Lucas LeeBaker
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Research Paper:

Tradition and its Discontents

A comparative study of the fundamental values and assumptions made about reality of
Anglo-Texans and Austrians

Introduction

In the summer of 2025, I traveled to Austria with a scholarship from the Tyler Center for Global Studies Abroad Fellowship. My intention was to better understand how culture shapes the way people perceive history, identity, and the moral structure of the world around them. While Austria and my home state of Texas may appear culturally and historically distant, both regions share a deep relationship to tradition, a distinct local pride, and a complex legacy of borderland identity. But, how each society approaches these legacies, how they remember, adapt, or reject their historical inheritance, differs dramatically.

This paper is an attempt to explore those differences. Instead of writing a formal ethnography, I approach this as a comparative study of cultural logic: what unspoken assumptions govern how people think about authority, morality, aspiration, and identity in Austria versus Texas? What are the philosophical substructures beneath everyday behavior, how a person speaks about religion, or reacts to bureaucracy, or imagines their role in a historical continuum?

To explore these questions, I began by researching the historical development of each region. This includes the ethnogenesis and political evolution of Austria, and the colonial and frontier dynamics that shaped Texan identity. I supplemented this research with informal interviews and firsthand observations conducted during my time in Austria. These personal experiences, while limited in scale, allowed me to connect abstract ideas to lived reality.

The sections that follow examine each culture's historical foundations and then move into cultural analysis across several domains: religion, tradition, authority, domestic aspiration, and expressions of identity. My intent is to show the different ways history informs values, and how those values persist, mutate, or fade over time.

This paper draws from a combination of historical research and personal fieldwork conducted during June and July 2025. While in Austria, I engaged in informal interviews and casual conversations with locals in Vienna, Tyrol, Salzburg, and Styria, or on trains in between. Respondents included Gymnasium (Austrian secondary school) and university students, professionals, and retirees. Conversations were not recorded, and quotes are reconstructed from notes and memory. All translations are my own.

The Austrian People: Ethnogenesis and Historical Foundations

Prehistory

In *Who We Are and How We Got Here*, David Reich presents the products of research, conducted by his lab and others, which use ancient genetics to trace human prehistory. According to this book, the origins of the Austrian people reach back to 43,000 BC, with the arrival of the Western Hunter-Gatherers (WHG) in Ice Age Europe. These groups replaced the earlier Neanderthals and became the continent's dominant population until approximately 5000 BC. Genetic evidence suggests minimal hybridization between WHG and Neanderthals within Europe itself; instead, the 2–3% Neanderthal admixture common among non-African peoples likely occurred earlier, in the Middle East or Western Asia.

Around 5000 BC, Europe experienced a major demographic shift with the arrival of Anatolian Farmers. These Neolithic migrants settled primarily in the Mediterranean and southern Central Europe, intermixing with WHG populations to form the Early European Farmers (EEF). Their impact was uneven, strong in the south, negligible in the far north. Austria, situated in the southern Alpine region of Central Europe, was significantly influenced by this wave. The resulting LBK (Linearbandkeramik) culture in Austria reflects this agricultural transformation.

Between 3000 and 4000 BC, another decisive migration reached Europe from the Pontic-Caspian Steppe: the Yamnaya culture, or Steppe Pastoralists. These Indo-European-speaking people introduced light pigmentation traits, patriarchal social patterns, and hierarchical political organization, which would leave an enduring legacy across the continent. Genetic data shows they disproportionately contributed to the Y-chromosome lines, signaling a male-dominated expansion. In Austria, the Yamnaya became the dominant ancestral layer of Bronze Age populations.

By 2800–1800 BC, the Bell Beaker culture, also steppe-derived, spread into Central Europe. Although not genetically distinct from earlier steppe migrants, it left a robust archaeological record (Reich). Modern Austrians can be understood as a genetic fusion of three major ancestral components: Steppe, EEF, and WHG.

Roman Austria and the Persistence of Borderland Identity

Under Roman rule, the territory of modern Austria was divided into three provinces: Raetia (to the west), Noricum (central), and Pannonia (east). Raetia included modern Tyrol and Vorarlberg, as well as parts of northern Italy, eastern Switzerland, and southern Germany. Before Roman conquest (ca. 15 BC), it was inhabited by the Raeti, who were possibly of Etruscan or non-Celtic Indo-European origin.

Noricum, the core of modern Austria, including Salzburg, Upper Austria, Carinthia, and parts of Bavaria and Slovenia, was dominated by the Celtic Noricii tribe and part of the La Tène cultural sphere. (Pliny the Elder) Eastern Austria, including Vienna and Burgenland, belonged to Pannonia and was inhabited by the Boii, another Celtic people, whose name survives in "Bohemia."

While the Romans built cities like Carnuntum and settled military veterans in the region, their genetic impact appears limited. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the late 5th century, Noricum was ceded to the Germanic Rugii. They were soon displaced or absorbed by the Ostrogoths, a Germanic tribe from the east. Around 560 AD, the nomadic Avars conquered eastern Austria, and Slavic groups began to settle the eastern and southern Alpine regions. These incursions largely erased earlier Germanic footholds, especially outside the west.

The Germanization of Austria and Formation of Regional Identity

Austria's identity as a Germanic-speaking region began in the 5th–6th centuries AD, when the Baiuvarii (Bajuwaren) settled in Bavaria, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Tyrol, and Carinthia. Likely originating from Bohemia, they spoke an early form of Bavarian (Bairisch) and eventually came under Frankish rule. In 788 AD, Charlemagne incorporated the Duchy of Bavaria into the Carolingian Empire.

A decisive moment for Christian consolidation in the region came in 955 AD, when Otto I of East Francia defeated the invading Hungarians at the Battle of Lechfeld. This victory ended decades of Magyar raids and enabled the stabilization of Christian frontier institutions. In 996 AD, the term Ostarrîchi, the earliest linguistic ancestor of Österreich, first appeared, referring to the Eastern March (border territory) of the Holy Roman Empire. This term marked both geographic function and emerging identity, as Bavarians increasingly distinguished the inhabitants of the eastern border as Ostermänner (eastern men) or Osterfrauen (eastern women).

At this time, much of southern Austria was still ruled by the Slavic Duchy of Carinthia—one of the first Slavic polities to convert to Christianity before 800 AD.

Independence, Consolidation, and the Habsburg Order

In 1156 AD, Austria was formally separated from Bavaria by the *Privilegium Minus*, issued by Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa. This granted hereditary rights to the Babenberg family and elevated the Eastern March to the status of a duchy. Following the *Georgenberg Pact of 1186* and the extinction of the Otakar line in Styria, Austria inherited that territory as well. The name "Austria" began appearing in Latin documents during this period, like the *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus* (Chronicle or History of the Two Cities) by Otto of Freising, signifying a shift toward a more independent identity.

After a succession crisis, the Habsburgs took control of Austria in 1278, incorporating Carniola (modern Slovenia) and eventually acquiring Carinthia and Tyrol. These regions had undergone gradual Germanization since Charlemagne's era, and by the 14th century, most were linguistically and culturally Bavarian, while leaving the population genetically still a mix of Celtic, Slavic, and Germanic ancestry, varying in proportion by region (Eupedia). This territorial consolidation laid the groundwork for Austria's future as a central European power.

Between 1683 and 1699, Austria expanded dramatically after the Great Turkish War and the *Treaty of Karlowitz*. The Habsburgs gained most of Hungary, Transylvania as a vassal, parts of Croatia, Slavonia, and sections of modern Serbia and Romania. Austria's influence peaked through a combination of strategic marriages, military victories, and dominance within the Holy Roman Empire.

The Modern Austrian State and the Invention of National Identity

The 19th century saw Austria's decline as a Germanic power. Rivalry with rising Prussia culminated in the German War (Deutscher Krieg) of 1866, which Austria lost. This marked its

exclusion from German unification and the beginning of its evolution into a distinct cultural entity. In 1867, the *Austro-Hungarian Compromise* created the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary, a vast, multiethnic empire held together by imperial bureaucracy and dynastic legitimacy.

Following World War I, the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, and the Republic of Austria was proclaimed. Many believed the new, much-reduced Austria would not survive as a standalone state. In fact, the *1921 Tyrolean plebiscite* showed that 98% of voters supported joining Germany. Although the Allied Powers forbade this union, popular support for Anschluss persisted. In 1938, Austria was annexed into Nazi Germany in a move welcomed by much of the population.

After World War II, Austria began cultivating a new national identity, increasingly distancing itself from Germany. The dominant political narrative cast Austria as Hitler's "first victim" (Just Act Report), a framing that enabled postwar rehabilitation. Cultural shifts followed: schools replaced the term Deutsch (German) with Unterrichtssprache (language of instruction), and the Austrian Wörterbuch supplanted the German Duden as the standard reference.

Today, most Austrians view themselves as a distinct people (ein Volk), despite shared language and media with Germany. While Bavarian dialects remain dominant in speech, they are slowly converging with standardized German (Kapeller), especially in urban centers. This evolving dialectical homogenization parallels Austria's ongoing negotiation between its regional heritage and national self-conception.

Mexico

<u>Spain in the New World</u>

The patterns that would later define the political, economic, and cultural character of the Mexican state began to emerge as early as 1492, with the Spanish discovery of the New World. Initial Spanish efforts to exploit the Americas through the capture of slaves and the search for precious metals quickly proved unsustainable. In response, the Spanish developed a plantation-based slave economy in the Caribbean, which became the prototype for subsequent mainland colonization.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés launched his campaign against the Aztec Empire, culminating in its conquest in 1521. Cortés adapted and expanded on the Caribbean model, institutionalizing a new system of colonization centered around the encomienda, a feudal-like grant that gave Spanish conquerors control over local land and indigenous populations. This system, sustained until the early 19th century, evolved into a complex caste-based society, stratified by race, noble lineage, birthplace, and slave status. Spanish colonial society thus developed as a rigid and hierarchical order, with an economy centered on extraction and designed for mercantilism. Colonies sent raw materials to Spain, where they were processed or manufactured, before being re-exported to Spanish America. Intercolonial trade and trade with other empires were strictly prohibited, forestalling the development of local specialization or economic innovation and locking the colonies into dependency on Spain.

<u>El Norte</u>

This centralized and extractive model shaped both the limits and the internal divisions of Spanish America. Expansion into the northern frontier of New Spain was constrained by the lack

of centralized indigenous states that could be easily conquered and folded into colonial governance. Instead, the region was home to semi-nomadic tribes and sparse natural resources, with land unsuitable for plantation agriculture. "El Norte," the territory north of the Sierra Madre, was defined by its harsh landscapes, first chaparral, then desert and grassland, and by continual conflict with unconquered Indigenous groups. Unlike the wealthier south, the north remained sparsely populated and difficult to govern.

In response, the Spanish Crown adopted a different strategy: the establishment of Missions. These institutions, twenty of which were founded in what is now Texas, were operated by Jesuit priests. Their goal was to "civilize" Indigenous peoples through confinement, conversion to Catholicism, instruction in the Spanish language, and training in skilled labor such as tanning, mining, and masonry. Although designed to be transitional spaces, enabling Indigenous converts to eventually leave and join Spanish colonial society, the Missions were incentivized to retain their labor force, often preventing individuals from graduating out of the system. San Antonio was among the settlements established by the Mission network.

Due to high attrition in the Missions, Spanish settlers were increasingly invited to the north to bolster these communities, and over time they outnumbered the Indigenous population. Although the mission system is widely considered a failure across most of New Spain, Texas presents a more complex case. Here, the Missions became the origin of the Mestizo Tejano identity, producing "civilized" Indigenous people who eventually integrated with Spanish settlers (Joseph and Chipman).

Many northern settlers rejected the rigid controls of the formal colonial system and moved beyond mission settlements to establish independent farms and ranches. Mercantile law required that all goods be transported overland to Mexico City and then to Spain, a burdensome

and inefficient process. Trade with Louisiana or other European powers on the Gulf Coast was illegal. In practice, this restrictiveness, combined with the inability of the Spanish state to enforce its laws in the north, led to the formation of semi-autonomous communities. These communities routinely engaged in illegal trade, exchanging cattle and hides with Louisiana and even with British and Dutch merchants.

While these northern settlements took on a decentralized and informal character, the southern regions of New Spain flourished. South of the Sierra Madre, the colony became the wealthiest in the New World. In an effort to better integrate the north and stimulate economic activity, Spain began relaxing elements of its feudal structure, allowing a wage-based economy to emerge. This shift enriched a southern merchant class while reinforcing the quasi-independent ranching economy of the north.

Northern settlements typically consisted of extended family networks led by a patrón, usually the wealthiest individual with the largest ranch or mine, who guided communal decisions. Over time, the divergent development of north and south led to distinct demographic and cultural differences: the north became predominantly white, while the south remained majority mestizo. The vaquero, a horse-mounted cattle worker, emerged from this northern ranching culture and would later influence the American cowboy tradition.

The End of Spanish Rule

By the late colonial period, New Spain's economy had outpaced that of Spain itself. In response, the Spanish Crown attempted to reassert control over independent markets. At the same time, Spain found itself embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars, allying first with France, then

with Britain after the defeat of the Spanish fleet at Trafalgar severely curtailed Spain's naval power. The war imposed heavy debts and weakened Spain's domestic economy.

In 1806, British forces invaded the Río de la Plata, but were repelled not by Spanish troops, but by colonial militias, an event that emboldened the colonial ruling classes and raised their confidence in resisting European military power. When Spain later aligned with Britain and reopened its ports to British trade, colonial merchants grew wealthy and increasingly aware of the costs imposed by Spain's earlier economic restrictions. Following the war, Spain again limited British access to American markets while simultaneously experimenting with constitutional reforms and tentative discussions about the abolition of slavery.

These contradictions catalyzed revolution. The Mexican War of Independence, which began in 1810, was driven largely by the ruling and merchant classes, who sought to protect their economic position and gain greater autonomy. The war was long and costly, claiming over 500,000 lives, more than any other revolution in the Americas. In its aftermath, the Mexican state was impoverished and unstable. First Panama, then Central America, broke away. The Mexican monarchy quickly collapsed and was replaced by a fragile republic, dominated by military strongmen and elites who viewed political power primarily as a means to secure their economic standing.

United States

The Old South

In 1607, the Virginia Company founded Jamestown, a settlement on the Chesapeake Bay. The original intent was to replicate the Spanish colonial model: recreating a European-style feudal society in the New World by using the native population as serfs. This plan quickly failed,

and within two years the colony was repurposed into a plantation economy centered on tobacco production, primarily worked by penal colonists.

The Virginia Company struggled to exert meaningful authority beyond its cultivated lands. As a result, attrition was high; forced laborers often fled and established their own farms on unclaimed land. Much like the norteños in New Spain, these runaway settlers formed their own semi-autonomous communities, organized independent trade networks that bypassed the company, and built militias for self-defense. The Company adapted again, this time by abandoning its feudal ambitions entirely. It turned instead to indentured servitude and enticed settlers by offering 50 acres to each servant upon completion of their term, plus 50 additional acres for each family member they brought.

To increase legitimacy and attract settlers, the Company also introduced a measure of local governance: a representative assembly in which all landowning men could vote.

Maryland, founded in 1632, followed a similar trajectory. Originally established as a proprietary colony under Baron Baltimore, its feudal ambitions were similarly undermined by the realities of the frontier. An assembly was created, and it quickly voted to place Maryland under the direct control of the English Crown. Together, Virginia and Maryland laid the foundation for what would become the plantation economy of the American South.

Later, the Carolinas and Georgia were settled, often by younger sons of English aristocrats seeking to recreate feudal structures. Many also came from the British Caribbean, where plantation systems were already well developed. These settlers imported not only logistical expertise but also fully formed racial hierarchies and a culture defined by wealth display, social dominance, and centralized political control (Fischer).

Over time, all these colonies transitioned away from a labor force composed of indentured servants and penal colonists toward a system of chattel slavery. African slaves became a permanent legal and social replacement for the would-be serf class. This transformation entrenched a racialized slave economy that defined the southern Atlantic colonies and later the Deep South. The expansion of this economy westward was facilitated by the French and Indian War (which opened up new territory), the American Revolution (which made it legally claimable), and *the Indian Removal Act* (which pacified Indigenous resistance).

By the early 19th century, the southern plantation economy had reached Louisiana. Initially centered on tobacco, the South diversified into rice and indigo, crops familiar to African slaves from their homelands. With the industrialization of textile production in the North, and the invention of the cotton gin, cotton quickly rose to dominance.

The Appalachian Frontiersmen

While plantation economies flourished along the Atlantic coast, a markedly different settler culture was taking shape in the Appalachian Mountains. This population was primarily descended from lowland Scots, Ulster Scots (Scots-Irish), and Northern English, especially from the Anglo-Scottish borderlands. Many were themselves former indentured servants, debtors, or penal colonists. However, the majority migrated to America through Pennsylvania, before pushing southward along the Appalachian spine.

This society was deeply clannish. While this led to frequent violence over land and livestock, it also fostered strong kin-based social structures. Notably, this group was the only major British settler population in North America to intermarry with Native Americans to any

significant degree during this period. Indigenous people were often perceived less as "others" than as another group of frontier families.

Economically, these settlers practiced a form of extractive subsistence agriculture. They raised pigs and sheep, and planted staple crops on land until it was depleted—then moved on. Their cultural code emphasized oral tradition, honor-based ethics, decentralized forms of Protestantism (often Baptist or Presbyterian), distrust of formal power, militarism, self-reliance, and a deep disdain for aristocracy (Fischer).

Texas

<u>The Origin of Anglo Texas</u>

To understand the Anglo-Texan population, we must treat it not as a cohesive ethnic group but as a frontier fusion, a convergence of already distinct regional Anglo-American cultures transplanted onto a Mexican borderland. This fusion was shaped by pressure, opportunity, and violence.

The two principal source populations were Appalachian frontiersmen from the Upper South and Deep South planters from the Gulf Coast. Central Texas became a hybrid zone, blending elements of both traditions, while West Texas and the Panhandle were later settled by products of the broader western expansion, culturally affiliated, but chronologically distinct.

The first organized Anglo settlement in Texas was established in 1821 by Stephen F. Austin and his father Moses Austin. Their "Old Three Hundred" families were primarily from the Upper South, a region stretching from the Ohio River Valley through Missouri, Arkansas, and the Ouachitas, down to northern Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. This area was itself culturally descended from the Appalachian settlers described above, and retained many of their

traits: clannishness, independence, suspicion of authority, and decentralized Protestantism (Fischer).

These early settlers entered Texas from the north, occupying Central Texas. At the same time, Southern planters migrated into East Texas and the Gulf Coast. The Mexican government welcomed this immigration, assuming settlers would assimilate into Mexican society as Stephen F. Austin had. Tejanos also welcomed them, anticipating economic integration, especially improved access to markets for cattle and hides.

But assimilation never happened. As settlers began importing enslaved Africans, despite Mexico's post-independence ban on slavery, the Mexican government responded by outlawing further Anglo immigration in 1830. This ban proved unenforceable, and illegal settlement from the South continued. By 1823, the Anglo and Tejano populations were roughly equal (around 3,000 each), but by the mid-1830s Anglos outnumbered Tejanos nearly 10 to 1.

The Revolution and its Aftermath

In 1833, President Antonio López de Santa Anna suspended the Mexican Constitution of 1824 and centralized power, sparking revolts across Northern Mexico and the Yucatán. In Texas, Tejanos initially sought regional autonomy within Mexico, but soon joined Anglo settlers in their struggle for independence. Twelve Tejanos were among the roughly 200 who died defending the Alamo, and Tejano forces played a decisive role at the Battle of San Jacinto. One of the Republic of Texas's first vice presidents was a Tejano.

However, after independence, new waves of Southern immigrants brought with them racial ideologies that excluded Tejanos from political and social life. The Tejano mayor of San Antonio was forced into exile, and Tejano families were driven from their lands on the Gulf

Coast and confined to the Rio Grande Valley. Their earlier contributions to Texan independence were quickly forgotten.

The next 120 years would bring the Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement, which defined elements of modern Texas society as well as solidified previous cultural tendencies.

Footnote on African American and Native Contributions

While African Americans were a significant presence in Texas, especially in the eastern and Gulf regions, their cultural influence on the dominant Texan worldview was complex and indirect. This paper focuses primarily on the cultural assumptions and values that shaped the mainstream settler populations and Tejano collaborators in the formation of Texan identity. African Americans, due to their historical position as an enslaved and later marginalized group, exerted less visible influence on the prevailing cultural logics of the region, though their presence certainly helped shape how those dominant groups understood law, order, labor, race, and power. Similarly, while American Indians were present in Texas throughout its formation, and even integrated genetically into the Tejano population, this largely occurred through the Spanish missions system, which was designed to replace native culture with that of Spain, resulting in very little influence being felt on the culture of modern Texans in ways this paper covers. These dynamics deserve attention in their own right but fall outside the primary scope of this paper.

Cultural analysis: Austria

Attitudes Toward History and Identity

Identity and Historical Consciousness

Austria demonstrates an emotionally ambivalent relationship with its historical inheritance. While materially preserving architectural and cultural artifacts with meticulous care, Austrians often express a personal detachment from the historical agents who produced them. This tension reflects a national psychology shaped by imperial nostalgia, postwar shame, and a long tradition of aesthetic reverence coupled with moral distancing. One informant from Graz, while giving me an informal tour of the city, pointed to both historic and recent constructions of totally different styles, built by people from a variety of countries, and spoke of them in the same tone of detachment regardless. Often, when the architect of a particular structure was born elsewhere, he would treat that fact as a point of pride, saying things like (interviewed July 2025) "Ich find's krass, dass sowas bei uns steht [...] Architektur lebt ja eh vom Austausch." ("I find it cool that we have something like this standing here [...] Architecture lives off of exchange"). These kinds of statements, when the tone is repeated across several examples, implicitly lowers the products of the native culture below the products of other cultures, as a form of humility, while still acknowledging the beauty of and showing pride in the products of the native culture.

Religion and Ritual

Religious architecture in Austria is preserved not for its theological utility but for its cultural symbolism. The secularization of Austrian society has led to the elevation of religious architecture to a kind of aestheticized reverence that turned spiritual value into cultural heritage. This can be seen in the practical handling of these buildings. After being rebuilt after WW2, they

continue to be used as houses of worship, though much of their income has transitioned to being gained from paid tours, gift shops, and other activities like concerts. These tours are conducted, often, by non-christians, who love the beauty and history of the structure for what it says about their culture, but are still willing to swear under its roof. Catholic aesthetics became a symbol of Austrians themselves rather than the Catholic faith. This can also be seen in fashion trends in cities like Vienna, where it is popular for secular young men to wear crucifixes over their shirts.

National Identity and Universalism

Austrian national pride coexists with a cultivated egalitarianism, often expressed through universalist moral platitudes. This reflects both a residual imperial pride and a postwar imperative to avoid expressions of cultural superiority. One quote I heard in every city I visited, from every age group, was "In jeder Kultur gibt's gute und schlechte Menschen" ("there are good and bad people in every culture"). This was always the response to questions regarding integration of migrants, discussion over Muslim or African cultures, or migration more broadly. It seemed to be used as a way out of discussion over the topic of immigration in general, and was often implemented preemptively, before the conversation actually reached where the saying would be appropriate. The sensitivity of that subject is evidence of a desire to distance themselves from any connection to the Nazis or their imperial history.

Comfort, Stability, and End-of-History Psychology

Material Security and Temporal Horizon

Austria's political discourse shows an attachment to postwar material security. National anxiety over climate change or immigration is often articulated not in terms of civilizational

decline or loss of greatness, but as threats to economic stability and public service continuity. That shows a temporal horizon shaped by preservation rather than ambition, a culture living in the long tail of its own stability. When asked, one man from Salzburg said (interviewed July 2025) "Meine Oma regt sich oft auf wegen der ganzen Zuwanderung, aber ich sag ihr dann immer: Ohne die Migranten würd sich in ihrem Altersheim keiner um sie kümmern. Die machen die Jobs, die sonst keiner machen will" ("my grandma often gets worked up over immigration, but I always tell her: without the migrants, nobody would take care of you in your old folks home. They do the jobs nobody else wants") turning the issue into something purely concerned with the pragmatic functioning of the country in that moment, without regard for the long term stability of such a strategy. When speaking to a 25 year old woman from Carinthia visiting Styria who was against the current state of immigration, the state's ability to provide social services played a large role:(interviewed July 2025) "Bei bestimmten Herkunftsländern sieht man öfter Probleme mit Kriminalität oder bei der sozialen Absicherung [...] man muss einfach genauer hinschauen, wer kommt, und was das für Folgen hat" ("with immigration from certain countries, you see more problems with crime and the welfare system [...] one must more closely look at who is coming here and what the consequences are.") This shows this focus on stability rather than ambition crosses political boundaries, though the sample size of people who admitted to being against the current state of immigration was quite small.

Cultural Priorities

Discussions of intergenerational well-being in Austria are overwhelmingly framed in economic and institutional terms. Rather than focusing on traditional life milestones, like marriage, family, upward mobility, Austrian cultural discourse centers on personal autonomy

within a stable infrastructure. This signals a moral imagination shaped by the preservation of comforts, not their transcendence. One quote which reflects this attitude came from a 26 year old man from Styria, (interviewed July 2025) "Ich versteh ehrlich gesagt nicht, warum so viele aufs Eigenheim fixiert sind. Wenn man in der Stadt lebt, hat man eh alles, was man braucht[...] Klar, *wenn* ich mal heirate und *wenn* Kinder kommen, dann wär ein Haus vielleicht was Schönes, aber momentan fehlt mir da nix" ("I honestly don't understand why so many people are so fixated on homeownership. When someone lives in the city, they have everything they need[...] Sure, *if* I one day marry and *if* we have kids, then a house would maybe be nice, but right now I'm not missing anything"). He placed strong emphasis on the "if" before marriage and procreation, as was very common among younger Austrians. This indifference toward the things traditionally seen as markers of success was balanced out by an equally strong concern for the stability of the healthcare system, pension system, public transportation, and affordability of rent in cities.

Conformism and Philosophical Absolutism

<u>Moral Philosophy and Cultural Logic</u>

Austrian sociopolitical life reflects a high degree of consensus-based conformity. Once a moral position achieves dominance, like the liberal ideal of an open, egalitarian welfare state, it tends to be pursued with philosophical rigor and without visible dissent. This may reflect the legacy of Germanic idealism and Catholic uniformity, now applied to secular liberal norms. The platitude "In jeder Kultur gibt's gute und schlechte Menschen" ("there are good and bad people in every culture"), which I heard from a diverse set of Austrians, is an example of this. It is more than what it is directly saying; it's a signal of belonging to the dominant national ideology. Another I heard in various forms is "Unsere Demokratie ist keine Selbstverständlichkeit" (our

democracy is not a given"). What sayings like these have in common is they often appeared at inappropriate times in conversations and interviews, serving a similar purpose to a flag. They are designed to preemptively state that they are in agreement with the cultural narrative, making further conversation on the topic unnecessary. What suggests that these signals are sent even when they are not accurate is the fact that the populist right wing party, known as the Freedom Party (FPÖ), got almost 29% of the vote in 2024 Austrian Federal Elections (Deloy), yet not one of the people I spoke to said anything that would suggest they may be sympathetic to the FPÖ platform, other than the young woman from Carinthia, which happens to be traditionally the most conservative part of the country.

Cultural analysis: Texas

<u>Introduction to Texan Cultural Roots</u>

Texan culture is a dynamic fusion shaped by three main ancestral influences: the Tejanos, Deep Southerners, and Upper Southerners. This ethnogenesis varied by region, with Central Texas standing as a hybrid zone where many of these influences converged. For the sake of focus, this section centers primarily on Anglo-Texans of Central Texas, excluding peripheral regions like West Texas and the Panhandle due to their later settlement and lesser cultural impact.

<u>Regional Variation and Scope</u>

The cultural features described here are general trends for Anglo-Texans in Central Texas, reflecting an ongoing process of cultural adaptation and synthesis unique to the Texas frontier environment.

<u>Relationship with Power and Authority</u>

Texans exhibit a complex and at times paradoxical relationship with authority. Distrust of governmental power coexists with acceptance, and even reverence, of influence wielded by wealthy, charismatic individuals. The political career of Lyndon B. Johnson, notably his 1941 and 1948 campaigns, exemplifies this tolerance for "soft power" and personal leadership. This duality likely derives from the Tejano tradition of patróns combined with the Upper South's skepticism of formal authority.

<u>Martial and Frontier Ethos: Sport, Violence, and Gender Roles</u>

The Anglo-Texan cultural emphasis on martial skills and physical prowess reflects its Appalachian and Upper South roots, where frontier survival demanded that all members of society, men and women alike, be capable of violence if necessary. This martial ethos filtered through Vaquero culture to create a distinct Texan "cowboy" identity, exemplified by rodeos and a strong gun culture. "Tom boy" traits remain culturally accepted among women, who historically contributed to both domestic and physically demanding frontier labor, continuing traditions of gender role fluidity and self-reliance.

<u>Ethos of Independence, Self-Reliance, and Informal Hierarchies</u>

Both Upper Southerners and Tejanos originated as frontier peoples who rejected centralized control, forming instead clan-like or patronage-based informal hierarchies. The survival demands of the frontier fostered a cultural valorization of independence and

self-reliance, with flexible gender divisions in labor. This legacy persists strongly in Texan identity and social organization.

Complex Southern Honor Culture and Pragmatism

The Upper South is characterized by a distinctive culture of honor marked by religious conservatism and a pragmatic approach to survival. This is exemplified by proverbs such as "better a coward than a corpse" and "he that fights and runs away will live to fight another day" (Fischer), which appear to contradict more absolutist revolutionary rhetoric like Patrick Henry's "give me liberty or give me death." This seeming contradiction is reconciled within the culture's pragmatic valuation of life preservation over rigid ideals, life is sacred, but liberty and manhood are paramount. Modern Texans maintain this blend of practical caution and fierce conviction, influenced in part by Deep South cultural trends.

Upper South Social and Moral Patterns: Conservatism and Fertility

Fischer's Albion's Seed documents high premarital pregnancy rates among Upper South "backcountry brides" (94% in 1767) (Fischer), a pragmatic pattern balancing moral strictness with social reality. Fertility rates in Appalachian regions historically outpaced those of the Delaware Valley and northern frontiers, reflecting strong family structures. These traits persist in Texas, where religious conservatism coexists with a culture that tolerates, or at least separates, behaviors like premarital sex and drunkenness from spiritual and social status. Texas and other Upper South states today have some of the highest fertility rates in the country, surpassed mainly by Utah and the Great Plains (CDC), demonstrating continuity with these cultural roots.

<u>Contradictions and Continuities: Churchgoing and Wildness</u>

Texas maintains a culture of paradox: deeply religious, conservative, and family-oriented communities exist alongside vibrant traditions of wildness, violence, and disorder. This duality, "showing up to church on Sunday after getting wasted on Saturday," is an enduring southern cultural feature that shapes Texan identity.

Comparison: Texas vs Austria

<u>Religion</u>

Today, Texas remains majority Christian, with 67% of the population identifying as such, 27% evangelical Protestant and 22% Catholic (Pew Research). While precise breakdowns by ethnicity are difficult to find, it can be reasonably assumed that many of the Catholics are among the 11.4 million Latinos in Texas, whereas most evangelical Protestants are likely among the 14.6 million whites (U.S. Census). In contrast, 55% of Austrians identify as Catholic, with small numbers belonging to other Christian denominations (CIA World Factbook). However, what it means to be a Christian differs significantly between the two cultures.

One informant from Linz (interviewed July 2025) affirmed his Catholic identity, but later stated that he did not believe in the resurrection of Christ or in the divine inspiration of the Bible—views that would firmly place him outside the bounds of Catholicism by Texas standards. In Texas, most informants who identified as Catholic affirmed both the resurrection and the Bible's divine authority, regardless of age, region, or gender. A common Austrian response was, „Ich glaube an die Botschaft der Bibel, aber nicht an jedes Detail" ("I believe in the message of the Bible but not every detail"). This illustrates not only a difference in religious belief, but also a divergence in how each culture defines religious identity. In Austria, identifying as Catholic

often reflects cultural heritage more than doctrinal belief, whereas in Texas, it typically implies adherence to foundational theological claims.

<u>Tradition</u>

The tone around tradition also differs. In Texas, tradition is something to be actively defended—perhaps a legacy of rapid cultural shifts experienced by the various groups who became Texans. What is not defended may be lost. In Austria, tradition is viewed more as something that quietly endures when treated with care and reverence. As one informant in Vienna said (interviewed July 2025), „Wenn wir auf diesen Ort achten, können ihn auch zukünftige Generationen genießen. Wer weiß, vielleicht schaffen wir es sogar, ihn ein bisschen besser zu machen[...] In jeder Generation geht etwas verloren, aber so ist das eben. Die wichtigen Dinge bleiben trotzdem" ("If we care for this place, future generations will be able to enjoy it too. Who knows, maybe we'll even manage to make it a bit better [...] Every generation loses something, but that's just how it is. The important things endure").

<u>Authority</u>

Attitudes toward authority also diverge. In Texas, government authority is often met with skepticism, while informal influence from wealthy or prominent community members is tolerated or even admired. In Austria, the pattern is nearly reversed. Bureaucracy and formal regulation are widely seen as necessary for order, and the average Austrian tends to follow public rules even when no one is watching—rarely jaywalking, for instance. Influence exerted outside democratic or institutional frameworks is often viewed with suspicion. As one Styrian informant (interviewed July 2025) remarked, „Ich bin ehrlich gesagt froh, dass die EU den digitalen Raum

reguliert[...] ohne klare Regeln sind wir diesen Firmen ziemlich ausgeliefert." ("Honestly, I'm glad the EU regulates the digital space [...] without clear rules, we're pretty much at the mercy of these companies.") This cultural difference may also reflect Austria's centuries-long history under centralized monarchy and Catholic emphasis on order and self-discipline, in contrast with Texas's frontier heritage shaped by Protestant pluralism and decentralized authority.

Conclusion

The comparison between Austria and Texas is a study in how history carves into the subconscious of a people. Both societies are attached to tradition, wary of losing what they value most, and shaped by the memory of living on the edge of larger empires. But their differences reveal 2 different forms that cultural continuity can take.

Austria's traditions come from a long continuity, an unbroken thread of political institutions, aesthetics, and a settled relationship to the land. Tradition there feels less like a war and more like a managed garden. It's cultivated and protected from disruption. It pushes for maintenance rather than defense, and refinement instead of reinvention. In daily life, that manifests itself in the trust placed in public institutions and the acceptance of formal structures.

Texas, in comparison, carries a frontier legacy in which tradition was often a rallying point for resistance, something that required defense against outside interference. Its culture values independence, suspicion of central authority, and the belief that tradition is inseparable from liberty. This makes Texan tradition more openly combative, more adaptable in some ways but also more vulnerable to fracturing, since its preservation depends on active will rather than ingrained structure.

Both cultures are responses to different historical conditions. Austria's stability and institutional trust offer a kind of cultural security that Texans might find suffocating. Texas's independence and dynamism encourage creativity but also produce constant tension with collective governance.

The weight of centuries of tradition, how landscapes and borders mold identity, and inherited ways of thinking shape everyone's daily lives to varying degrees. To live in another culture is to encounter the deep logic beneath its surface habits. In that encounter, one can see their own home through new eyes.

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