefit offered by others, and who voluntarily engage in the transaction to receive it, cannot then refuse to pay the cost and demand it for free. Because there is “no free lunch,” I’m happy to affirm that “Culture ought to value assimilation over multiculturalism.” I’ll prove this to you by showing that assimilation is the price outsiders voluntarily agree to pay in exchange for the benefits of joining a new culture.

OBSERVATION 1. ASSIMILATION AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Assimilation contains 3 elements and is part of the social contract of immigration.

Dr <Peter> Salins 1997 (PhD; professor of urban affairs and planning, State University of NY) “FROM MANY, ONE NATION” Washington Post 9 Feb 1997 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1997/02/09/from-many-one-nation/82e5578d-cb76-423e-ab14-2e9781000e86/>

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, both the elites and the rank and file of "native" Americans aggressively and self-consciously promoted the idea of assimilation or, as they called it in the early years of this century, "Americanization." Immigrants would be welcome as full members of the American family if they agreed to abide by three simple precepts:  
\* They had to accept English as the national language.  
\* They were expected to take pride in their American identity and believe in America's liberal democratic and egalitarian principles.  
\* They were expected to live by what is commonly referred to as the Protestant ethic -- to be self-reliant, hardworking and morally upright.

**END QUOTE. Salins then goes on later in the same context to conclude QUOTE:**To seal the assimilation contract, immigrants were not only permitted but encouraged to become citizens with full rights. The offer of citizenship was an advanced and radical idea in the 18th century; even today, most countries, if they accept immigrants at all, merely allow them to be residents.

**END QUOTE**. So, assimilation is part of the social contract, and a contract is where both parties give up something to get something. The immigrant comes to this country voluntarily because he believes he will be better off with the opportunities our country offers than he would be in his homeland. In exchange for that benefit, he agrees to accept the duty of assimilating by accepting three core values that our society expects of him.

OBSERVATION 2. THE SOCIAL CONTRACT AND THE VALUE OF JUSTICE

Subpoint A. Justice means fairness as determined by the social contract and its terms of basic cooperation

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, first published in 1996, substantially revised in 2019. “Original Position” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/original-position/>

Rawls’s idea of the original position, as initially conceived, is his account of the moral point of view with regard to matters of justice. The original position is a hypothetical perspective that we can adopt in our moral reasoning about the most basic principles of social and political justice. What primarily distinguishes Rawls’s impartial perspective from its antecedents (in Hume, Smith, Kant, etc.) is that, rather than representing the judgment of one person, it is conceived socially, as a general agreement by (representatives of all adult) members of an ongoing society. The point of view of justice is then represented as a general social “contract” or agreement by free and equal persons on the basic terms of cooperation for their society.  
**END QUOTE. They then go on to conclude later in the same context QUOTE:**Why does Rawls represent principles of justice as originating in a kind of social contract? Rawls says that “justice as fairness assigns a certain primacy to the social” (CP 339).

Subpoint B. Assimilation was consciously designed into our nation's founding social contract

John Fonte 2003 (Ph.D., is a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute) Needed A Patriotic Assimilation Policy <https://www.thesocialcontract.com/artman2/publish/tsc1603/article_1390.shtml> (originally published in 2003, republished in 2006)

For more than 200 hundred years immigrants to America and their children have successfully assimilated into what has been called the "American way of life." This civic or patriotic assimilation of immigrants into the American constitutional regime did not just happen "naturally." Patriotic assimilation was the end result of a sometimes explicit (and other times implicit) long-range vision that was formulated by America's leaders. Since the days of George Washington, continuing through the era of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, and supported in the past decade by such public figures as Barbara Jordan this strategic vision has helped to define immigration-assimilation policy by articulating two interconnected ideas (1) welcoming immigrants, and (2) assimilating those immigrants into the mainstream of American civic life. Thus, George Washington wrote John Adams that he envisioned immigrants becoming "assimilated to our customs, measures, laws," and because of this, he predicted, native-born citizens and immigrants would "soon become one people."

Subpoint C. Immigrants voluntarily accept the contract. They agree to pay the costs of becoming American to receive the benefits

Dr. Bruce Thornton 2012 (PhD; research fellow at the Hoover Institution) 26 Oct 2019 “Melting Pots and Salad Bowls” <https://www.hoover.org/research/melting-pots-and-salad-bowls>

Of course, this process of assimilation also entailed costs and sacrifice. Having voted with his feet for the superiority of America, the immigrant was required to become American: to learn the language, history, political principles, and civic customs that identified one as an American. This demand was necessarily in conflict with the immigrants’ old culture and its values, and, at times, led to a painful loss of old ways and customs. But how immigrants negotiated the conflicts and trade-offs between their new and old identities was up to them. Moreover, they remained free in civil society to celebrate and retain those cultures through fraternal organizations, ethnic festivals, language schools, and religious guilds.

OBSERVATION 3. WHY IT MATTERS WHEN THE CONTRACT IS BROKEN

The behaviors of upholding one’s obligations, not taking without giving, not expecting something for nothing – these are all part of a criterion of personal integrity in upholding the value of justice. When individuals act with integrity towards others, they uphold justice and the social contract. When they expect a free lunch – expecting benefits from others without giving what they promised in return – their lack of integrity violates justice. We see this in 3 subpoints:

Subpoint A. Multiculturalism avoids assimilation by resisting changes in patterns of thinking and behavior

**I**nternational **F**ederation of **L**ibrary **A**ssociations and Institutions, Last updated 2016. "Defining Multiculturalism" <https://www.ifla.org/publications/defining-multiculturalism>

"Multiculturalism" is the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles.

Subpoint B. Multiculturalism violates the contract and harms society. The unassimilated become parasites – taking from others without giving.

Dr. Bruce Thornton 2012 (PhD; research fellow at the Hoover Institution) 26 Oct 2019 “Melting Pots and Salad Bowls” <https://www.hoover.org/research/melting-pots-and-salad-bowls>

No matter how the laws of Arizona and other states fare, this problem of assimilation will remain. Millions of the illegal immigrants in this country are no doubt striving to become Americans despite the obstacles multiculturalism has put in their path. Many others have not developed that sense of American identity, nor have they been compelled, as immigrants were in the past, to acknowledge the civic demands of America and give her their loyalty. Their relation to this country is merely economic or parasitic.

Subpoint C. Multiculturalism blocks fair treatment of minorities. Integrating into power structures requires assimilation, so the unassimilated will never get a fair deal

Dr. Joseph Heath 1997 (PhD; professor of philosophy, Univ. of Toronto ) “Immigration, Multiculturalism, and the Social Contract” July 1997 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-law-and-jurisprudence/article/immigration-multiculturalism-and-the-social-contract/1D927B5D896C4952D727BDB2C78399F1>

Most importantly, the multiculturalism policy is faulted for attempting to pursue two simultaneously unachievable goals, viz., to integrate ethnic minority groups into the dominant institutions of the society, while at the same time to protect them against various pressures to assimilate to the dominant culture. Critics have pointed out that social institutions and cultural values are interdependent. Not only do cultural value systems provide the central legitimations for social institutions, but the internalization of these values through socialization processes provides agents with their primary motivation for conforming to institutional expectations. This means that integrating an agent into a system of institutions can only be achieved by assimilating the agent to its underlying cultural system.

END QUOTE. In summary, we uphold justice when we uphold the social contract; when we give and take fairly; when we don't expect something for nothing. Multiculturalism unjustly breaks the contract and robs both society and the unassimilated of justice. Assimilation is more just, and provides the fairest outcome for everyone.

2A Evidence: Assimilation over Multiculturalism

ASSIMILATION & THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

The bargain our society makes with immigrants is that they are welcome to enjoy the benefits of immigrating here, provided they assimilate

Theodore Roosevelt in 1894 Quoted by Stanly Kurtz 20 May 2018 NATIONAL REVIEW “Acculturation Without Assimilation” <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2013/05/20/acculturation-without-assimilation/>

“We freely extend the hand of welcome and of good-fellowship to every man, no matter what his creed or birthplace, who comes here honestly intent on becoming a good United States citizen like the rest of us; but we have a right, and it is our duty, to demand that he shall indeed become so and shall not confuse the issues with which we are struggling by introducing among us Old World quarrels and prejudices.”